

atomic ranch

MIDCENTURY MARVELS



WINTER 2008



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winter 2008

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cover

A "cocktail" room in a 1954 split-level custom ranch is furnished with vintage Danish modern pieces, including a couch reportedly from Errol Flynn's collection. The homeowners inherited parquet floors and beams covered with wood-grain Contact paper, but are methodically making it their own through a series of restorations and remodels. Story page 16.



◀ Designed by
Jorge Pensi

coming up next time



Texas Teardown

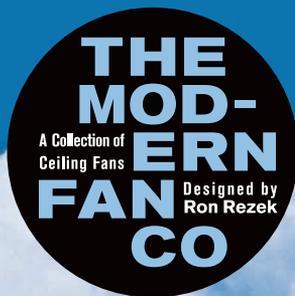


Feathering the Empty Nest



Pennsylvania Vintage

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modernfan.com



atomic ranch®

MIDCENTURY MARVELS

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Subscriptions & Address Changes:

Atomic Ranch, PO Box 9624, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33310-9624

866.518.1369 954.653.3950

atomic-ranch.com

USA: \$19.95 1 yr / \$36.95 2 yrs

CAN: \$27.95 1 yr / \$49.95 2 yrs

Outside USA/CAN: \$55.95 1 yr

Not responsible for undelivered issues due to late change of address.

Atomic Ranch (ISSN 1547-3902), Issue 20, Winter 2008,

is published quarterly by Atomic Ranch, Inc.

at 3125 SE Rex St., Portland OR 97202-8573.

U.S. subscriptions \$19.95.

Periodicals Postage Paid at Portland, OR

and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

Atomic Ranch, PO Box 9624, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33310-9624.

All rights reserved by Atomic Ranch, Inc. Canadian Post Publications

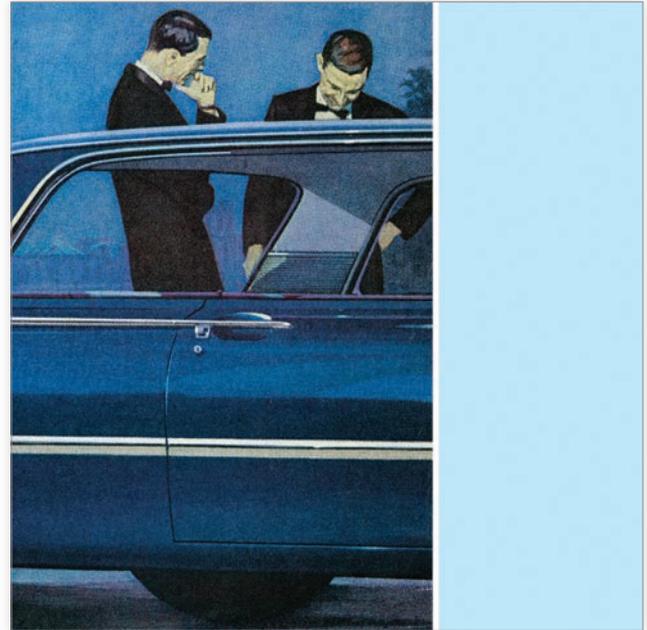
Mail Agreement No #40065056. Canadian Return Address:

DP Global Mail, 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, ON N9A 6J3.

Atomic Ranch is printed on recycled paper. ♻️



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the new JIM WARD MORRIS prints titled *MIDCENTURY* and *POSTMODERN* have been described as

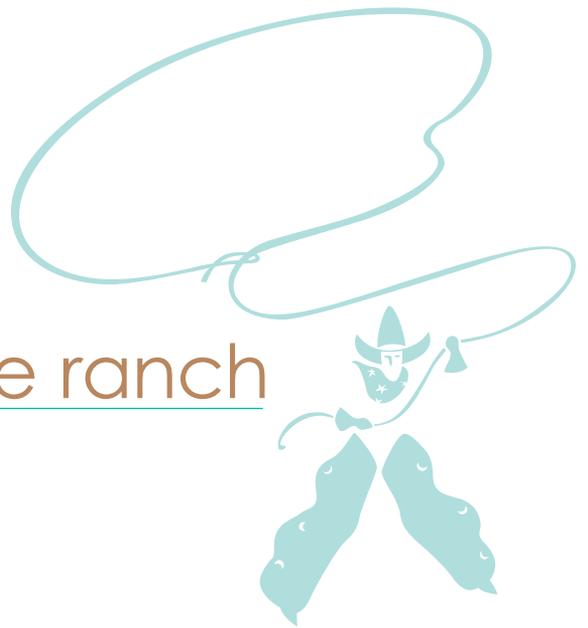
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meanwhile... back at the ranch



