

atomic ranch

MIDCENTURY MARVELS



SPRING 2008



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Vintage Saarinen chairs around a Knoll conference table are the most prized possessions in this dining area in a transitional ranch in Portland, Ore. The homeowners have showcased their furnishings' great lines with budget finds as well: FLOR carpet squares help protect the original cork flooring, and an IKEA buffet and homeowner-created artwork pop off the orange wall. The Nelson saucer lamp is from Hive, and the accent lamp is from Lux Lighting. Story page 70.



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atomic ranch®

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my2cents

We skirted when we bought our Portland ranch in 2006, since it had been recently flipped—both a good and bad thing—and had fresh finishes. After plenty of do-it-yourself projects at our California house, we were happy to not be living in a construction zone.

But, like most of our readers, we've since gotten to know our home best through the repairs and quirks: the leaking shower valves that revealed walls of 1 1/2"-thick sheet lath; the peeling painted concrete porch that tried to update the bright brick red surface material; the beautiful windows that make you say midsummer, Gee, it sure would be nice if one of them opened. Like an early infatuation, we love this house but can also more easily see her occasional shortcomings—that freezing bedroom over the garage comes to mind right about now.

When our daughter, Cheyenne, recently bought her first home, a 1949 ranch, we got the opportunity to experience its essence somewhat intimately as well. Volunteering our sweat equity, fall weekends were spent trying to remove five or six layers of traditional wallpaper applied directly



to the drywall and sundry other cosmetic projects. Online advice said to avoid using water or other strippers so as not to permeate the paper backing. But a member of the Portland Atomic Age Alliance, the preservation group we're part of, said he'd removed lots of drywall-based wallpaper with the help of a squirt bottle.

One drywall refinisher (you see where we're going here) advised diluted fabric softener misted on would do the trick, but that it all had to come down. Another contractor said to just leave it, she could skim over it. And at the end of the project, our ad manager volunteered that she knew a woman who was great at removing wallpaper and was affordable to boot. Sigh.

Each house is different—none of the “soak it and it'll come right down” advice worked worth a crap. And each house is much the same: it's not really yours until you lavish time, money and hard work on it. That's one of the most important things we try to do in AR: show you good solutions other midcentury enthusiasts have found, talk realistically about their experiences and share resources that can help you out of your Does anyone make ... ? dilemma.

Like you, Cheyenne found that “ranch-appropriate” is still not on most house pros' radar. From her realtor to the home inspector and a long parade of contractors, the faux-bungalow big-box front door drew admiring praise for its solid look (it's hollow) and sheer newness. A three-pane “Grover” from Crestview Doors is now on her 2008 wish list, and we will continue to encourage manufacturers of all kinds of home products to embrace the midcentury aesthetic so we can all benefit from real choices.

From the myriad suggestions and tips we receive, to the proud, albeit blurry, “after” photos you send of your own ranches, it's apparent that your houses are much more than a roof, four walls and a cement slab. They reflect our nation's past, who we are today and what we hope for the future. These personal connections are what make this magazine worth doing. Most days.

Michelle Gringeri-Brown
Editor

modernwisdom



* There is a house in Houston that was designed in 1963 by architect/designer Robert Cohen for his own family. It is probably one of the best (or wildest, depending upon whom you ask) examples of midcentury modern or Googie architecture in our city, and it's going to be demolished in a very short amount of time.

The home itself has an almost Palm Springs feel, and includes a large, circular pavilion that makes up the main living room. It also has a boomerang-shaped pool in the back. It has been left to rot and has sustained serious water damage—to the point where several people who have been inside the house have been ill.

A homebuilder now owns the house and they seem committed to building a multi-story McMansion in a neighborhood of very interesting and large midcentury homes. This house is the centerpiece of that neighborhood, and few people really want to see it go.

Ben Hill

Houston, Texas

Ben recently sent this update: Demolition on the Cohen house in Houston started yesterday. While this is unfortunate, the past few weeks since I contacted you brought the house considerable publicity, and we've secured copies of the original drawings and a furniture plan. *Houston Chronicle* staffer Lisa Gray wrote the most extensive article to date on the house, and some excellent pictures were included.

(<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/headline/features/5298831.html>; http://www.chron.com/life/photogallery/The_dizzying_tale_of_the_Carousel_House.html)

I wanted to thank you for your interest in this house and its story. There are many other great examples of midcentury modern architecture in Houston that have been lovingly restored. Unfortunately this was not one of them.

* As a director of Manitoga, Inc., I want to thank you for your excellent piece spreading the word about Russel Wright (no. 16, winter 2007). Within just a few pages, you were able to provide a comprehensive review of the designer, his work and his legacy, and, with the help of Annie Wright's recollections, you conveyed some rare insights into his thought process and personality.

In the same issue, I was delighted to read "Atomic Aussie," about a new custom-built modernist home. Like the Zanettis, my wife and I recently built a home in Sedona, Ariz., inspired by Neutra's Kaufman House and furnished with midcentury vintage pieces, including an extensive collection of Russel Wright dinnerware, spun aluminum and Oceana wood pieces.

While we always enjoy reading about the preservation and restoration of distinctive 1950s homes, many of us modernists are trying to recapture the essence of those designs in new construction, and we would welcome more coverage along those lines in *Atomic Ranch*.

Gary Maurer

Chicago, Ill.

Gary and likeminded readers will enjoy the green new construction featured in "Delcambre Does Dallas," page 33. For those purists who are reaching for their keyboards, rest assured that AR is not turning into Dwelling in Big, Expensive Custom Homes Quarterly. There will always be a preponderance of original mid-century featured in our pages.

—ar editor

* I'm 82 years old and was one of those lucky people who received one of the Wright dinner settings for four. We enjoyed them for many years, but over time

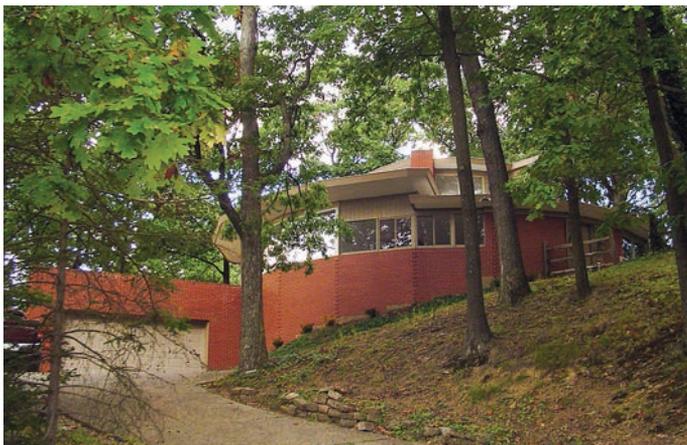
morewisdom

they disappeared. Along with my many cherished possessions, I would like to have a place setting for four to leave my children, along with my Eichler home; the color red will do nicely. Please let me, soon, be the first customer.

The article brought new life to my artistic soul.

Fran Karnes

Orange, Calif.



* We live in the north suburbs of Pittsburgh and bought a round Usonian house built in 1949 by Don Owens. The house is extremely modern in design: In-floor radiant heat, summer sun blocking eaves, even a place for an earth-planted tree in the living area!

The problem is that we are having no luck in finding information on the builder/architect. He designed an amazing group of houses off Cardiff Road in the north hills of Pittsburgh, and then built our house for himself. Can you suggest a way to research Mr. Owens and find out more about the history of our new home?

Andrew Adams & Mark Chambers

Pittsburgh, Penn.

The short answer to your question is to see what historical group covers your area and ask them if they have any info on Mr. Owens. I imagine you've done various online searches and have come up empty. If he was an AIA, you might check their site (aia.org) to see if they have any leads for you.

The National Trust's Preserving Resources from the

Recent Past includes general guidelines on how to research the history of a home; it's available on our website—see page 81. You're one step ahead of most people who don't know who designed or built their home, but our first advice is normally to go to your local building permit office and ask to see the records for your address. If you haven't done so, this might garner additional info that would lead to more details about Mr. Owens. And presumably with such an unusual design, there were likely articles on it in your local paper; check their archives.

—ar editor

* I was thrilled to see that Atomic Ranch made its way to Harvey Park (no. 15, fall 2007). It is probably one of Denver's best-kept secrets for midcentury modern homes at an affordable price. I knew it would only be a matter of time before word got out!

I am, however, writing to respond to the comment that the Cliff May houses in Harvey Park are in near-condemnation condition. I live in one of the 145 or so Mays in the neighborhood, and my wife and I love our house. Our original fence needs some work, but all in all, our house is in great shape! There are certainly a few houses here that need a lot of love, and many more that have been insensitively remodeled, but these houses are unique and would be a treasure to someone who appreciates what they are. Feel free to stop by sometime when you're in town!

Adam Stevens

Denver, Colo.

* I'm writing you because I woke up at 4:30 this morning with what I think is a fabulous idea: an Atomic Ranch CALENDAR! You've already created that lovely book and as I look for a new 2008 calendar among a sea of cat fancy, Dilbert and soft porn, I realize what I really want to see are some lovely midcentury modern homes inside and out. I would much rather look at that on my kitchen wall every day over the lame calendar my financial planner sends me every year. Friends, please make it go.

Anette Zielinski

Online

continued on page 16

even more wisdom

We receive various suggestions/pleas for collateral AR stuff, so we're looking into the economics of producing a few products. Stay tuned ...

—ar editor



* I am a big fan of your magazine; it has changed the way my husband and I think of our 1957 ranch house in the Hillsdale neighborhood of Portland. After looking everywhere for a door that would fit our house, we finally had one made and love it. We bought the light fixture from Remcraft, one of your advertisers, and the house numbers and doorbell from Atlas Homewares. You would think simple fixtures, hardware and doors like these would be easy to find, but as we found out, that is not true. Your magazine helped us immeasurably in finding sources and ideas.

Jill Fitzpatrick

Portland, Ore.

* For quite some time I have searched fruitlessly for any significant discussion of a house style of which I am enamored. In the 1950s and early '60s there was a fad for building ranch homes with a distinctively Asian or Hawaiian influence. There are still fine examples all over Southern California.

I remember being so proud of the Hawaiian Modern split-level my parents bought in 1963 in Arcadia, Calif.,

though my mother toned down the architectural accents during construction, which even at the age of 10, I felt was a grievous betrayal to the style. (Here's the original house elevation—as I like to call it, "Plan 322 from Outer Space.") This trend in suburban architecture coincided with the tiki trend, and one of our neighbors built a terrific tiki hut by his pool. Of course we also had this style manifested in restaurants of the era.

By the 1970s the fad was clearly over and in the following decades people very often remodeled these homes in haphazard ways to make them more "up to date." This left some neighborhoods with horrible eyesores, such as the ranch house with the clearly Polynesian-inspired roof and diamond-paned windows, arched-glass panel garage doors and a variety of other offenses. I still see these mutant creations of Oriental-Cape-Cod-Spanish-Tudor "architecture," but now and then I discover rare gems of near-perfectly preserved homes of this style.

I have no idea how many others share my passion for this perhaps politically incorrect variation of the mid-century ranch, but I would be delighted to know if there are



any articles or books on this style. It would, I think, make a great topic for an article in Atomic Ranch some day.

Dale DiStefano, M.D.

Newport Beach, Calif.

