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Texas kitsch helps give personality to TV house

By **Derrick J. Lang**
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas -- During the past 15 seasons, the camera-laden homes on MTV's "The Real World" have become as much of a character as the seven strangers picked to live within it.



⊕ zoom

The confessional chair in MTV's "Real World" house has been used in previous seasons and is a fisherman's chair bolted onto the floor. - Jack Plunkett / Associated Press

space.

"It carries a lot of weight when I call and say I'm with 'The Real World,' " Mozersky said. "I get a lot more than I would if I just called and said, 'Hey, I'm working on this project.' That clout helps balance out the need for immediate gratification."

For the Sweet 16 season in Austin (premiering June 21), MTV and Bunim-Murray Productions hired native interior designer Joel Mozersky to transform an old warehouse into a reality TV domicile.

"I got the job basically six weeks ago," Mozersky said in January during a tour of the house the day before the roomies were due to arrive. "I had the full concept in a week. I had to present it to the president of the company in a week. Construction has been 3 1/2 weeks from rough space to this. So it's been quick."

But it doesn't show. Mozersky filled the space with Texas kitsch, art from friends, Italian furniture and a pool. Mozersky used "Real World" stature to expeditiously furnish the

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When the seven strangers enter their abode, they'll be greeted by an 18-foot-tall neon cowboy named "Big Tex" (because he's holding a sign that says so). "When they walk in, I want them to feel like 'Welcome to Texas!' and I don't think I could've said it any better than that," said Mozersky. As they move farther into the warehouse, they'll notice an assemblage of vintage cowbells on the left wall.

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Living room

A sleek vintage vinyl couch, lava stone coffee table and mod seats adorn the small living area. Two plastic bubble chairs hang above a white flokati shag rug. "I used the bubble chairs because I think they're a really fun chair," said Mozersky. "They can hold two people. I don't know the exact weight requirement, but they can hold at least 300 pounds."

Kitchen

It might be hard to cook in a kitchen this loud. The walls are pink, the cabinets are red, and a tree trunk with an island atop it sprouts up in the center. At least the stainless steel fridge is calming. It's loaded with organic goods. "I think red and pink together create a lot of energy as opposed to having flat wood," said Mozersky. "It'll make you stop changing the channel."

Pool

There's a small pool in the center of the warehouse, carved out of indigenous leuter stone. "I didn't know if it was going to be possible due to physics and things like that," said Mozersky. "We had to build up from the basement. I wanted it to be sort of monolithic like it grew out of the floor, almost like it was always here." The roomies can't even escape from the cameras while dipping in the pool: A camera is hidden below one of the jets. "It's more geared toward young adults getting together than anybody doing laps," added Mozersky.

Confessional

This is the room where the seven strangers reveal their inner thoughts to a small camera mounted across from a fisherman's chair bolted onto the floor. Behind the chair is a wavy, textured drywall sculpture infused with changing colored lights. "That's actually the official 'Real World' confessional chair that's been in many seasons," said Mozersky. "You don't ever see it because someone's sitting in it."

Patio

Not so much patio as hot tub room, with walls made of thin plastic sheeting. There are two entrances. Wooden benches and plants flank both sides. "I wanted to simulate the outdoors as much as possible, considering it's sort of in an enclosed plastic area," said Mozersky.

Dining room

Next to the patio is a large fake wood dining table. The "Real World"-ers also have a real wood bar. The walls behind the bar have cork wallpaper.

"It's like a service bar for the exterior," said Mozersky. "The producer wanted it to feel like a Texas bar."

Sitting room

The name "sitting room" is more fitting for granny's house, but this space resembles something out of the Playboy mansion: It has one giant circular bed, exposed to all three bedrooms and the bathroom. "A lot of the creation of the rooms and the architecture is geared toward creating drama, like the orgy room being in the middle of everyone's bedroom so you have to suffer the humiliation of being seen by everyone if you're going to go to that level," said Mozersky.

Bedrooms

Each of the three bedrooms is decorated with a native flora theme and corresponding decorative mural: thistle, tumbleweed and guava cactus. Two bedrooms have two beds, while one room has three -- and a trio of garden gnome-shaped nightstands. "I wanted this room to be the most fun because you had to actually share it with two people," said Mozersky.

Bathroom

Walking into the bathroom is like stepping into a stable. A trough sink is mounted in the center of the room with multiple faucets. Swinging saloon-style doors hang outside the dual-head showers. "It's a way for all of them to get ready at once," said Mozersky. The only thing separating the commodes from the rest of the bathroom (and the cameras) are see-through doors, which become instantly opaque at the flip of a switch. The doors are made of electrochromic glass, which can change color when exposed to electricity.

Phone room

It might look like a TV room at first -- what with the gigantic flat screen and all -- but TV is forbidden in "Real World" houses. The flat screen is just a monitor plugged into a video phone system that will allow the roomies to see their family and friends with the same system. And just like the hot tub, every "Real World" abode comes standard with a fish tank. This time, it's inside the wall of the phone room. "It's actually fresh water instead of salt water, which is a whole different set of rules," said Mozersky.

Billiards room

For a more intimate feeling, the cast can trek upstairs to the billiards room, which overlooks the larger space. The red room also contains two giant bag chairs and one regulation-sized pool table.

"This is the best vantage point in the whole house," said Mozersky. "You can see right into the bedroom, who's coming out of the shower, you can see who's coming in."

Office

On the opposite side of the second floor is a small home office. The half-drywall, half-brick wall is a reminder of the warehouse's former condition.

"The wall was actually just like this except we painted it," said Mozersky. "I wanted to give an indication of what it was architecturally here before."

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