S

ometimes it seems that if you live long enough you can find a connection to everyone and everything. I'm reminded of a passage from *Your Friend the Atom*, an elementary school book that calculated how many molecules of air a person would breath in a lifetime that had actually passed through the lungs of Leonardo da Vinci, given that matter is immutable. Along those lines, this issue's Tony Neal Palm Springs tour needed an image of the Visitors Center, which I happened to have in my collection of past jobs. Back in early 2001 I was a freelance photographer recently released from a long career at Petersen



Home again; Avanti in front of Frey's Lowey home

Publishing. Seemingly out of the blue I got a job to cover a celebration of designer Raymond Lowey out in Palm Springs. How'd I get the gig? Connections: I'd done a lot of event photography for the Petersens and their Los Angeles PR man, Joe Molina, somehow mentioned me to the East Coast-based PR company that was handling the event.

Headquartered at a modest art gallery that occupied the Albert Frey Tramway Gas Station, the exhibit suffered terribly from a lack of actual material from Lowey's long career. But enthusiasm for Lowey was very high. Loyal Avanti owners trekked out and Tom Kellogg, one of Lowey's then-young designers of the car, was a featured speaker. Along with industrial designers, academicians, past executives from Studebaker and Lowey's daughter, Laurence, it was a fabulous opportunity to soak up all their memories of one of the great designers of the 20th century.

The two-weekend-long event included lectures, slide shows and civic presentations, but the topper was a private reception at the Frey-designed Raymond Lowey home. Turns out that Lowey sequestered his team of designers there in 1961 for an intense two-week period of conceptualization and design of the radical (for Studebaker) Avanti. The home was in excellent condition and you could easily imagine how it would foster creativity.

For me the other significant highlight of the job was that I convinced the client to put me up in Palm Springs at the Orbit In, rather than commuting each day from Pasadena—a 200 mile round trip. That was my first real adult immersion into midcentury. My room there was furnished with the touchstones of the era: a Womb chair, wire chairs with bikini pads, a blond amoeba coffee table and a similar modern bedframe. It was at the same time alien and familiar; I had lived through the era, but hadn't experienced it firsthand in my parents' Early American-furnished home. Presaging my future life, I felt compelled to photograph each room of my suite and, while I'm not usually the type to lounge around, I just couldn't pass up the opportunity to sit and zone out over the poolside bar's lava lamp. I might have had a drink or two.

Looking back now, it wasn't exactly the Eureka! moment you might imagine, but it did significantly lay the groundwork for the launch of Atomic Ranch in 2004. Based on my Palm Springs experience, I realized that midcentury was an expansive subject that could inspire real passion and wide appeal.

I'd urge you all to come visit Palm Springs some time in your life—it might prove to be your great connection.

Jim Brown, Publisher

modernwisdom



* I received my summer issue and once again am very pleased with the quality of your publication. I love every sentence!

One small pedantic issue, though: on page 20 you show a photograph of a wonderful midcentury bar cart that you attribute to Russel Wright. Unfortunately you missed the mark on that one; it was in fact designed by Arthur Umanoff and distributed in the states by Raymor. Just thought you needed to know.

Scott Lindberg

Online

* In response to Sean Huberty's query in the Fall 2008 issue about films showing MCM interiors, try "The Second Woman" (1950). Robert Young plays an architect who built his high-end modern house on a cliff overlooking the Pacific. The film shows interior furnishings, lighting, art, window treatments and landscaping that will wrench "Wow!" after "Wow!" from MCM enthusiasts. Tragically, the house burns down, but you will have to watch the movie to find out whodunit.

Peter Crabb

New Tripoli, Penn.

* OK—who is with me here? Wouldn't you just die for an Atomic Ranch Holiday Special Edition? As a design student and a midcentury fan, I would love to see what others do for holiday decorations. Maybe a calendar too? And I would love to see an article on mod silver jewelry. My great uncle was the silversmith Henry Steig. Hmm? How 'bout it?