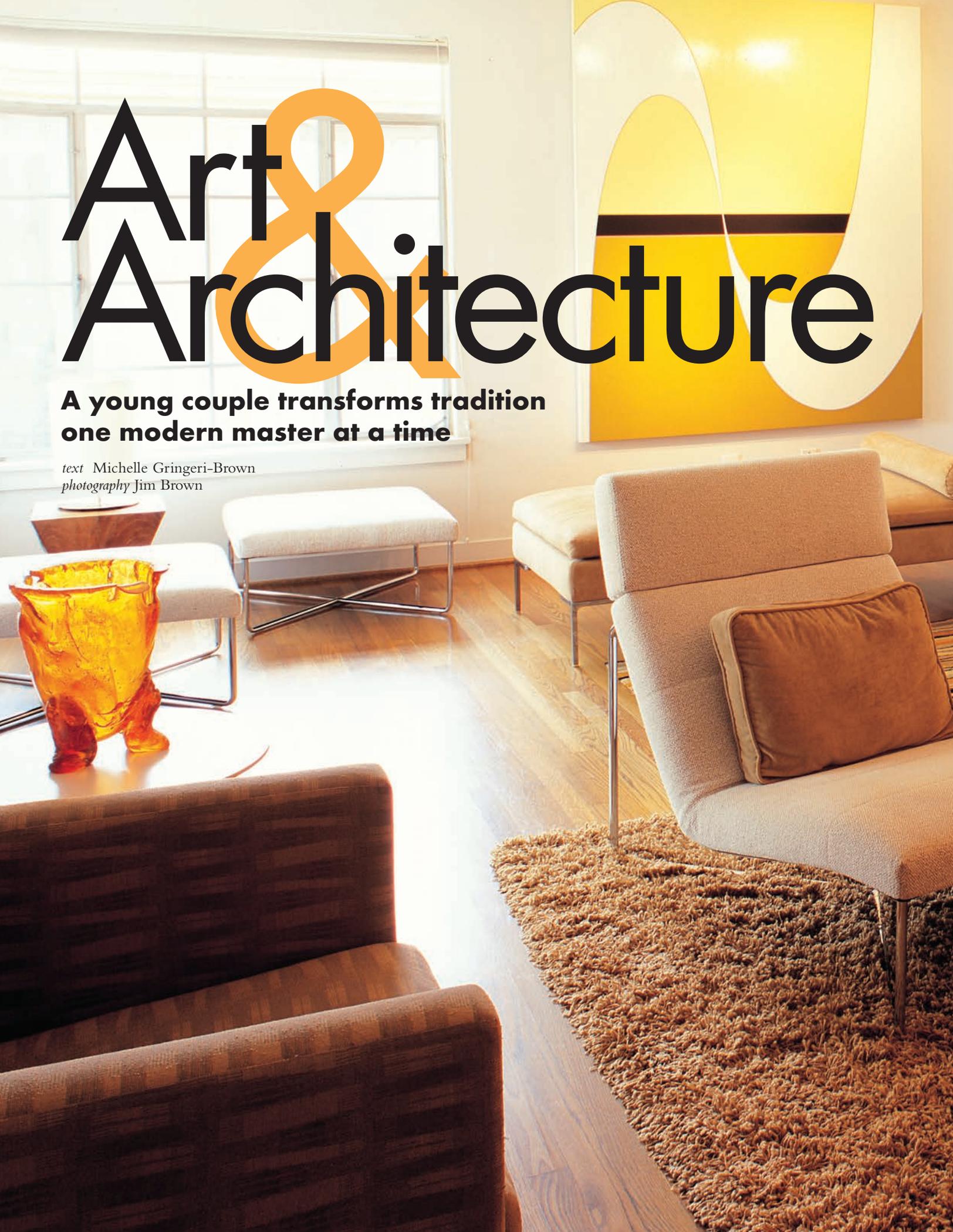
While the tiki article on page 40 doesn't focus on these homes, you'll undoubtedly enjoy it, as well as Sven Kristen's Tiki Modern book, which covers numerous commercial buildings in your favorite style.

—ar editor



Write us at editor@atomic-ranch.com or send a note to Atomic Ranch, Publishing Office, 3125 SE Rex St., Portland, OR 97202. We'll print the good ones.

Art & Architecture

A modern living room with a large abstract painting on the wall, a white armchair with a brown pillow, a brown sofa, and a coffee table with a large orange vase.

**A young couple transforms tradition
one modern master at a time**

text Michelle Gringeri-Brown

photography Jim Brown



It started innocently enough. “One night we unscrewed the threshold to the kitchen and tugged at it until we saw what we thought was wood,” says Karen Lantz, a Houston-based architect. “We pulled some more and confirmed there was oak flooring underneath three layers of vinyl.”

So began a “while-we’re-at-it” whole-house renovation of a 1954 traditional brick ranch in Braes Heights, 15 minutes from downtown Houston. As she explained to her husband, Andy Farkas, if they were bringing

Previous spread and this page: Immediately inside the front door is the living room, with its modern icons. The chrome-leg chairs and the ottomans in the corner are from Minotti, and the coffee table is a Noguchi reissue. An Eames Time Life Building walnut stool sits under a charcoal by Texas artist Bob Russell, and a Gaetano Pesce vase is displayed on a George Nelson table from Herman Miller. In the left foreground (page 18) is a Knoll Pfister Petite Lounge chair. The shag area rug is stain-resistant wall-to-wall carpeting, cut and bound for \$500 (also seen on table of contents with similarly hued Scarlet). In the dining room, reissued Jens Risom chairs bookend the yard sale buffet.

Opposite: Russell Crotty's giant Lucite globe makes you pour over its inked phrases—"Live Life to the Fullest," "Old World Charm," "Extravagant Master Suite." What's that about a ranch?



the floor back, that would be the time to change the layout of the kitchen and repair damage from dishwasher leaks.

"It snowballed from there. I told Andy if I cleaned up the floor plan of the house we could have a bigger bathroom, more storage space and correct a bad circulation plan," she explains. Remodeling the kitchen, guest bath, master bath and home theater followed. The couple also replumbed with PVC to fix failing pipe connections (Houston's gumbo-like clay soil makes for lots of foundation movement) and installed a radiant shield in the attic to help with solar gain issues. Oh, and they replaced the dry-wall in the entire house to add insulation.

"I know it sounds crazy and it was a huge mess, but we were able to get grounded wires to the home theater equipment and office," Lantz drawls with a laugh. "It also allowed us to get smooth walls—much better than 50-year-

old Sheetrock with bumps and cracks that are difficult to hide. Smooth walls were important to hang our art on."

Young Collectors

The art Lantz refers to includes works from Aaron Parazette, Bob Russell, Janaki Lennie and Russell Crotty, all now gracing their modest home. The couple collects fine art, decorative objects and pedigreed furnishings, such as the corrugated cardboard side tables and bentwood chairs from Frank Gehry, Droog light fixtures and a footed—literally—vase by Gaetano Pesce.

At 1,500 square feet, the couple felt the size of the house allowed them to invest in furnishings and art instead of having to fill up the rooms of a larger home. "We have midcentury pieces and we have people who are inspired by midcentury, like Jonathan Adler," Lantz



In the master bedroom, a Sengo bed and nightstands from Capellini are accessorized by a vintage capiz-shell lamp, a ceiling fan from Modern Fan Co. (off camera), wall sconces from IKEA and a Philippe Staark La Maire chair. On the left, artwork by Janaki Lennie and a bit of Texas bling—a perfume bottle collection on a Nakashima Studios vanity. “I do like a little bit of sparkle,” Lantz admits.



says. In front of the living room's vintage custom mohair sofa sits a Noguchi reissued glass-top coffee table. "You've got to have the Noguchi; it's a classic. We have some old things but I like new ones because they're not scratched," she says.

Farkas, a dentist who practices in a fab modernist building designed by his wife, is the one most drawn to the art; he does research on an artist and brings purchase ideas to Lantz. A globe by Crotty, which was lent several years ago to a local museum, hangs like a giant moon over their vintage sofa. Another piece, a large canvas by Parazette titled "Black Sea," barely fits on their smidge-over-8' walls. "When we first began collecting, it was more about something looking good in a particular space," he says. "Now it's, 'This is a great piece; we're going to make it fit.'"

Their advice to other would-be art patrons: join a young collectors' group at a museum, attend art openings at galleries and "buy what you like because you are going to look at it every day. Follow your heart first, but if you are spending a lot, you need to know what you are getting, so educate yourself about the artist and the art," Farkas counsels.



In the guest bathroom, a Kohler Jacuzzi tub, limestone floors and the world's simplest vanity lights: porcelain sockets outfitted with oversize silver-dipped light bulbs. The same Home Depot cabinets were used in the kitchen and the two remodeled baths, and the Mexican mosaic tile is consistent as well.

A tiny space, the master bath houses a Kohler toilet (off camera to the right), IKEA lights over a Home Depot cabinet topped with travertine marble, and a ceiling-hung curtain from a medical supply house that divides the open shower from the rest of the glass mosaic-tiled room.



Clockwise from above: The view from the Frigidaire "Gallery Series" stove and Vent-a-Hood exhaust fan includes a graphic painting by Aaron Parazette. Three cardboard nesting tables designed by Frank Gehry in the '70s hold two trays, a gray one by Jonathan Adler and a Fornacetti "Eye"; the sculpture on the largest table is "Estrella del Chaos" by Saulo Moreno. In the dining room, details of a lamp and salt and pepper shakers by Jonathan Adler. A B&B Italia daybed as you step into the house.



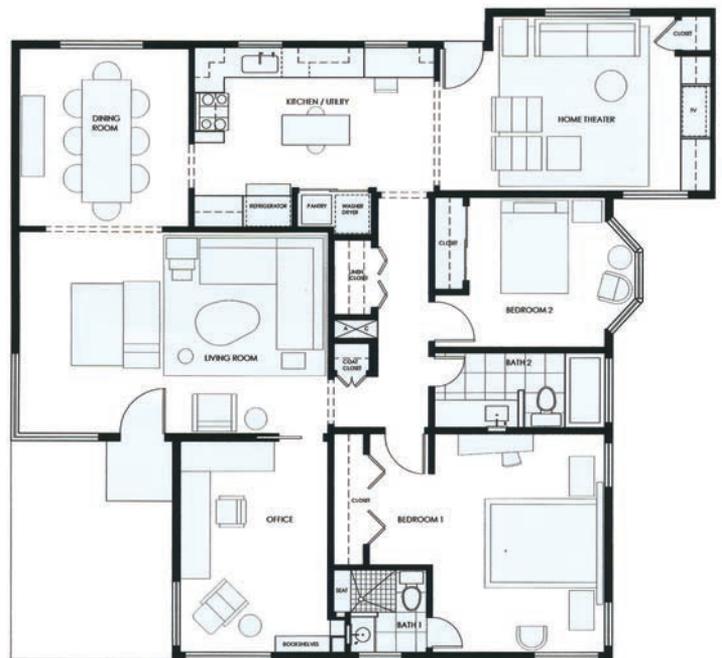
Full of Potential

The house had been a rental property and looked the part. Buying during a red-hot sellers' market, the couple made an offer based on reviewing the listing's size and location on the county records—without actually seeing inside. While they were waiting to hear if it was accepted, the couple went to check out the house first-hand. Dirty, with shag carpeting, vinyl flooring and moldy bathrooms was the initial impression.

"I remember coming in and thinking how gross it was," Lantz says. "Our realtor told us, 'You should not put any money into this house; it's a definite tear-down.'"

"But there was a great oak tree in the front and a pecan tree in the back. These houses were built well compared to today's standards, so other than foundation or sewage problems, there's not a lot that can be wrong. They're also nondescript in a lot of ways—they were just suburban housing."

Because of its location near downtown, McMansionization is going on in the neighborhood, and Lantz and Farkas decided that the remodel didn't need to



be slavishly purist. They opted to keep some elements—the exterior facade, the hardwood floors and aluminum casement windows—and chose contemporary materials for most finishes and fixtures.

Down and Dirty

The couple was hands-on, with Farkas demo-ing the kitchen down to the studs, hanging fresh drywall and installing new toilets. Lantz textured the ceiling and they both painted. A tedious but worthwhile project was cleaning up the original aluminum casement windows with steel wool. They also took a crack at refinishing the wood floors, but ultimately called in a pro.

“We needed a new roof and had three previous layers to take off,” Lantz explains, noting that the home’s original wood shingles have since been banned in Houston. “Since houses from the ’50s are typically inefficient when it comes to windows, insulation and roofing, we used plywood with a reflective foil radiant barrier on the inside of the attic to cut down on heat gain in the house. Increasing energy efficiency in the roof makes more sense than ripping out the windows and losing the look of the exterior. Still, the house is not as efficient as it could be with new windows.”

Budget was important, as Lantz was still in architecture school and Farkas was building his practice. They focused on leavening the affordable—stock cabinets and Kohler fixtures from The Home Depot, floor model Frigidaire appliances, IKEA lights—with the designy—Droog pendant lamps, a Dornbracht faucet and glass mosaic tile.

“Just the art and furniture that we can take with us one day were pricey,” Lantz says. “Even the door hardware, which could have easily been a splurge, was in stock at The Home Depot and the Jacuzzi tub was a scratch-’n’-dent. The marble and granite countertops were made from scrap goods. These are the secrets and tips you pay a designer for. Renovations can easily get out of control

and over budget when there are too many splurges.”

A quick update as we went to press revealed that the couple recently swapped their living and dining spaces. “Now we can have dinner in the ‘art room’,” Lantz writes. “It’s really nice and makes me want to tell everyone to reconsider what room uses are supposed to be (in terms of location and size), and experiment making them your own.”

Like any good architect, she hungers to design their own home. “Step 1 for an architect: renovate existing house. Step 2: build before you get too many clients and you don’t have time. I am in the beginning of step 2.” 🏠

More details on the Lantz-Farkas house are in *Atomic Ranch: Design Ideas for Stylish Ranch Homes*; see page 81 or atomic-ranch.com.

Resources page 95





"I think I made the kitchen better than it would have been in the '50s with customized materials," says architect Karen Lantz. Her choices include stock cabinets, granite countertops, glass mosaic tile backsplashes, a Frigidaire refrigerator and refinished red oak floors. Jamaica stools from Knoll offer seating at the Pottery Barn worktable and, overhead, two Droog pendants add style. In the adjoining dining room, Frank Gehry chairs at a B&B Italia table and family silver. The grass cloth-covered walls help mask an ever-returning crack courtesy of Houston's gumbo-like clay soil.

home page



Nashville, Tenn.

I didn't know how much I loved ranches until I picked up your magazine. We recently bought a 1955 brick ranch in Nashville. Many of the houses in my neighborhood are in need of some TLC. Our house was remodeled nicely before we purchased it, and my wife and I took it to the next level once we moved in. Thanks for all you do!

Jason & Martina Ahlbrandt

Atlanta, Ga.

My 1961 split-level is in the Northcrest neighborhood of Atlanta, where there are 200-plus "California Modern" homes built from 1958 to 1969. Since buying it in 2006, I replaced more than 30 rotted roof boards, installed boomerang laminate counters in the kitchen and wet bar, refinished the hardwood floors, put in bamboo floors in the family room and painted in midcentury hues inside and out. The latest addition to all my collectibles is "Marilyn," a 1963 turquoise Mercury Monterey.