Rona Dexler

Online

Check our web store (atomic-ranch.com/store) for our 2009 calendar ... One out of three's not bad, right?
—an editor

* I laughed when I was reading Modern Wisdom in my hot-out-of-the-mailbox Atomic Ranch. Wouldn't you know, I had exactly the same trouble explaining how I wanted my reed glass entry doors made. For some reason, no one could understand what "simple," "clean-line" or "modern" meant. No one could understand that I did not want some overdone leaded glass, or that I did not want fibercrap with oval edging. I wanted wood: plain, with square or quarter round sticking and glass—that's it. Reed glass, yes, like a doctor's office; no, I'm sure that I don't want the leaded peacock glass design—thanks. Finally, an older gentleman who remembered something like it from his childhood was able to help me. Go figure.

Same thing when ordering new double-paned aluminum windows—plain, without grids—yes, I'm sure I don't want vinyl. And not to mention the new back door with three square reed glass lights (like the "Pasadena" Crestview door). I had to print several pictures for the door fella and give explicit instructions.

I guess if it's not Home Depot beige, people just don't get it. Thank you for bringing us atomic ranchers together!

Hilary Young

Redding, Calif.

* Our neighborhood is made up of 48 ranches on two streets, with several original owners still living in homes they purchased some 50 years ago. The surrounding area is being courted for the demolition of a huge 1950s shopping center. Developers want to turn



two blocks of our area into a “Town Center.” We are being told this move is inevitable.

Just last year we went through all the motions to protect our neighborhood from infill. After all that trouble, why would we sell now? Everyone here loves this neighborhood—it is truly a community. We have an annual block party and most of the neighbors know each other. I grew up in the ‘50s and ‘60s in a ranch neighborhood where we all ran around free; this neighborhood has returned to that. Now a speculator is scaring everyone with the “inevitability” of this area going to pot due to the proposed changes that the Town Center will bring.

Do you have any resources on such a subject? Where can we go to research this? I’m looking for real truth—you can’t believe everything you read on the Internet.

David Caron
Decatur, Ga.

Two National Trust for Historic Preservation resources are a solid place to start: *Preserving Resources from the Recent Past*, a 28-page booklet available on their site or from atomic-ranch.com/store for \$8 is an excellent foundation, and “*Teardown Tools on the Web*” gives 300 examples of “best practices” being used in 32 states, including a case study in nearby Atlanta. Go to <http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/teardowns>.
—ar editor

* Southern California misses AR! I was thrilled, however, to see that you sponsored Pasadena’s postwar housing tour [no. 17, page 87]. It was great fun.

Do you know where I can find Cliff May style tiki-esque house numbers? I love the Neutra numbers, but am looking for something that is a bit more fun and styled somewhere between the traditional ranch and hardcore modern styles.

Steven Gertsen
Newport Beach, Calif.

In addition to eichlernumbers.com, try housethumbert.com, atlashomewares.com/housethumbert1.html, accurateimageinc.com or customhousethumbert.com/fonts/mid_century/font_machine_flash/index.html. If you end up ordering from one of these companies, please let them know we sent you.

—ar editor

* I’m developing the branding for a new website that will act as a resource for the community working on their midcentury houses. They can submit their cool finds, project photos and tips, original house details, etc. We’ll let you be the final word: is it “midcentury” or “mid-century”?

Paul Robinson
Online

Glad you asked; our esteemed copy editor, Vickere Murphy, word geeks out: “Neither are even in my Merriam Webster’s dictionary (or any of my dictionaries, for that matter) and so it’s clear that the adjective is quite young. Typically in our living language it’s hyphenated until it’s so common that the hyphen disappears and the word phrase becomes one because

morewisdom

everyone is so used to it that they're not likely to misread it (think midwife).

"In my opinion, since we are a publication about all things midcentury and AR's readership has a well-honed familiarity with the phrase, we are leading the charge for it to be considered such an everyday word that the hyphen isn't needed to be able to correctly read it. No one is wrong in this situation but I for one tend toward omitting hyphens whenever there are grounds to do so."



* A local artist stopped by our annual Lustron home garage sale this year and asked if he could put one of his sculptures in our yard. We knew some of his work and didn't hesitate to say Yes! James Bearden loves midcentury modern and is making wonderful metal sculptures, sconces and screens.

He loves our metal house and thought his sculpture would look great with the Lustron as a backdrop. We installed it a couple of weeks ago and have so much fun watching joggers, dog walkers and drivers do a double take when they see it.