Doug Thornburg

Vancouver, Wash.

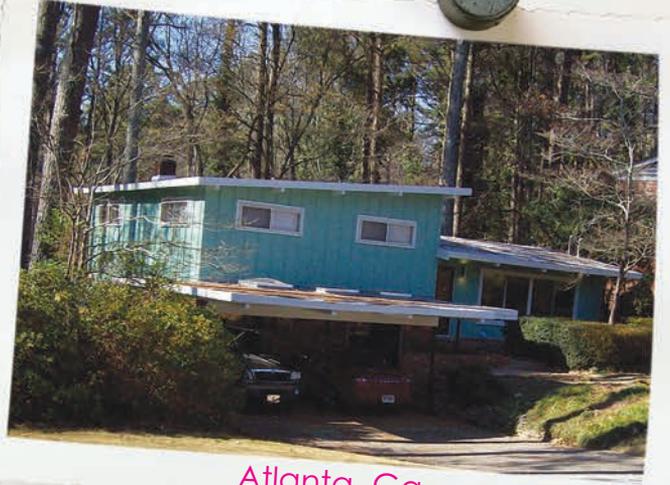
The Southcliff neighborhood appealed to me because all the homes are on large lots and each is unique—not cookie cutter like many of the newer ones. I love that my 1957 home has lots of floor-to-ceiling windows to allow western exposure. This is especially helpful in the wintertime, when the house is dark and outside is so gray. I also like the daylight basement with courtyard and entrance for summertime entertaining, the large kitchen and early version of the family room, or "kitchen-keeping room," as the blueprints label it.

Will Bell

Put your home on our fridge; send in a high-resolution photo or sharp snapshot and a couple of sentences about your cool pad for our next issues. See contacts page 9.



Nashville, Tenn.



Atlanta, Ga.



P

H



Vancouver, Wash.

Delcambre does Dallas



An architect riffs on the midcentury theme with new, (relatively) affordable green construction

text Michelle Gringeri-Brown
photography Jonathan Delcambre



“Our house was inspired by the Eichler series of homes—in particular A. Quincy Jones—with floor-to-ceiling glass, exposed wood beams and public spaces circulating around a courtyard,” says Dallas architect Jonathan Delcambre. His “468” house isn’t like William Krisel’s updated midcentury designs for Maxx Livingstone, nor a developer’s Tuscan two-story tarted up with a slanted roof and relabeled “Retro.”

“It is more of a take on midcentury modernism in a contemporary style,” he explains. “By re-creating a true midcentury we wouldn’t be any different than the big builders putting up these monstrous McMansions, some of which replicate Mediterranean, Cape Cod or Georgian styles, etc. Rather, the influences reflect on the ’50s neighborhood, along with newer building technologies.”

The first of three planned infill homes in Old Lake Highlands, northeast of downtown Dallas, Delcambre’s family home is a 2,400-square-foot design built for \$125 a square foot, plus the land. Lauded by the U.S. Green

Building Council, the project used structurally insulated panels (SIPs), a passive solar design, low-E windows, a TPO (thermoplastic polyolefin membrane, if you must know) roof and more. The 32-year-old says other architect-designed non-green modern homes in Dallas are going up for between \$150 and \$300 a square foot.

Midcentury Goes Modern

The 468 house sits on a never developed 80’ x 90’ lot in a neighborhood of about 1,700 brick ranches; lots on either side will hold similar green homes. Close by is the Dallas Arboretum and NorthPark Center, a shopping mall designed by Phillip Johnson in 1965. Young couples like Delcambre and his wife, D’Lee, who have two young daughters, are buying into the area as original and second owners move on.

Delcambre wanted to keep his new design in scale with the original single-story homes and chose 16” emperor brick—similar to the style favored by Frank Lloyd Wright—



“ It is more of a take on midcentury modernism

The fireplace is a gas direct-vent model, keeping the line of sight to the kitchen much more open than with a masonry chimney. In the view, right, from the entry corridor, the low wall of emperor brick brings exterior finishes inside, and the large built-in cabinet opposite the couch houses the family's media equipment. "The drawers at the bottom function as toy chests for the kids," Jonathan Delcambre explains. "You've got to keep the house orderly somehow."



in a **contemporary style**”



concrete, cedar siding, exposed beams and lots of windows. Surprisingly, he specified vinyl-clad EnviroShield windows, in part for their affordability, as well as their noise-deadening qualities, as the site fronts a semi-busy road and a middle school is across the street. The SIP panels do their part with this as well, providing a high level of sound insulation, the architect says.

“The first SIP home was built in 1952,” he notes. “In fact, some of the early Eichlers being restored today are using SIPs to achieve LEED certification.”

Aesthetically Speaking

Like many midcentury homes, 468 has a cement slab floor and an open floor plan, with the living, dining and kitchen sharing one space. The master bedroom has two shoe closets, and a large shared clothes closet is located inside the master bath. Two children’s bedrooms share a Jack-’n’-Jill bath on the opposite end of the home, and

they and the master suite can be closed off from the public part of the house when the Delcambres entertain. A half bath was put next to the study/office for guests’ use, and clear maple cabinetry was designed for the baths, kitchen and living room.

The office, master bath and living and dining room have clerestory windows, while the bedrooms have casements. The living room also has awning windows above the large built-in that houses the media equipment and at the bottom of the three fixed windows near the front door. “The vinyl windows were considerably cheaper than aluminum and perform much better. This was one of the ways we were able to get the house in on budget,” Delcambre explains.

Their furniture is “a mixture of classic midcentury modern pieces and ideas combined with today’s way of living and construction technologies. For example, Wassily chairs, Eames furniture and IKEA tables and chairs,” he

“

the influences reflect on the '50s neighborhood,



Above; D'Lee Delcambre and daughter Ella hang out in the construction zone with a typical original neighborhood house glimpsed in the background. You can see the sandwich nature of the SIP panels lying on the ground awaiting erection.

Dupont Tyvek was applied on top of the SIPs to provide a barrier against water and air infiltration. The roof panels are 8" thick to allow for greater structural spans supported by Glulam beams, as well as more insulation.

says. The living room had a Design Within Reach couch and a coffee table and bent plywood chairs and ottomans from IKEA.

Tech Talk

The house is sited to maximize daylight and minimize the necessity for artificial light. The dimmable lighting is recessed compact fluorescent throughout, with low voltage halogen in the kitchen.

The SIP wall panels are rated R15 and the 8"-thick roof panels provide an R30 insulation value. Other green aspects include a 3.5 ton electric heat pump, an HVAC duct system that runs inside of insulated space, a sealed direct-vent gas fireplace and an energy recovery ventilator to bring in outside air and guard against mold in the tightly sealed house. Low-flow toilets, Energy Star-rated appliances, two tankless water heaters, carpet pads made from recycled fibers in the bedrooms, low VOC paints and stains, and native plantings round out the package.

"We have low-maintenance landscaping, such as yaupon hollies, fountain grass, cedar elms and Southern wax myrtle," Delcambre explains. "And we used 1/2" crushed gravel for the driveway, the front and back courtyards and the sides of the house, which allows water to percolate into the soil and avoids excess runoff."

along with newer building technologies”



Delcambre's initial green home at the Kessler Woods development is a 2,400-square-foot story-and-a-half, seen here in the final stages of construction, as well as on the table of contents. With two bedrooms, a media room and a study, its footprint embraces his smaller-is-better ethos.

What's What

Energy Star

Energy Star is a government-backed program that requires homes to be at least 15% more energy efficient than houses built to the 2004 residential code, Jonathan Delcambre explains.

SIPs

Structurally insulated panels are made of expanded polystyrene sandwiched between oriented strand board. The panels, which can be as large as 8' x 24', are prefabricated in a shop, numbered and shipped to a site on a flatbed truck. The envelope of the house goes up in a matter of days and due to the material's insulating qualities, heating and cooling cost are less. "Building with SIPs generally costs about the same as wood framing when you factor in the labor savings from a shorter construction time, plus you have less job-site waste," Delcambre explains.

TPO

Thermoplastic polyolefin membrane is an environmentally green product that exceeds EPA and Department of Energy requirements. Delcambre says, "It helps mediate the 'urban heat island effect' due to its high reflectivity, which dramatically reduces solar gain through the roof."

GREEN SITES

buildinggreen.com
greenbuilding.com
greenhomebuilding.com
greenhomeguide.org
usgbc.org

Modern Enclave

The U.S. Building Council featured the 468 house as one of the 25 greenest buildings—commercial or residential—in north Texas, and it is ranked in the top 10 percentile of Energy Star Certified homes. As a result, the architect was asked to design two custom homes in Kessler Woods, a Dallas development inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright and Joseph Eichler, according to their website (kesslerwoodscourt.com).

"Kessler Woods will be comprised of 30 homes; some are occupied and others are in various stages of construction," Delcambre explains. "The price point for these homes ranges from about \$650,000 to \$1,600,000. One of the houses I designed in this development is just finishing construction and will be toward the lower end of the price point spectrum. It is similar to 468 in that it is constructed of SIPs, uses green practices and will deliver high performance. Other than mine, as far as I know there are no other green homes in the complex. Most of the others are built with steel and wood framing and are extremely expensive."

The architect says that modern homes are popping up all over Dallas. "I have met with five clients since the new year who are interested in building a green, high performance modern home. They all want the mid-century modern characteristics incorporated into a new home. We're trying to prove that green can be obtainable and affordable, and that good design can minimize our footprint on the earth with smaller homes instead of huge mansions." 🏠

Resources page 95

the of **Bad Boy** **Bad Taste**

text Naomi Alper

photography Sven Kirsten

Without even entering Sven Kirsten's Los Angeles home, it's apparent that it is the house of a collector. A wide variety of tiki statues mark the visitor's climb up the stairs to his hilltop home. On the front lawn an 8 1/2'-tall moai*, carved out of a tree that had died on the spot, stares broodingly at the view of Silver Lake Reservoir, Griffith Observatory and the Hollywood sign. Directly ahead, on the opposite hill, is the curved roofline of Silvertop, one of architect John Lautner's most well-known homes. An impressive sight for both man and moai.

Kirsten's house is no Silvertop; it is a low-slung, ramshackle affair that was built in 1908 as a weekend retreat—back when the area was still mostly rural—and added onto haphazardly over the decades. There's a peaceful, settled-in feel to the place and, with its wide porch festooned with fishing float lamps, nautical ephemera and more tikis, one has the sense of having reached a beach-comber's shack marooned in a sea of urban sprawl.

Inside is not just any tiki collection, it's a tiki explosion, a museum, a repository of all things Polynesian pop. Every available surface in

*Moai: monolithic human figures, i.e. Easter Island's carved heads



The tall tiki on the left is one of Witco's "Contemporary Idols," and an authentic Asmat shield from Papua New Guinea sits to the right of the tiki-revival smoking table with lamp. In the background are original wahine paintings by Moritz R., cover artist of *The Book of Tiki*.

Had he found a book about tiki,



Witco "primitic** male and female" carvings on burlap, circa 1966, were used by Roy Orbison as den decor. The vintage swag lamp is from eBay, and the rattan table holds a red ceramic Bosko tiki lamp (left) and the popular black Moai lamp by Dave Krys. Right: "Interlude," metal on a Witco wood base, dates to 1964. Witco produced more than 30 different pieces in this very popular Alberto Giacometti-inspired genre of decorative art, and a good percentage of their wall art also incorporated rough-cut metal.

every room is inhabited by the detritus of the brief but intense tropical craze that swept the United States in the 1950s and '60s: mugs, lamps, books, artwork, carvings—even the bathroom is chockablock with items. Authentic primitive artwork rubs shoulders with figures from Disneyland's Enchanted Tiki Room. Rare vintage tiki mugs happily commingle with colorful creations by modern ceramicists. It's a multilayered riot of objects that somehow doesn't overwhelm the space. But the eye can't seem to settle for more than a moment in any one place, and conversation is often interrupted with questions about a particular item.

None of this is surprising, really, because Sven Kirsten is not just a tiki collector. He is *the* tiki collector, a man whose singular obsession has resulted in two books: *The Book of Tiki*—often attributed as the catalyst for the current tiki revival—and the recently published *Tiki Modern*.



**Primitic: Witco's term combining (perhaps) "primitive" and "modernistic."

things might have ended there.

What is surprising is that the 52-year-old transplant from Hamburg, Germany, does not consider himself a collector. "I'm a visual junkie," he explains. "I don't need to possess the object; visual ownership is satisfying enough for me." He gestures to the floor-to-ceiling bookcases in his living room, crammed with photo books on a wide array of subjects, from Japanese sword fighting to Google architecture to 1960s underground comics.

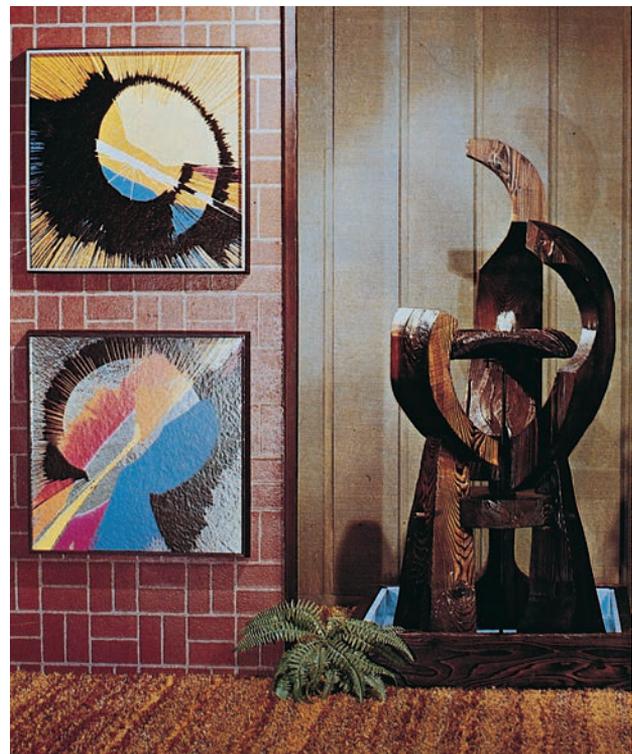
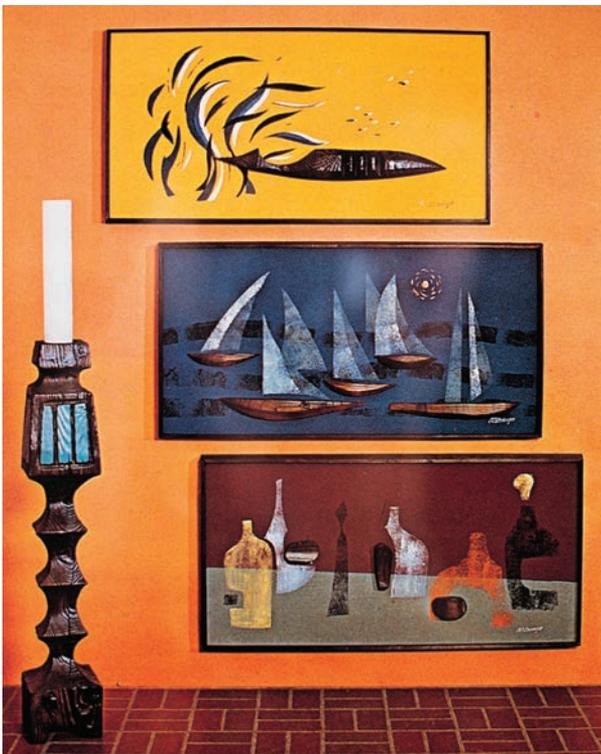
Had he found a book about tiki, things might have ended there. "When I started coming across these mugs in the late 1980s," he explains, "the image of tiki, as well as the terminology, had been forgotten in America. It became obvious that it was so rarified a subject it had not yet been recognized or dealt with in any formal way. I needed to collect these things to save them for posterity." This altruistic endeavor resulted in *The Book of Tiki*, which firmly put Polynesian pop back on the map.

The "Tahiti bar," (1972) was the most elaborate of Witco's many tiki bar designs, decorated here with vintage liquor bottles and cocktail mugs, some from Havana and Spain. The Disney Tiki Drummer and parrot, "Jose," are original scale replicas by Kevin Kidney; on the right sits a vintage Tapa hut lamp.



Modernism cannot exist in its own vacuum; it has to

Clockwise from below: A sketch for a pool house using Witco decorative pieces. An untitled tabletop statue from Westenhaver's woodshop, late-1970s. The Witco catalog ensemble of an "Apollo Eleven" fountain and spin-art paintings dates to 1971; the company's fountains included tiki, modern and conquistador styles. "Fish," "Sails," and "Decor Bottles"—painted fabric with wood accents—are examples of how Witco married their rustic wood with modernist painted shapes to produce contemporary decor for the masses. While the graphics are still rooted in late-'50s modernism, the colors are decidedly late '60s. The signature, "Wilrongo," is a combination of the first syllables of the three creative Witco team members: William Westenhaver, Ron Hovde and Gordon Robb.



acknowledge its roots to give itself context.



William Westenhaver, whose cousin, Bob Post, founded Witco (Western International Trading Company), was an Art Center College of Design-trained graphic designer. His modernist education is seen here in this print.

Now, seven years later, writing in between his job as a director of photography for film and television, Sven has produced *Tiki Modern*. Larger and more image-laden than his first book, *Tiki Modern* examines the relationship between modernism and primitivism in midcentury culture—a relationship that eventually spawned Witco, a home decor company that borrowed heavily from both sides of its parentage and is best remembered for providing the furnishings in Elvis' Jungle Room.

Like The King, Kirsten's house is well appointed with Witco decor. His favorite piece is the bar that graces his entryway. Purchased online from the original owner (who bought it from the same Memphis store that Elvis patronized), it is one of only 15 bars ever created in this design. "It is the only one I have ever seen outside of the Witco catalog," he notes.

Although generally well received, *Tiki Modern* has been

Sven Kirsten's Tiki Top 10 8:

Favorite authentic cocktail bar:

The Tiki Ti on Sunset Blvd.

Favorite original midcentury tiki temple:

The Mai Kai in Fort Lauderdale

Favorite repository of Witco art in situ:

The Hala Kahiki in River Grove near Chicago

Favorite lost tiki haven lucky enough to document before it was razed:

The Kahiki in Columbus, Ohio

Favorite original tiki carving supplier still in business:

Oceanic Arts in Whittier, Calif.

Favorite modernist tiki illustrator:

Stanley Stubenberg, whose 1957 menu art was used for the cover of *Tiki Modern*

Favorite vintage cocktail history bible:

Sippin' Safari by Jeff "Beachbum" Berry

Favorite soon-to-be-gone midcentury tiki mural:

Beverly Hills Trader Vic's on the Santa Monica Blvd side



Buy
Jeff Berry's drink book:
see page 80 or
[atomic-ranch.com!](http://atomic-ranch.com)

decried by some for its heavy focus on Witco, whose cumbersome burnt-wood offerings were described by one critic as " 'Shaft' chic." But Kirsten defends his decision: "Witco has its own place in the history of tiki style and midcentury modernism, which is why it deserves as much attention as I'm giving it. It is a clear result of the art history that precedes it, which is described in the first half of the book."

But how can something generally considered tasteless kitsch be considered modern? "First, we need to define 'modern,'" Kirsten says. "There is true modernism, the 'form follows function' kind, and then there is what post-war America thought of as modern: the big tailfins on cars and A-frame architecture. The average middle-class Joe wanted Googie, not the boxy structures that were true modernism. It was in this climate that Witco was created.

"On one hand it's way too ornamental and kitschy to be

Kirsten's house is well appointed with Witco decor.



Beginning in the late '60s, Witco furniture ensembles became more and more elaborate, including not only bar sets, but also complete living room and bedroom suites. Above the 1970 "Voyager Sofa," we see the Witco "Globe," one of their most popular designs then and now. Left of it hangs "Lady of the Orient" by Vladimir Tretchikoff, and the table lamp is by Oceanic Arts. Kirsten's living room fireplace mantel sports a row of mostly vintage American-made tiki figures. The black lawn idols on the hearth are freeform creations from the 1970s loosely based on Polynesian ancestor art.



modern; on the other, because it was mass produced it had to be simple and primitic and, yes, that *is* modern. Witco's best pieces have a touch of Le Corbusier's brutalist quality, and some of Paul Evans' crazy textures."

Apparently interior decorators of that era agreed. In the newest book there is a contemporary photo of Witco furniture happily co-existing with higher-end pieces in a Lautner-designed house. "This is how people lived. Modernism cannot exist in its own vacuum; it has to acknowledge its roots to give itself context," Kirsten contends.

Despite his obvious love for the subject, the author cheerfully concedes that Witco furniture is not for everyone, particularly those with refined tastes—of which he is definitely not one. "I'm very critical of the non-differentiating appreciation of everything midcentury modern. There's a lot of boring and sterile stuff out there.

This need to strip down everything to its basics is conceptually interesting but emotionally lacking.

"By connecting tiki with its modern roots and by putting Witco on a pedestal, I'm trying to show people how completely subjective judgments on good and bad taste are," he says. "Bad taste can be much more interesting than what I call the 'consensus of good taste.' Too much good taste puts me to sleep; bad taste creates a reaction and makes me think."

Sitting in his comfortable home surrounded by what was once perceived as the epitome of bad taste, it's easy to see his point. 

Naomi Alper is Sven Kirsten's indulgent other half and proprietress of 8 Ball, a clothing and gift store located in Burbank, Calif.

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Lofty A-Frame:

One Man's Nirvana

“I bought the most expensive house in the neighborhood, which is the biggest real estate no-no, but that didn’t matter to me,” says Peter Blank, a Realtor with Mile Hi Modern. The house in question is a 1956 A-frame built by H.B. Wolff, one of only five such designs among the 100 or so Modernist residences in the Lynwood neighborhood of Denver.

“I’ve always been a loft guy. I wasn’t really looking for a house and I don’t like yard work, but now I’m into bamboo and water features—a total 180° change from where I was two years ago,” the 50-something bachelor says. “This neighborhood is five minutes from downtown and the neighbors are artsy, so it wasn’t like I was moving to suburbia.”

The 1,630-square-foot residence had been altered by a previous owner—the original carport is now an entry hall and an office, and the garage is a later add-on as well. Blank took that idea further and pushed out one wall of the A-frame section, adding square footage to his living room and kitchen. It gives him a striking, in-your-face space that’s definitely not meant for the toddler crowd.

There’s a small table for two in the kitchen, but no dining table in the house. That’s intentional, as he prefers to have sit-down dinners outside and keeps his indoor entertaining limited to cocktail parties or drinks downstairs at the intimate basement bar. Between the ballsy wood support beams and cement footings in the living room, the code-busting

text Bromley Davenport

photography Jim Brown



Formerly a lattice-topped patio before it was enclosed, this part of the living room displays two sugarcane grinders, an amethyst specimen and the new cherry wood wall, which is ceiling height here and a pony wall in the peak of the A-frame.



stair handrail, the original art, the wood sculptures and the pristine surfaces—including a cherry wall that took a month to stain—it's likely there won't be too many sippy cups cluttering his coffee table.

"I took my time choosing each panel; I wanted the wall to have almost a wood mosaic feel," Blank explains about the living room's cherry pony wall. "The corners were particularly challenging: two pieces meeting at the corners wasn't a very clean look, so I ended up creating a corner piece that finishes it off. This is not your father's wood paneling!"

A similar attention to detail was brought to the green accent walls in the remodeled kitchen, which were added when white proved too stark. Eight different glazes over a chartreuse base tested his painter's stamina and patience. "People might argue that some of what I've done isn't good for resale, but I chose to do this for my own personal



The A-frame section is a striking, in-your-face space

Left: The homeowner is still changing out various bastard-colonial elements, like the entry door with its sidelights. This area was once a carport and the flat-roof garage is an add-on as well. The distinctive mortar on the chimney and front facade oozes out between the bricks.

Below: Once you step up into the living room from the entry hall, this is the view that greets you. The white beams on the left mark the newly annexed area, and a low wall offers definition and a place to display the rustic remains of a fishing boat. The red chaise is from Mitchell Gold and the abstract on the wall behind it is by Jeff Bertoncino.



Blank has plenty to dabble with on the 10,000-square-foot lot.





enjoyment. The next person will probably paint the kitchen walls white again, but while I'm here I want to enjoy it," he explains.

For a guy who doesn't like yard work, Blank has plenty to dabble with on the 10,000-square-foot, doublewide lot. He inherited a wonderful chartreuse honey locust tree that's visible through the living room windows, and clumps of aspens and a large Russian olive near the backyard water feature. He brought in moss rock and river rock and created swales and berms of low-maintenance plantings—junipers, grasses, vinca—and confines blooms to a few pots on the patios.

Blank also removed part of the existing cement patio and installed a rusting steel water feature in that space, as well as designing a pergola that his contractor fabricated. Its angled supports and random-length cross pieces tie in with the interior A-frame aesthetic.

The home is undeniably individualistic. "I wanted a clean, modern look, yet a little retro in the kitchen—though I'm not a kitschy guy," he says. Both baths had

The patios were pre-existing, but Blank added the pergola and water feature. By repeating elements—steel I-beams for the fountain, metal plates anchoring and joining the patio cover, wood bridges—he created a cohesive design. The groups of aspens and low-care groundcovers keep the large yard from overwhelming his weekends.



The large master bedroom has a West Elm storage unit and an all-white en suite bath (off camera). The living room combines intimacy—a seating group with a cozy fireplace and a dark accent wall—with the wide-open spaces of the A-frame roofline and gallery area (page 51). Opposite: The seller was nearly done with a remodel when Blank bought the house. He would have chosen a different approach, with dark wood in the office, but has made do with FLOR carpet on the laminate flooring and a custom-designed desk.

Interior Design Tips from Peter Blank

Low Ceilings: “For today’s sensibilities, modest midcentury houses don’t have the high ceilings that a lot of people want. So the question is, How do you make eight-foot ceilings play to your advantage?” Blank asks rhetorically. His advice: Paint tongue-and-groove ceilings a lighter color to lift your eye up, or make the ceilings and walls the same color. You can also draw attention with an interesting wall treatment. “In one house we did a slate partition wall and it brought your eye up and made such an impact.”