Michael & Stephanie O'Neal

Des Moines, Iowa

* Just got done reading about your landscape travails (Fall 2008); great article. I think your readers will appreciate the raw honesty in that piece. We just had a long concrete planter installed in the back yard. Not knowing anything about concrete, we brought in an "expert." We explained to him what we wanted and

then showed him at least a dozen images from magazines. He built the thing while we were away for a few days. Come back to find a wall that got laid with brick and then skim coated—not poured. We said, "simple, clean, flush and right angles." He gave us concrete stucco, rounded corners and texture. On top of that, it's already cracking. Awesometown.

On a more positive note, check out "How to Build a Mid-Century Modern Birdhouse" video: <http://www.curbly.com/Chrisjob/posts/5046-Curbly-Video-Podcast-Build-Your-Own-Mid-Century-Modern-Birdhouse>.

John Skelton

Portland, Ore.

John is responsible for our post-2006 logo design. He also said his new planter looks like an Armenian goat fence but we didn't want to offend any Armenians or goats.

—ar editor

* Since discovering Atomic Ranch, I look forward to receiving every issue and faithfully read each cover to cover. I've also purchased all the past issues I was missing.

However, I do have one concern with the direction of the magazine. I most enjoy the articles of the average homeowner with unique homes such as the one featured in Open House in the Summer 2008 issue (no. 18, page 64). Not all of us have the resources to own an Eichler or Stenger. Please don't sell out and become a highbrow design magazine like so many others are.

Brad Smith

Atlanta, Ga.

No chance of that, as we are dedicated to presenting a whole range of aesthetics, from the everyman's neighborhood examples in this and last issues' "Working Class Heroes" to the dream settings of "Charmed Life" and "Life in the Round" in no. 19. If you have great photos of your own modest ranch, why not nominate it for inclusion in our pages? Send a few shots to editor@atomic-ranch.com

—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.



Adam Murray and
Sammy Schwarz-Murray
with fox terrier Otto.



flower power

A couple's first house together builds teamwork



“The previous owners lived here 37 years and were big do-it-yourselfers, but they didn’t pay attention to the style of the house,” says Adam Murray about his Knight and Piercy home in Portland’s West Hills. That included ’70s tile in the kitchen, a mix of hardwood and parquet floors, and “wood” beams that were in reality painted and covered with wood-grain contact paper. So much for inheriting a purist canvas.

Now the third owners, he and Sammy Schwarz-Murray bought it five years ago. In a hilly neighborhood of ’50s and ’60s custom homes on meandering streets, the view from the front windows and patio off the kitchen takes in the adjoining suburbs all the way to distant McMinnville and the wine country.

During the house hunt, it became apparent their realtor didn’t even like ranch houses and she was pretty certain the couple would be unimpressed with this 1954 split-level. Wrong; it pretty much fit their wish list. “We wanted a two-car garage, we wanted a backyard, an open floor plan and tall ceilings,” says Murray, who does online sales and marketing for a BMW dealership. “It was 3,500 square feet of house and \$425,000.

“When we saw it, we just wanted to clean it up and do it right,” he continues. “The main thing we tried to do was unify what was in the house. We’re not big do-it-yourselfers—we’ve mostly had handymen that we gave direction to. But we have friends who are architects and Sammy’s really great [at design].”



text Bromley Davenport

photography Jim Brown

styling Lisa Swain





“We wanted a home we could build together,” adds Schwarz-Murray. “We know lots of designers and artists who we can talk the talk with.”

During the first four years the couple replaced sections of rotting wood, had Pella fiberglass windows installed, painted inside and out and added an outdoor kitchen to the large covered patio over the garage. Murray designed a simple wood railing for it made out of 2” x 2” cedar that adds a trellis-like detail to the front facade and protection from the one-story drop to the driveway.

“Jack-and-Jill” baths in the master bedroom and hallway were redone because they were laid out poorly and had plastic tile and funky corner sinks. “This was our first

The dining room set was purchased at local vintage dealer Era 20th Century. It gave Adam Murray’s grandfather a jolt when he first saw it: he’d sold the same furniture new in the ‘50s. The armchairs and sofa in the living room are local thrift store finds. “Our friend Bruce Carey found them for us and made us buy them,” Sammy Schwarz-Murray says. “He is known for his great interior design skills.”





remodel in the house and I'm not really happy with how we did it," admits Murray, as he shows off the narrow powder room with paisley wallpaper in a humongous scale.