Kitchens: “There are so many houses that don’t have slab granite in the kitchen that are very cool if done correctly. Look at what you have with a new eye: maybe the vintage appliances are great and still functional but the room needs new cabinetry, or the cabinets are sound but the appliances don’t work.” He urges new buyers to “identify the original elements of your house and see what’s worth saving that will make your kitchen stand out from every other stainless steel-and-granite remodel.”

Scale: “Big, heavy furniture in a small house of 1,000 square feet is not going to work, but if you do platform beds, low seating and ‘50s- and ‘60s-style furniture, those work exceptionally well. You have to be more of a minimalist, but that furniture was made for these types of environments.”



The view from the kitchen door shows the stairs down to the basement and a hallway leading to the office with a black and white painting by Denver artist Peter Illig.



Opposite: Home Depot cabinets and hardware and a microwave from Target kept the kitchen budget in hand. Peter Blank chose a Thermador stove and hood and GE Profile refrigerator but would eventually like to pop for a glass-door refrigerator. A custom cherry TV stand in the breakfast area ties in with the paneling on the other side of the kitchen wall. The Design Within Reach cafe table has been fitted with a custom cherry top.



been remodeled when he bought it, and Blank is still systematically undoing some of the PO's neo-colonial finishes, both inside and out.

When he couldn't find what he wanted at Denver vintage stores, he went with a couch and "Gigi" chairs from Room and Board, a generic Nelson-style bench, a cubist end table and a chaise lounge from Mitchell Gold's retro collection. Geodes and amethyst crystals from his South American upbringing are on display, as is an old Indonesian iron pot next to the fireplace, sugarcane grinders from the Philippines displayed as sculpture, Vietnamese black clay pots and a portion of a Cambodian fishing boat.

"People give me grief about the cowhide rug, but I grew up in Brazil and they were very commonplace on hardwood floors. The furnishings in the living room are a culmination of where I grew up and where I've been," he says.

In the kitchen, a checkerboard linoleum floor adds a little whimsy and echoes the grid of the nearby metal

stairwell railing—in contrast with the Design Within Reach chairs and table base with a custom cherry top. Counter materials include butcher block, stainless steel and Silestone—a quartz and epoxy material that's harder than granite.

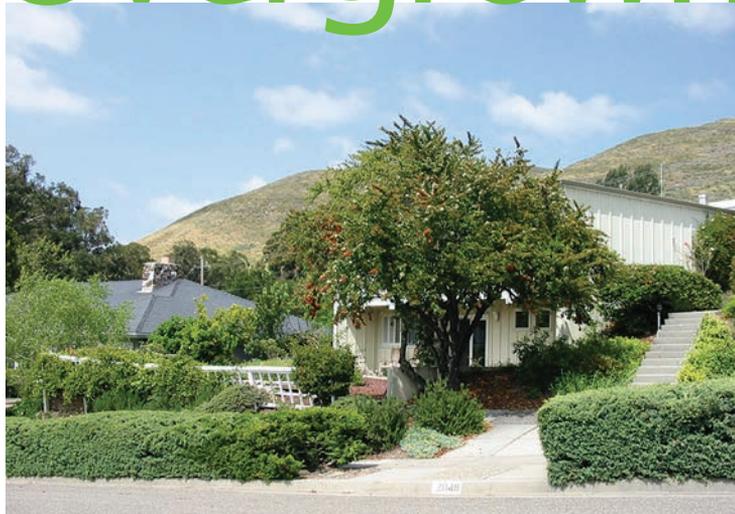
"I'm not about to preach to somebody what they should like or what they should do with their home, but I want people who are buying these houses to understand what they're buying and how valuable it can be if they maintain the integrity," Blank says.

"This part of Americana is disappearing. The good thing is, a lot of people are getting it. Ten years ago people bought here because it was affordable—it was a neglected neighborhood. That's all changing. I've bought and sold homes most of my life, but I want to be here for many years." ▲

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From Overgrown



Modernist Landscaping in a Mediterranean Climate

text Michelle Gringeri-Brown

photography elliotjohnson.com

The flat-roof board-and-batten house was half hidden behind a tree-size pyracantha, and a narrow run of stairs led from the juniper bracketed sidewalk to the front door. A wide asphalt driveway shared with the house next door dominated the view from the street. And a rickety white lattice fence and yards of red lava rock added to the home's schizophrenic nature. Was it a modern house? Was it a wanna-be Monterey, a style of home prevalent in this California central coast town?

"You could see the house was modern on the inside but you couldn't tell what it was on the outside," says Cindy Bonifield about her home. Transplants from Denver and a Craftsman-style garden, she and husband Gary lived in the San Luis Obispo house for a year before tackling the garden. But then, "I couldn't stomach that yellow exterior any longer," she says. "Once we painted, it was a different house; you



To Awesome



The new rectilinear elements totally changed the curb appeal of this 1961 hillside home. Much of the demolition and installation was done by the homeowners, who crafted the ipe wood balcony railing that ties in with the new sidewalk privacy fence. Less than a year after planting, it already looks remarkable.



could see what was what and what the house needed.”

The Bonifields sought help in reimagining the quarter acre lot and turned to local landscape architect Jeffrey Gordon Smith. On the must-have list was regional appropriateness, a design complementary to the 1961 house, low water usage and room for organic gardening.

“The modern grid is new to us and the plant selection is, too,” Cindy says, while noting her favorite plants are ornamental grasses. “What I want is a landscape that suits where you live. In Boulder I wanted landscaping that suited the Colorado Rockies and would take the weather extremes. It doesn’t have to be strictly native but it does have to suit the site. When I sit in this yard I want to know that I’m in San Luis Obispo.”

Almost equidistant between L.A. and San Francisco, SLO, as it’s known, benefits from a marine influence but also gets skimpy rainfall and is pretty toasty in the summer—a classic Mediterranean climate. “I was a geography major, so working with the amount of rainfall and climate conditions that we have was really important to me. I didn’t want azaleas or turf, so in terms of steering Jeffrey, I was pretty specific about what I liked and wanted to see.”

The pro weighs in

“One of the primary reasons the Bonifields purchased the home was the architect’s design, which brought the outdoors in, with every room having a door that opens to an outdoor space,” comments Smith. “But the patios had very little appeal and were primarily surrounded by lava rock.” An additional challenge was the angular way the house is sited on the lot to capture the views: traditional rectangular front and back yards weren’t part of this picture.

“The renovation began with changing the house color, then a new entry experience designed to reduce the driveway’s footprint while still allowing access to the garage. This created space for the meandering front entry steps. While the stairs and landings are geometric, their offset design and gentle wandering adds an element of surprise,” Smith explains.

On the front facade, a large expanse of glass with hill-top views opens onto a balcony. The Bonifields were unhappy with the existing traditional white railing, so an ipe wood handrail and verticals were designed with almost invisible cable rails. Ipe 1” x 6” boards are also used for a front privacy fence.

“The railing reinforces the horizontal lines of the architecture and unites the house to the ipe wood screen near the street,” Smith comments. “A paver pathway from the screen serves as a ‘spirit walk,’ borrowing from a Japanese tradition where a straight path jogs quickly to one side to let the evil spirit continue on the straight path. This concept reinforces the line and length of the ipe screen while discouraging visitors from using the home office entrance.”



Plant Materials

Trees

Acacia stenophylla (shoestring Acacia) in parking strip, opposite right
Feijoa sellowiana (fruiting pineapple guava) between front steps and courtyard area, previous spread

Shrubs

Agave attenuata 'Nova' blue-gray succulent shown below on either side of aggregate steps
Otatea acuminata (Mexican weeping bamboo)
Rosmarinus officinalis 'Tuscan Blue'
Rosmarinus officinalis 'Boule'

Perennials

Aeonium arboreum 'Atropurpureum' (succulent)
Anigozanthos 'Harmony' (kangaroo paw) coming into flower left
Euphorbia characias wulfenii (Mediterranean spurge)
Euphorbia characias wulfenii 'Bruce's Dwarf'
Lavandula x intermedia 'Provence'
Phlomis lanata (Jerusalem sage)
Roldana petasitis (Velvet Groundsel)
Senecio mandraliscae (Blue Finger succulent)
Heuchera maxima
Iris douglasiana (Douglas iris)
Liriope spicata 'Silver Dragon' (lilyturf)
Salvia apiana (white sage)
Salvia officinalis purpurascens (purple sage)





The homeowner's favorite grasses, including *Festuca ovina* 'Elijah Blue' lining the bocce ball court, are used extensively both front and rear, and bamboo fills a raised bed next to the corrugated fiberglass garage wall, opposite upper right. Other grass choices include *Austrostipa ramosissima* (pillar of smoke), *Carex glauca* flaca (glaucous sedge); additional varieties listed on page 95.



Ivy, ivy everywhere

Both of the Bonifields work at home. Cindy does close captioning for TV from an office off the front bocce ball court, while Gary, a software consultant, has a lair that looks out on the backyard. After Smith presented his final design, the couple opted to do much of the demo and install work themselves.

Although they planned to keep some existing plants, only three oaks, a couple of toyons and a privacy-lending clump of bamboo were in good enough condition once they hacked through the overgrown jungle. The most physically challenging part of the job was removing various concrete and flagstone patios, paths and steps.

"We got the biggest sledgehammers we could find and, because we're on a slope and there's not much access to

the back, it was one wheelbarrow at a time lugged out to a dumpster. We demoed all the rotted wood fences; that whole thing took us about three months of weekends," Cindy says with a laughing shudder.

The couple also dug the footings for the new zigzag concrete retaining wall that spans much of the back yard. The sizable pile of soil that resulted was used to regrade the area where their organic vegetables are now grown. And there was one last job that Cindy particularly relished: "The red lava rock was going to be recycled into concrete, and it came up off the surface pretty easily. But we found it everywhere, buried in the soil. It was mind-numbingly boring to pick those out."

Coalescing the design

The Bonifields used Roy Burch, Smith's recommendation for the extensive concrete work the plan called for, and a landscape contractor ordered and installed about 70 percent of the plants. The couple put in everything else, including faja guava, shoestring acacia and a dozen fruit trees.

Decomposed granite is used extensively for paths, patios and the bocce ball court, while midcentury-appropriate aggregate squares break up the surface treatment on the concrete patio in back. "In the rear garden, a zigzag concrete retaining seat wall was poured in place. To achieve a sleek, modern, polished look, the forms were stripped from the wet concrete and black integral color was hand troweled onto the face of the walls," Smith explains. Burch also made three large cement globes in the same dark gray tone.

"The angular theme was continued in the raised vegetable and herb garden that Gary and Cindy requested for organic vegetables and fruit trees. To achieve an actual working garden with architectural lines, we designed



The area first planned for the vegetable beds was too shady, and Cindy Bonifield is still tempted to turn more square footage into organic food production. Husband Gary's office looks out on this area, which attracts birds and butterflies to the garden.



raised planters of 6" x 6" redwood lumber. Their placement and shape is a continuation of the zigzag retaining walls, blending the two gardens.

"A native California and Mediterranean plant palette surrounds the bocce ball court and is layered for viewing from the balcony above and from Cindy's office below," Smith says about the front yard plantings.

"Originally I thought I wanted to go all native and didn't want to use irrigation," Cindy reports. "Then I went to a native nursery and the guy there said, 'You know, you can get by with natives and no irrigation, but they won't look as good as if you provide some water.' Once we decided we were going to put in a drip system, that opened up a lot more in the plant selection. Then it was like a kid in a candy store—we could do anything."

In the spring, dozens and dozens of euphorbia burst into chartreuse bloom, while rosemary, lavender, phlomis, agaves, aeonium and ornamental grasses look great year-round. Ardent gardeners, Cindy and Gary have had a few frustrations with both the orange-tinged Australian windgrass in the front and select euphorbias.

"The area where some of the plants are having a hard

time is where we removed asphalt; I'm wondering if either there's something in the soil or some kind of overwash when it rains from the asphalt that we relaid," Cindy muses. "We're going to try again, digging a bigger hole, mixing in some of the great native soil from the back and planting in five gallon peat pots and see if that will work. Bulletproof things like rosemary will grow in this area; of course that will grow anywhere."

Anything you'd do differently, we ask. Cindy is quick with an answer: "The public places as Jeffrey has done them perfectly complement the lines of the house. If we don't get our little dream organic farm somewhere, and I'm just going to live in a suburban setting, I would redesign the private portions for more edible gardens.

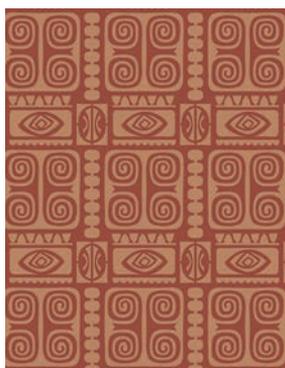
"I'm a huge reader of *Mother Earth News*. If I'm going to be out there fussing, I want it to be with something I can eat or take to the farmer's market or the homeless shelter or a food bank or something. For the two of us, the beds we have and the trees produce a ton. But I love meeting my neighbors and sharing that way." 🌳

Resources page 95

cool|stuff

Paper Me Retro

There's more to midcentury than hard-edged modernism, a fact that Stephen Bauer of Bradbury & Bradbury fully embraces; after all, he lives in a 1961 ranch himself. The art wallpaper company—which still handprints their papers—has a new line of '40s and '50s patterns based on original mid-century designs and vintage colors. Paper that kitchen nook with "Apple Betty," part of the Post War Era line, or cover a wall of your entry hall with "Atomic Doodle." The kitschy among us will relate to "Island" for their tiki rec room, or "Interlock" (both \$57 per roll) would look slick in a dining room setting off that vintage Cherner chair. Order samples at bradbury.com, or 707.746.1900.



Mr. Fluffypants Scores

It kinda sucks if your cat's snoozing place is groovier than yours, but then again, if it means you can kick that nappy cat tree to the curb, so be it. Touting a motto of "Modern Pet Furniture That'll Make You Jealous," Hepper (both an actual cat named for Audrey Hepburn and industrial designer Jed Crystal's company) pet pads feature molded foam laminated with fabric, fleece-lined interiors and steel frames. Starting at \$85, Pod, Nest, Podium or Wave—they're really cool looking; hepperhome.com.





Out of Context

Tab A, slot B looks to fairly accurately describe Scott Klinker's Truss line of tables and chairs for Context Furniture. The laminate-clad, Baltic birch plywood designs include cafe tables and chairs—in both kid and adult sizes—benches, picnic-type tables and a desk. Owners Bryce and Kerry Moore have other designs, like the William & Mary Collection Round Table I—an interesting riff on an Alvar Aalto-esque stacking stool. From \$150 at contextfurniture.com.

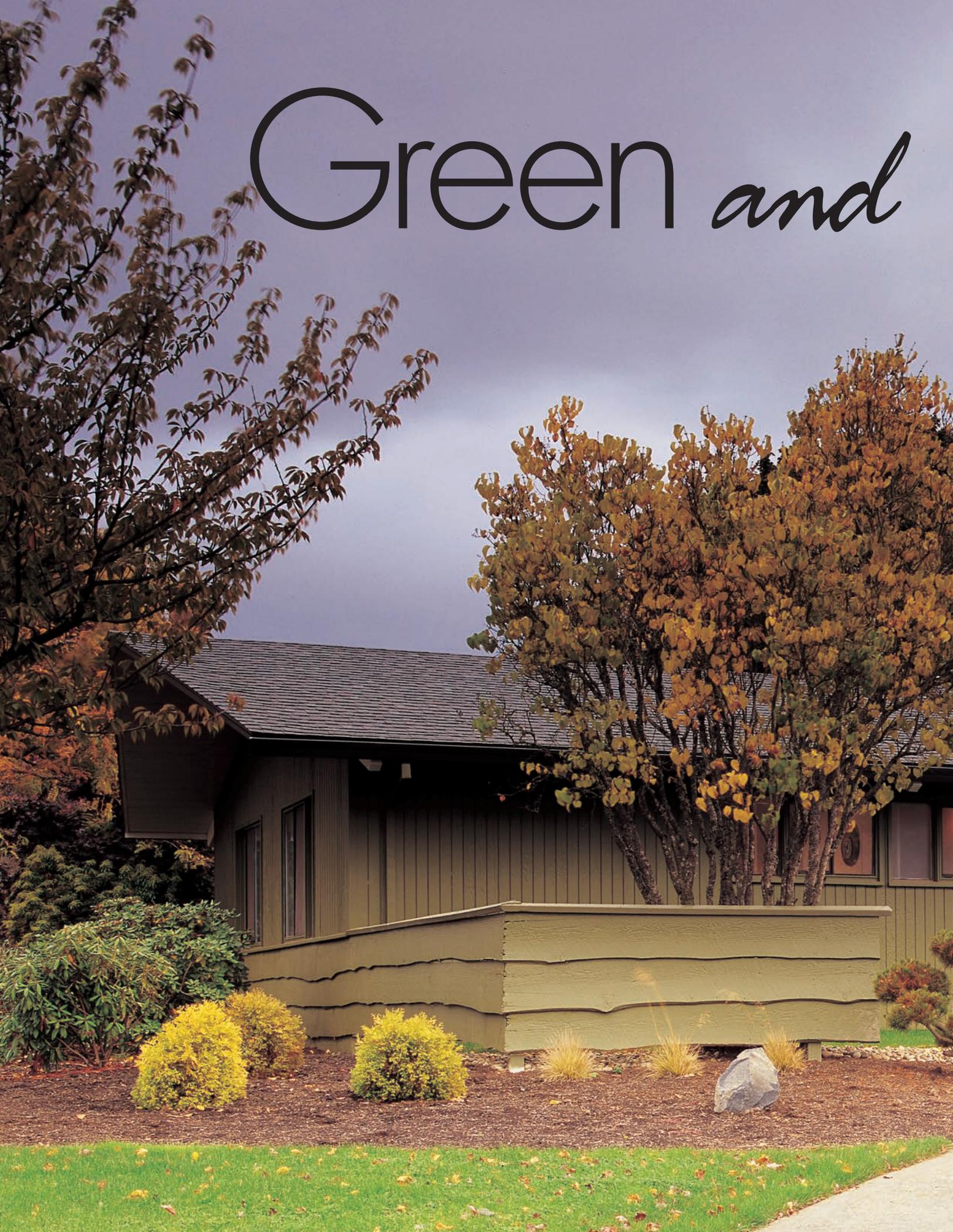


You Say Vetrazzo

If “green,” “recycled” and “sustainable” are words that give you a head rush, check out Vetrazzo's countertops. Made from 85% recycled glass by weight—sources include traffic light lenses, reclaimed window glass and curbside recycling programs—the material looks similar to terrazzo and is marketed as being comparable to high-end (shudder) granite. The custom-poured material can also be used as flooring or architectural cladding. Visit vetrazzo.com for a list of retailers. 



Green *and*



Growing

About a mile from the Nike campus in Beaverton, Ore., is Cedar Hills, a Portland neighborhood of ranches built in the '50s. Matt Demarest, 41, and Kristin Hammond, 37,

first rented a midcentury post-and-beam house there before buying their own 1955 transitional ranch. With an attached garage forming an L, the home looks like others of its vintage, but it captured them with several distinctive features.

"The yard was decent, but what sold us was the roof line, the layout and all of the glass," says Hammond, a pr/marketing person for Cushman Wakefield. Despite its low-slung ranchiness, the living room has soaring modern elements: exposed beams, full-length windows and clerestories, including a set on the wall that backs up to the kitchen, letting light travel between the rooms. Similar clerestories in the family room rather oddly look into the adjoining garage.

Downsides were the butter popcorn yellow interior, some rotting posts in the



text Michelle Gringeri-Brown
photography Jim Brown

crawlspace and an icky kitchen. Under the beige carpet was original cork flooring but the small master bath needed a makeover. “It had red ceramic tile on the floor, a yucky sliding glass door in the shower and the sink vanity had a big wall cabinet right across from it—strictly Home Depot specials,” Hammond says. “It just shrunk the space; you could hardly move in there.”

A leak in the shower led them to gut the room, a project that finished up as the couple moved in. New fixtures, floor-to-ceiling tile in the shower and a floating vanity were some of the contemporary choices they made for the space.

Demarest and Hammond had to get immediate neighbors to sign off on their proposed green exterior paint scheme, thanks to the tract’s CC&Rs. But those guidelines haven’t forestalled unfortunate remodels, witness the steroid ranch with Palladian windows and two-story pillars a few doors down.

“We’re lucky that on our street there are a lot of nice homes that owners have taken care to keep truer to the original style,” Hammond says. “But there are a few two-story houses that have no business being in this neighborhood. We have a homeowners’ association, but they don’t worry about that too much.”

Demarest, a commercial editor, chimes in: “As far as pop-ups go, I’d rather not see that at all, but I also understand that there are people who have three or

The pony wall dividing the kitchen from the living and dining room has glass clerestories, an unusual interior treatment. A

FLOR area rug sits on the original cork floor and the walnut Axis media cabinet was built by Bo Hagood at MADE Studio.

The pith-helmeted sculpture is from Africa and the photos are by Gerald Hammond, Kristin’s architect father. And yes, that is

Captain Bogg & Salty, seen here in a music video edited by Demarest for Portland’s own pirate rock band.









Beyond the IKEA kitchen is the office/family room with a vintage Danish modern couch, gray Prince Aha stool from Design Within Reach, and an Arm Shell rocker and Mini Wire tables from Modernica. The vintage ball lights were removed from a Victorian home.

Demarest displays his collection of masks from Ecuador, Kenya, Costa Rica, Alaska, Papua New Guinea, Italy, China, Indonesia and the Ivory Coast on the family room wall. While they enjoy a minimalist environment, both owners say they have a weakness for art festival tchotchkes; keeping them confined to the DWR Cubits storage unit works—for now.



four kids in these homes who can't afford, or don't want to buy, a McMansion. So, what do you do when you need more space? I just wish additions were more sensitive to the original design of the homes. I don't see that there's an aesthetic that the board is trying to endorse.

"Neighbors said that ours was one of the first houses built in the tract and was an architect's spec house," he continues. "We've only seen two others in the area that might be the same plan."

The plan isn't without its quirks, such as two doors to the back yard, one in the family room and the other in the orange dining room, about six feet apart. "In my mind, the first people who bought this house were in the dining room and said, 'Sure would like to walk out into the back yard out of this room.'

So they took out a window and put in a narrow door," Demarest opines.

The three-bedroom, two-bath house cost \$267,000 in 2004; today, similar homes are on the market for \$350,000 and up. Still, as a real estate professional, Hammond lobbied for a \$15,000 kitchen remodel, not a top-of-the-line custom-cabinet bonanza.

"This house doesn't warrant a \$70,000 kitchen," she says. "That would be a bad move on our part."

Instead, the cabinets and laminate countertops are from IKEA, the dishwasher is a KitchenAid and the gas range is a Maytag with a Broan exhaust hood above. They passed up a sexy red or Martha Stewart-green finish on the Abstrakt cabinets, playing it safer with white with future resale in mind. The



The Neo couch, Neilsen coffee table and purple Bertoia Diamond chair are from Full Upright Position, a Portland modern store no longer in business, but many retailers carry both the Bertoia Diamond and Bird chairs. “We looked at vintage Bird chairs, but a lot of times the covers weren’t in particularly good shape,” Matt Demarest says. “If you buy a replacement cover, you’re halfway to buying a new chair.” A refinished Heywood-Wakefield table is next to the couch, and a chair found in a dumpster sits by a John Coltrane poster.

Kristin Hammond grew up with these original Saarinen chairs, which belonged to her grandfather before being passed down to her parents. Since they weren’t able to cage the accompanying teak Florence Knoll table, Demarest and Hammond retired this Italian table when they found a ‘70s Knoll conference table (shown on the cover) on eBay.

The soft modern master bath has a Toto toilet, Kohler sink and Restoration Hardware medicine cabinet customized with frosted glass.

remodel would have come in even cheaper if they hadn’t encountered asbestos when removing the old flooring for new Marmoleum tile.

“We didn’t have a very big budget for the kitchen and wanted to maximize the overall aesthetic and quality,” explains Demarest. “We liked the footprint and just added more storage under what was a bar in the family room. Granite countertops just would have been wrong.”

We first shot the Hammond/Demarest home in 2005 for the Atomic Ranch book, and two years later we revisited them photographically. (OK, they’re now friends and pour a mean bottle of Veuve Clicquot.) A few changes had taken place in the meantime: replacement windows, a jacked-up-and-leveled foundation, revamped landscaping and a



new family member, Kato, a Shiba Inu dog.

Hammond was the force behind the new landscape, as she previously worked at a nursery; Demarest endorsed the plan and helped with the brawny tasks. The couple wanted more privacy and year-round greenery on their corner lot, which has a smallish L-shaped back yard and a good size public-face front yard. The previous owners had installed irrigation, a new lawn and the backyard raised bed trimmed in rock. But to Hammond the landscape was lacking.

“The things that were planted in that bed were bordering on obnoxious spreaders: wild geranium, probably 200-plus grape hyacinth bulbs—and other than alliums, I’m not really a bulb person—junipers and Oregon grape,” she enumerates. “I removed two

yuccas and trimmed a third one. There were a few things we kept: heavenly bamboo and Japanese honeysuckle—that’s it.”

Hammond feels her design and plant choices are a bit eclectic, with Asian and tropical influences in a PNW context. “I wanted it to be like a river—smooth and all connected once it is grown in. But first and foremost, a plant has to intrigue me. Whether it’s the texture or color of the leaves or blooms, there has to be something interesting about it,” she says.

“The second thing is the kind of light and water it receives naturally. In the section of our garden that gets more sunlight, I have drought tolerant plants so I can minimize how much irrigation we have to do. In areas that are receiving a lot of shade and the soil

Kristin's Garden I.D.