In the kitchen they removed upper cabinets and painted the lower ones white so the horsey tile would virtually disappear. They also painted the wall paneling in that room and plan to replace the cabinets with natural wood ones and install new counters—perhaps Paperstone or tinted concrete. The kitchen's adjoining "cocktail" room was furnished with reupholstered vintage Danish pieces and an eBay couch shipped from Florida, purportedly once part of Errol Flynn's estate.

The most ambitious project was remodeling the basement and connecting it to the main level with a new stair-

case punched through the floor between the kitchen and dining areas. Previously, basement access was from the garage, so this link allows them to have a bona fide family/media room and office space down below, as well as a third full bath. At the head of the stairs, they designed a storage/display cabinet that helps define the various functions of the open living-dining-cooking-imbibing space without adding unnecessary walls.

The kitchen prior to a recent remodel, with its original Dutch doors—evocative of Cliff May's 1940s homes—leading to the covered patio. The support post-cum-pole lamp is a conduit for electrical power as well as a stylistic bonbon.





"We wanted it to be a big punch when you opened the door," says Adam Murray, who found the Cole & Sons "Rajapur" wallpaper for the powder room.

The expansive laundry room with its original cabinets and light fixture.

The guest bedroom was being eyed as a possible nursery for Axel, the couple's first baby. This portion of the house is thought to have been an add-on, perhaps done in the '60s based on the electric heaters installed in the ceilings.

Coming from a 1959 brick traditional across the Willamette River, the pair discovered that bright wall colors and Pottery Barn furniture didn't work in this new home. Their primary focus was on finding era-appropriate furnishings, many of which came from Hawthorne Vintage in Portland. "We bought a new leather furniture set, but it didn't fit the house," says Schwarz-Murray, who owns Sammy's Flowers, a Portland chain of open-market flower stalls.

Since the 2007 photo session, the family welcomed their first child and updated the kitchen, reporting that

it's "much cooler now." The couple's future wish list includes replacing the parquet flooring upstairs, installing built-in closets in the master bedroom, redoing the fireplace facade in the basement, installing a new fence and landscaping the back yard in classic PNW style with low-care rhododendrons and azaleas.

"One thing we're unsure about is the fireplace upstairs," Murray says. They already removed bronze-color glass enclosures and installed the chain fire screen, but are unhappy with the soot-darkened appearance and overall color. "We've thought, Should we get the brick professionally cleaned so that it's vibrant or see if there's a stain that can be used on brick? We're definitely afraid to paint it or stucco it."

"For me, I don't want it to feel like a remodeled house," Schwarz-Murray says. "We're scared to tamper with it."

"The traditional feel adds character and coziness," Murray adds. "Anything that we put in place of the original elements needs to not call attention to itself. We're always going to have the Dutch doors and the beams and the exposed ceilings."

"We're both involved 50/50 in decisions about the house and we both have a hands-on attitude," he continues. "We're partners in every sense of the word." 🌸



cool|stuff



Mommy Dearest

Remember those keen-o wood puzzles you played with when you were a pre-K modernist or the Danish hi-fi unit your grampa had with the flip-up lid? Well modmom furniture does. The Owyn Toy Box has two leaf-shaped lids that solve “the-top-bang-ded-down-on-my-heaaaad” wails, and the Gracie model would be a tempting steal for the living room. Made from Baltic birch plywood, non-toxic paint and low-VOC polyurethane, they sit on MCM-style legs, too; \$350–\$395. Visit modmomfurniture.etsy.com to order.



Light Up My Life

Bullet, bell, tapered or double tapered—Hip Haven's ceiling or wall-mounted light fixtures look old school while being trendy at the same time. Each style is available in single, double or triple versions, as well as 16 powder-coat colors or brushed and polished metallics.

Say you're looking for a hot orange 3" mini bullet for your Airstream? Got it. A tasty triple tapered bullet in brushed aluminum rated for the atrium of your Rummer? Double check. Browse the combos at hiphaven.com, starting at \$45.