0. **Agapanthus – Lily of the Nile**
large purple globe-shaped flowers in the late spring
1. **Carex pendula – Drooping Sedge**
2. **Heuchera (Coral Bells) – ‘Obsidian’**
3. **Helleborus foetidus (Stinking Hellebore) – Bear’s Paw**
supposedly a stinky plant, but I’ve never noticed
4. **Musa basjoo (Hardy Banana) – Purple Banana**
this one takes extra effort since we are on the edge of the hardiness zone
5. **Juncus effusus – Rush**
likes moist conditions
6. **Selaginella – Golden Spikemoss groundcover**
7. **Salix gracilistyla ‘Melanostachys’ – Black Pussy Willow**
the little fuzzy blooms in spring are jet black
8. **Aquilegia – Columbine**
9. **Brunnera macrophylla – Jack Frost**
related to the “forget-me-not” plant, only clumping not spreading growth
10. **Nandina domestica – Heavenly or Sacred bamboo**
though this plant really isn’t a bamboo at all, it has a similar leaf shape
11. **Adiantum – Maidenhair fern**
these delicate ferns have shiny black stems and bright green foliage
12. **Ophiopogon planiscapus – Black Mondo Grass**
13. **Daphne odora – Winter or Fragrant daphne**
this plant has the sweetest smelling blooms, usually in late February
14. **Tricyrtis hirta – Toad Lily**
very unusual blooms that look like orchids; opens up in early fall
15. **Wisteria**
16. **Fatsia japonica – Japanese Aralia paperplant**
17. **Phyllostachys aurea – Golden Bamboo**
totally contained, otherwise this variety spreads fast
18. **Carex morrowii ‘Aurea Variegata’ – Variegated Japanese Sedge**



Demarest, Hammond and Kato relax under the backyard overhang of their post-and-beam ranch, which they found through Realtor Bob Zaikoski of Portland Modern. Bamboo and grasses in decorative pots soften the patio far into the fall, when the red maple is in full color.



stays moist, I have plants that can take those conditions. That way, it requires less maintenance, I'm not replacing plants and they're healthier."

In the main bed, the Asian influence is seen in the heavenly bamboo, rush, sedge, Japanese aralia and clump of golden bamboo, while the purple-black banana lends a tropical note. That black accent is repeated in the coral bells, black pussy willow and mondo grass, many of which were planted next to contrasting plants—brilliant green maidenhair ferns, gold spike moss groundcover and variegated Jack Frost brunnera.

Hammond's advice to others in a similar climate (zone 8) looking to landscape a midcentury property: "My first question is What kind of light does your yard get? because that determines what's going to work.

My second question: Is there a style you find yourself leaning toward? Ornamental grasses usually come into play because they are very low maintenance and can handle a variety of light conditions.

"I like to use small succulents if you have a lot of light; sedums give you a little bloom but have a green effect in the winter," she continues. "If you have a lot of shade, I tend to advise things that look slightly more tropical, like *Fatsia japonica* for color late in the season and extremely low maintenance. *Nandina domestica* is a great plant for sun or shade and it comes in burgundy or plum, while other varieties are brighter orange. And I always try to work in a conifer, something like a serpentine blue spruce.

"But most important is you've got to like what you're looking at; it's a reflection of you." 🐾

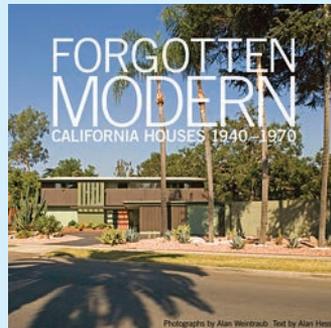
atomicbooks

New titles to entice!



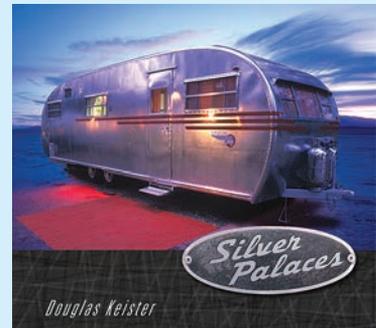
Beachbum Berry's Sippin' Safari
by Jeff Berry

A well written, profusely illustrated narrative of the people and bars responsible for the tropical drink craze that helped lubricate the '50s and '60s. The treasures of this small book are the 70 authentic recipes for such tiki cocktails as the Zombie and Mai Tai, and the vintage ephemera that takes you back to the day. Forget about opening a mix, these are the real deal and presage the current fresh cocktail scene. Softcover, 183 pp., \$23.50



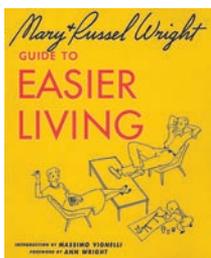
Forgotten Modern:
California Houses 1940-1970
by Alan Hess

Fans of lesser-seen custom MCM homes will enjoy this hardcover coffee-table book. From Edward Fickett's ranch variations and a condo by William Cody, to Wright-disciple Foster Rhodes Jackson's compound in Claremont, Hess explores some 25 architects. Mark Mills' organic Bay-area vernacular is covered and, in addition to Alan Weintraub's 300 color photos, vintage b&ws of select projects give more complete coverage to an architect's vision. 280 pp., \$45.95



Silver Palaces
by Douglas Keister

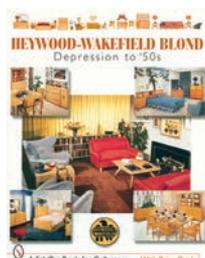
Focusing on streamlined aluminum travel trailers, photographer Keister takes us inside these miniscule houses on wheels, beginning with the Bowlus in 1934. Teaming vintage vehicles—from a 1965 Plymouth Sport Fury to a 1937 LaSalle Sport Coupe—with Airstreams, Curtis Wrights and Shastas, and citing engine sizes and pulling capacity will appeal to both the gearhead and pillow maker at your house. 160 pp., \$28.95



new!

Guide to Easier Living

This reprinted vintage book addresses modern living Wright-style, from organizing household chores to streamlining the dining table. Of particular interest are the sections on contemporary floor plans and Russel and Mary Wright's philosophy of informal living. A great look at the couple behind American Modern. Wright, softcover, b&w illus., 202 pp., \$22.95



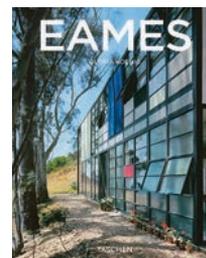
Heywood-Wakefield Blond:
Depression to '50s

A definitive softcover volume on H-W's birch modern and streamline '30s pieces with vintage photos of upholstered pieces, tables, chairs and case goods; includes current values. Leslie Piña, softcover, 248 pp. \$33.45



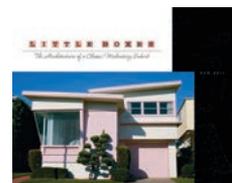
Blenko:
Cool 50s & 60s Glass

A hardcover book with beautiful examples of 1930s-1990s Blenko pieces with current values, period advertising and a reproduction of a 1960 catalog. Leslie Piña, 208 pp. \$43.95



Eames

This small softcover book is a concise overview of the designs and talents of both Charles and Ray Eames. Highlights include their films, two Case Study houses, early plywood experiments and their numerous chairs. Gloria Koenig, 96 pp. \$16.45



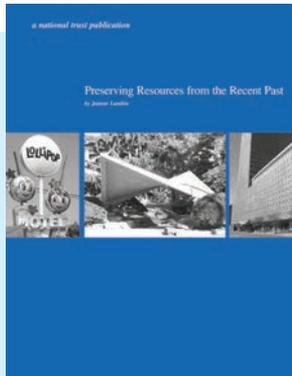
Little Boxes:
The Architecture of a Classic Midcentury Suburb

Westlake, the quintessential postwar neighborhood in the Bay Area, gets the glamour treatment in this attractive hardcover book looking at the "boxes made of ticky-tacky." Rob Keil, 144 pp. \$38.50

Visit atomic-ranch.com to order or call 503.771.4171

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Selected books
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for your midcentury shelf



Preserving Resources from the Recent Past by Jeanne Lambin

A b&w 28-page National Trust booklet chockfull of background and good advice for anyone looking to research their home or start a neighborhood preservation group. Best of all, it's readable! \$10

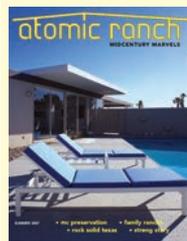
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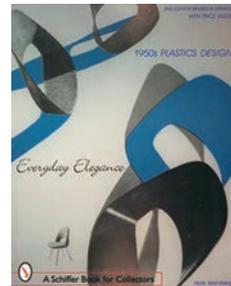
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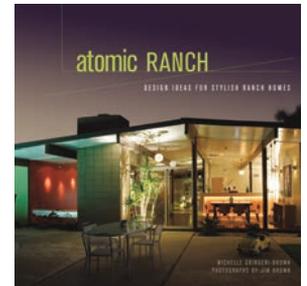


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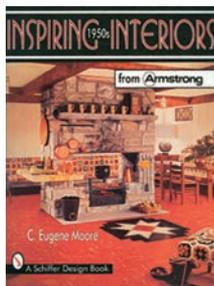
1950s Plastics Design by Holly Wahlberg

From melamine dinnerware, laminate counters, Tupperware, woven lawn chairs and faux leather upholstery, plastic transformed the way postwar America kept house. Holly Wahlberg, softcover, 112 pp.; was \$22.95, now \$19.95.



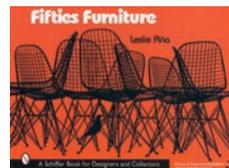
Atomic Ranch: Design Ideas for Stylish Ranch Homes by Michelle Gringeri-Brown & Jim Brown

From modern to transitional, collecting to landscaping, 35 great houses to inspire you. Includes homes from our early sold-out issues and lots of practical advice from homeowners just like you. M. Gringeri-Brown/J. Brown, hardcover, 192 pp. \$43.95



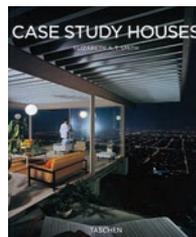
Inspiring 1950s Interiors

Over-the-top rooms from Armstrong Flooring advertising, but a great peek at interior details from the '50s. Softcover, 176 pp. \$33.45



Fifties Furniture Revised & Expanded 3rd Edition

Looking to start collecting vintage furniture? This accessible yet thorough book covers the heavy hitters—Eames, Nelson, Platner, Bertoia and Noguchi—as well as major manufacturers like Heywood-Wakefield, Lightolier and Herman Miller. Includes current prices and dimensions. Leslie Piña, hardcover, 240 pp. \$43.95



Case Study Houses

A softcover book on *Arts & Architecture's* Case Study Houses covers Pierre Koenig's iconic Stahl House, plus 34 other projects through Julius Shulman's vintage photos, floor plans, elevations, models of unbuilt designs and contemporary color photos. Elizabeth A.T. Smith, softcover, 96 pp. \$16.45



Saarinen

Another in the same series as Eames and Case Study Houses, this softcover book focuses primarily on Eero Saarinen's architecture—Dulles International Airport, the TWA Terminal, Case Study House #9, North Christian Church and many more—while touching on the Womb and Tulip chair designs. Pierluigi Serraino, 96 pp. \$16.45



The Golden Age of Advertising—the 60s

Mad Men indeed: There's a lot to learn from this chunky hardcover book of 1960s imagery. Pop culture, the selling of the American dream and the aesthetics of the midcentury lifestyle are all explored through quality reproductions of vintage Madison Avenue advertising. Jim Heimann, 352 pp. \$22.95

modern masters

for your ranch:

Florence Knoll Bassett



text Timothy Sullivan
photography courtesy Knoll, Inc.

This is probably your first face-to-face encounter, but you have already met through her furniture. You have sat on it. You may even own a piece of it. An entrepreneur, architect and furniture designer extraordinary, Florence Knoll Bassett pioneered midcentury interior design. You may not realize it, but she even revolutionized the way that you live and work today. And now, at age 90, she can revolutionize your home all over again.

Back in the '50s, Knoll Bassett became a champion of good interior design. Trained as an architect, she was ideally positioned to define midcentury modernist interiors as a logical and efficiently organized reflection of the era's new architectural style. Her pedigree includes a veritable Who's Who of 20th-century architects. During her years at Kingswood, a private high school in Michigan, she met and

befriended renowned architect Eliel Saarinen and his son Eero, who was to become a famous modernist in his own right. With the Saarinens she traveled to Europe, where she came into contact with Alvar Aalto. Ultimately, Knoll Bassett returned to America, where she worked for Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer. After a period in their office, she went on to receive her degree from the Illinois Institute of Technology. There, she came under the strong influence of modernist pioneer Mies van der Rohe.

Following her studies, Knoll Bassett landed a job designing the showroom of New York furniture entrepreneur Hans Knoll, with whom she fell in love and married. Joining Knoll Associates, she soon launched an interior space-planning department. From this influential position, she leveraged her training as an architect to make mod-



Opposite: Clarity of line distinguishes Knoll Bassett's design for a conference table.

Her design for the office of CBS President Frank Stanton displays a typical spare use of furniture, neutral colors and dramatic accents.

ernist interior design livable for midcentury American tastes and lifestyles. She did this by softening the harsh lines of modern buildings with comfortable furniture, beautifully textured fabrics and accents of vibrant color. To accomplish her goal, she also rethought and clarified interior space planning by making rooms more open and efficient. In doing so, she left behind a design legacy that is as relevant to today's homeowners as it was to those of the 1950s.

The first lesson that we can learn from Knoll Bassett is that basic, low-tech planning can create some of the most successful interior design schemes. She believed that organized thinking and careful analysis creates the best designs. To this end, she and her staff hand drew floor plans and sought the most efficient way to use interior

space. She gave furniture room to breathe and made rooms airier by using table desks with credenzas behind for storage. After choosing the most advantageous floor plan, she borrowed a technique from the world of fashion and would paste swatches of fabric, carpet and wood over the plan. By juxtaposing these elements as they would appear in the finished room, she could understand the space's color and texture in a way even the best computer programs cannot accomplish today.

The next lesson that we can learn is to selectively place furniture that is simple, classic and sculptural in our efficiently planned rooms. Knoll Bassett often used her own timelessly elemental upholstery and casegoods, such as her iconic sofa and table designs. Divided into three seats and reduced to a series of rectangles supported by steel legs,



This bedroom features some of Knoll Bassett's most successful design principles: neutral backdrops punctuated with crisp but comfortable furniture designed by Eero Saarinen, including the iconic Womb chair.

Florence Knoll Bassett used paste-ups of interiors to clarify furniture layout and the interaction of color and texture.

Her iconic sofa design is architectural in style and reduces a complex form to a series of rectangles.



her sofa is as comfortable as it is architectural. It evokes Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House, a masterpiece built in 1951. Her conference table merges wood with exposed architectural steel to create a piece of furniture that is light, airy and immensely durable. Today, as seen on this issue's cover, it is as useful in the dining room as it is in the boardroom.

Knoll Bassett used equally unassuming background colors for these pieces of furniture and for carpet and wall treatments, too. To bring life to these neutral rooms, she accented them with bright primary colors and a few pieces of boldly expressive furniture. A true visionary, she commissioned her childhood friends, including Eero Saarinen, to create daringly modern chairs and tables that would stand out as functional sculpture. Saarinen's Womb chair is still a beloved investment, a work of art that can

cradle generations. Neutral backgrounds, classic mid-century furniture and a few vibrant investment pieces still make a room sing. They also make moving and designing on a budget much easier.

More than 90 years after her birth, Florence Knoll Bassett is revered as one of mid-century's most inventive and influential designers. Her seminal work has been the subject of several prominent museum exhibitions throughout the nation, and her message of humanized modernism is as relevant today as it was during the Atomic Age. 

Learn more about the designer; see resources page 95.

Boston-based interior designer and author Timothy Sullivan received his M.Phil. and M.A. in History of Art from Yale University, where he is a Ph.D. candidate.

ranchdressing

House parts ...
midcentury collectibles ...
the inside scoop on
what's what
and where to get it



Q: I was wondering if you have any information on these chairs we salvaged from our local re-use-it center in British Columbia. A label on the underside says they were made by the Vista Furniture Co. of Anaheim, Calif. I can't find any reference to them or other pieces of their furniture anywhere. We love them and, at \$10 for a pair, they're a bargain that fits easily into our decor.

Thanks for any help you can offer.

Martyn Meek

A: *Two of our MCM experts agreed there was a bit of Nelson in your chair, and Nick Horvath of Modern Decodence in Denver says that Daystrom made some similar models. Lianne Dickson of Treadway/Toomey Auctions weighed in with this: "Metal frame chairs were widely produced in the 1950s—high quality mass production furniture at low cost. The metal frames solved several design problems: structural stability, comfort, versatility. This example doesn't rely on ordinary 90-degree angles but instead includes curves and angled legs. The chair shares some design features with George Nelson's metal chairs designed for Arbut in the 1950s. Here's a link: architonic.com/4100986."*

Q: My goal is to replace the shoddy traditional finishes in my first home, a 1977 ranch in Portland, with very simple modern hardware. I've done some basic upgrades throughout, but am stumped by the patio cover at the back of the house. It's in a great location off the kitchen, east-facing and leading into a huge backyard. I'd like to maximize the morning light that is currently blocked by the faux wood corrugated plastic panels covering the patio.

I can imagine very modern and simple aluminum uprights and a milky polycarbonate cover. My only issue is that I'm on a budget and want something really modern with clean lines. Any ideas?

Georgia Lee Hussey

A: *An updated version of corrugated fiberglass in translucent colors called *Sequentia Structoglas* will let more light through, though it's probably too period for your aesthetics: kemlite.com/sequentia_corrugated/corrugated_index.cfm.*

We found two other solutions as well, likely with hefty price tags. Applied Geodesics' ClearVue patio covers are custom made: agidomes.com/patio.html. And Palram manufactures a variety of polycarbonate and PVC building panels; check them out at suntuf.com.

If the frame of your current cover is in good shape, it would be relatively easy to put new material on the top. Here's a good overview: naturalhandyman.com/iip/infxtra/infcorroofpanels.html.

Q: We just purchased our 1952 atomic ranch in the Pine Spring area of Falls Church, Va. The previous owner expanded the living room with the wall of windows shown here. The rest of the windows are clerestory and typical large panes of the midcentury style. How can we change the wagon-wheel tops of the windows

to reflect a midcentury modern look? It looks a little too “ranch” and not enough modern.

Melissa O’Brien



A: Interior designer Erin Marshall of Kismet Design replies, “Windows are an integral feature in both the interior and exterior perception of your home. They affect curb appeal, interior views, energy use and, to a certain degree, the overall value of your home.

Windows can also date a house. As with many things, they are prone to fashion trends, like diagonal siding circa 1974 or 4" shag carpet a la 1982. Sometimes these elements are deemed classic, vintage or retro-chic and we keep them. Most of the time they are just evidence of a trend gone by and it’s time for an upgrade.

When you change out exterior windows, you affect two surfaces: the outer wall and the inner wall. Depending on each wall’s surface—e.g. shingles, lap siding or stucco on the outside and Sheetrock, paneling, etc. on the inside—there are a couple things to ask yourself before you reach for a Sawzall: Do these windows function well? Are the views pleasing? Does the

room have enough natural light? Do I need more or less security or privacy? Is the room warm/cool enough? Where’s the heat register? Are these windows appropriate to the style of my house?

After that, if you still yearn to change out the windows (it’s generally easier to make them larger than smaller), it probably means you really need to. From what I can tell, the graduated heights of your windows capped with wagon wheel arches do not appear to complement the strong, low, horizontal thrust of most ranch architecture. If your room gets hot, opting for some opening casement windows might be helpful. If you have a private view from this room, I’d suggest a simplified approach: a glass wall or large glass slider with a glass transom above. If you want, you can echo the slant of the ceiling line or bring the header down straight; either way, one strong simple statement that merges the interior with the exterior will improve the view.”

croutons

✘ In regard to the question Ethan and Cheryl Allen had about their chair, I quote the book *Grand Rapids Furniture: The Story of America’s Furniture City*:

“Brower Furniture Company (1919-1977). Originally makers of chairs ‘in the white’ to match tables and case goods of other local manufacturers, principally Imperial, Grand Rapids Chair, and Heckman. 1927: Adds a contract furniture line, for which it manufactured, upholstered and finished chairs, tables and companion pieces for retail stores, hotel dining rooms, clubs, school dormitories and ships.”

Gina Bivins

Need a renovation resource or wondering if that flea market find is anything? Send your questions and photos to editor@atomic-ranch.com and we’ll run them past our experts.

atomic events

February 23–24 Cincinnati 20th Century Cincinnati

Furniture, lighting, decorative objects and more at Ohio's MCM showcase at the Sharonville Convention Center, 11355 Chester Rd. Don't miss a special exhibit on Cincinnati's modern architecture put on by nonprofit Cincinnati Form Follows Function. 20thcenturycincinnati.com.

March 1–3 New York The Modern Show

The 69th Regiment Armory at Lexington and 26th St. hosts 80 European and American exhibitors selling vintage art, textiles, glass, ceramics, jewelry and furniture; stellashows.com.

Through March 23 Portland, Ore. The Living Room

Garage sale finds, modern classics and vintage and recent crafts on display in a domestic setting that explores high and low art and MCM design. The Museum of Contemporary Craft; museumofcontemporarycraft.org.

March 30 Pasadena, Calif. Postwar Pasadena Home Tour

Pasadena Heritage's annual spring home tour celebrates the city's rich legacy of midcentury residential architecture. pasadenaheritage.org.

April 5 Portland, Ore. Street of Eames

The popular tour of contemporary homes and remodeled midcentury houses tends to sell out in a matter of hours. Visit streetofeames.com to see if you're still in luck.



April 5–6 Phoenix/Scottsdale Modern Phoenix Expo and Home Tour

Saturday's Expo includes lectures on historic preservation, gardening and con-

crete casting, and a tour of the Hotel Valley Ho. Sunday's midcentury home tour is of the Village Grove neighborhood in Scottsdale. Tickets and a detailed schedule available at modernphoenix.net or call 480.994.ARTS.

April 25–27 Chicago

Dolphin's annual Chicago modernism show features 60 dealers at 1422 N. Kingsbury; chicagomodernism.net.

April 26 Alexandria, Va. Hollin Hills Home and Garden Tour



Designed by architect Charles Goodman, midcentury modern neighborhood Hollin Hills was developed in the late '40s. Tour both original homes and several that have received extensive renovations or additions; hollinhills.org.

May 2–4 Santa Monica Los Angeles Modernism Show & Sale

At the Santa Monica Civic, LA's annual mod show with some 90 dealers; lamodernism.com.

Through May 4 Portland, Ore. The GI Dream: Family, Home, Peace & Prosperity

Held over the Oregon Historical Society's exhibit traces the optimistic postwar years, from its bigger-is-better cars to space-age kitchen appliances. Visit ohs.org for details or call 503.222.1741.

Ongoing Shawnee, Kansas All-Electric House

This 1954 restored all-electric home at the Johnson County Museum of History was innovative and futuristic living at its most accessible. Info on guided tours at jocomuseum.org.

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where'd you get that?

art & architecture, pp. 18–27

Architect: Karen Lantz, Enter Architecture, Houston, 713.659.4777, enterarchitecture.com ✦ Houston neighborhood: braeswoodplace.org ✦ Furnishings & fixtures: Herman Miller, hermanmiller.com ✦ Knoll, knoll.com ✦ Droog, droogdesign.nl ✦ Modern Fan Co., modernfan.com ✦ George Nakashima Woodworker, nakashimawoodworker.com ✦ B&B Italia, bbitalia.it ✦ Pottery Barn, potterybarn.com ✦ Vent-A-Hood, ventahood.com

delcambre does dallas, pp. 33–39

Architect: Jonathan Delcambre LLC, Residential Development and Design, Dallas, 972.898.2841, jonathandelcambre.com ✦ Windows: EnviroShield by Showcasewindows, showcasewindows.com/main.html ✦ Couch: Design Within Reach, dwr.com

the bad boy of bad taste, pp. 40–46

Sven Kirsten's and Naomi Alper's websites: tikimodern.com ✦ 8ballwebstore.com

lofty a-frame, pp. 48–57

Peter Blank: Mile Hi Modern, Denver, 303.486.3724, milehimodern.com ✦ Furnishings: Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams, mgandbw.com ✦ West Elm, west.com ✦ Design Within Reach, dwr.com ✦ Room and Board, roomandboard.com

from overgrown to awesome, pp. 60–66

Landscape architect: Jeffrey Gordon Smith Landscape Architecture, Baywood Park, Calif., 805.528.2118,

jgsdesigns.com ✦ Custom concrete: Roy Burch Concrete, Los Osos, Calif., 805.528.7845, royburch.com ✦ Additional Grasses: Anemanthele lessoniana 'Golden Abundance' (New Zealand wind grass) ✦ Juncus effusus 'Carmens Japanese' (common rush) ✦ Leymus condensatus 'Canyon Prince' (giant wild rye) ✦ Miscanthus transmorrisonensis (silver grass) ✦ Sesleria autumnalis (autumn moor grass) ✦ Stipa gigantea 'Gold Fontanene' (feather grass) ✦ Carex divulsa (Berkeley sedge) ✦ Thymus serpyllum 'Elfin' (creeping thyme)

green and growing, pp. 70–79

Custom audio cabinet: Bo Hagood, Made Studio, Portland, Ore., 503.233.8616, made-studio.com ✦ Lighting: Hive, hivemodern.com ✦ Lux, luxlights.com ✦ Kitchen: KitchenAid, kitchenaid.com ✦ Maytag, maytag.com ✦ IKEA, ikea-usa.com ✦ Broan, broan.com ✦ Bath: Restoration Hardware, restorationhardware.com ✦ Toto, totousa.com ✦ Pirate band: boggandsalty.com

modern masters for your ranch, pp. 84–86

Books: *Knoll Furniture: 1938–1960* Steven and Linda Rouland ✦ *Knoll Home and Office Furniture*, Nancy N. Schiffer ✦ More info on Florence Knoll Bassett: knoll.com/designer/designer_detail.jsp?designer_id=83 ✦ dwr.com/designers/?designer_id=275 ✦ hivemodern.com/products/?cid=38&cid2=157

ranch dressing, pp. 88–89

Interior Designer: Erin Marshall, Kismet Design, Portland, Ore., 503.288.5311

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