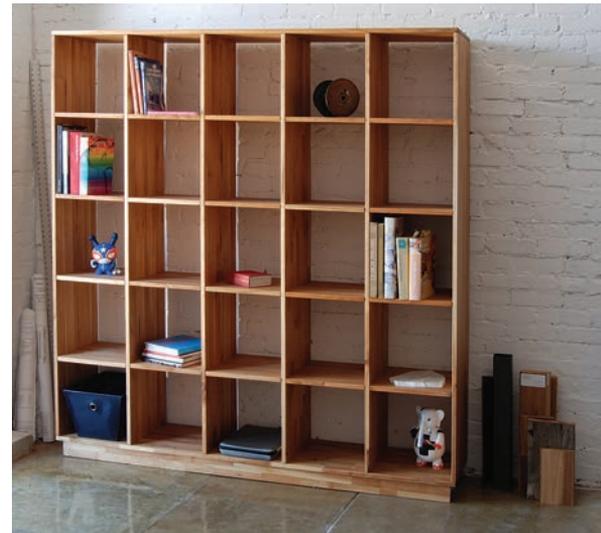
Less is More

Grohe is known for its yummy fixture designs, but now they're helping you save the planet one shower or pot scrubbing at a time. The WaterCare line (grohewatercare.com) has six kitchen faucets, including Essence, seen here in chrome for \$499; five lavatory faucets; and three showerheads, like the \$116 Movario beauty shown. All 60 low-flow products in the line offer 30% water savings. AI would applaud.

Stocking Up on Staples

If solid walnut with a natural oil finish and powder-coated aluminum sounds like a great combination of old and new technology, you'd be right. The LAX series by MASH Studios distills midcentury modern design into understated storage staples that fit into a variety of aesthetics, including those upgrading from IKEAville. The 3X credenza (they call it a shelf) comes in wall-hung or base-supported versions, both with sliding metal panels. The 5x5-cubby bookshelf would look equally good displaying your collection of Blenko

against a window wall or corralling your burgeoning design volumes in the family room. From \$675 to \$1,750 online or at select retailers; laxseries.com.





Kennewick, Wash.



Fallbrook, Calif.



Perryville, Md.

home page

Kennewick, Wash.

We purchased our 1958 ranch house last year as a Fannie-Mae repo and have been working constantly to bring it back to its midcentury beauty. Robert Hobbie, who's 80 now, designed our house for his parents when he was fresh out of architecture school; his father developed the street and built the house. We replaced two ceiling fans in the living room with a Modern Fan Co. "Pharos" model from Y Lighting and still have the original kitchen wall oven and pink countertops. We've invited Mr. Hobbie for a visit and would love to see his reaction to the house now. He said he never liked the type of brick his father used; that's OK—we love it.

Lori Vonderhorst & Carl Tosten

Fallbrook, Calif.

Ours is an all-electric house built in 1958 at the top of a hill with 270° mountain views. This is avocado country and they say it is what SoCal looked like 30 years ago. The kitchen is all original—spruce cabinets, Formica counters, GE cooktop and oven—and the master bath has blue fixtures and Franciscan tile in the Starburst pattern. Both the second floor and the interior paneling are original. In back are midcentury-style stone pillars and a large pergola we built ourselves. We have been restoring this house for three years and we're not finished yet.

Nick Bendas

Perryville, Md.

I bought this 1956 house the summer before last and love it more and more, so I've wanted to learn about the ranch aesthetic. At first I was looking for a Victorian farmhouse, but those are a dime a dozen around here; I'm glad I found something far more distinctive. The heating system is an oil-fired, three-zone radiant floor slab using iron pipes. It's beautifully engineered and nothing like the cheap systems found in tract homes of the 1950s. Remarkably, there is no sign of leakage after 50 years of use, a testament to good design and good construction.

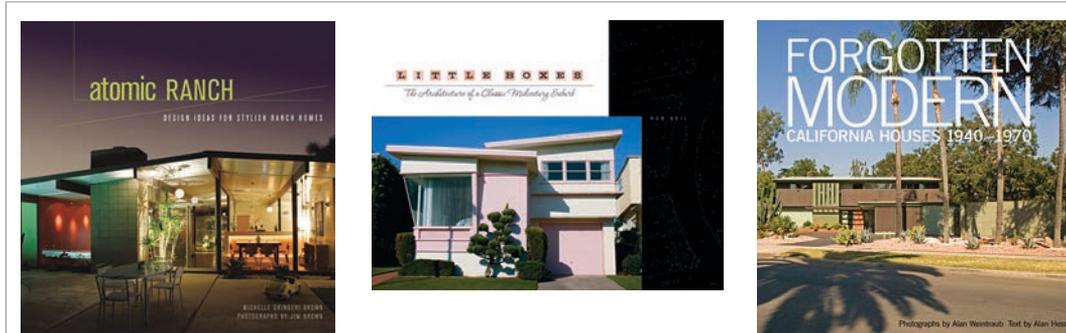
David Terri

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 7.

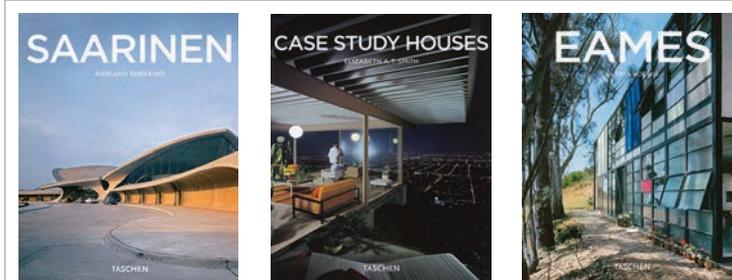
atomicbooks

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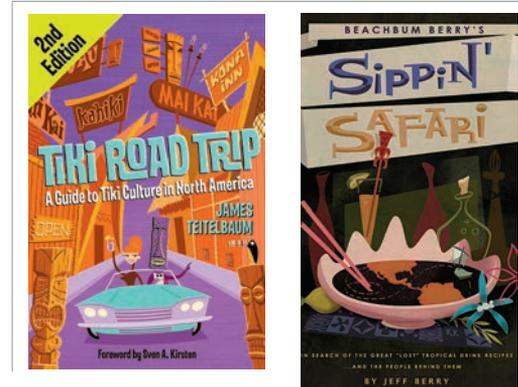
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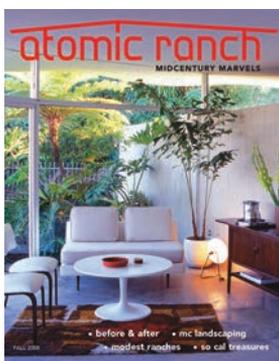
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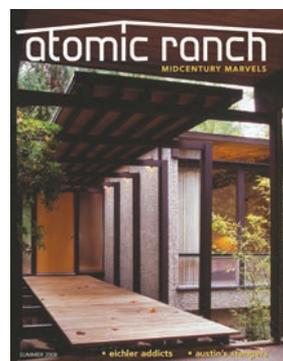
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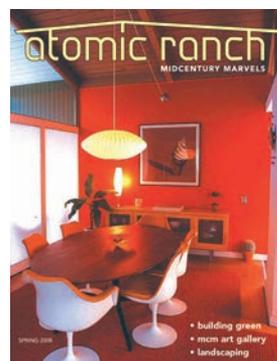
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no. 18,
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no. 17,
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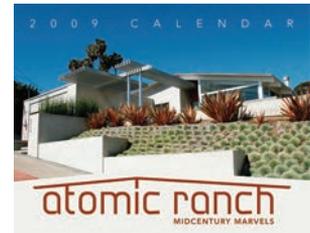
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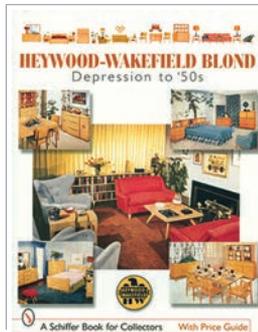
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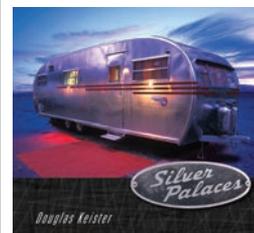


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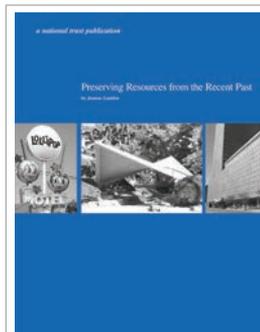
Heywood-Wakefield Blond: Depression to '50s

A definitive softcover volume on H-W's birch modern and stream-line '30s pieces with vintage photos of upholstered pieces, tables, chairs and case goods; includes current values. Leslie Piña, softcover, 248 pp. \$29.95



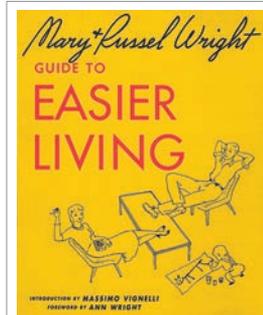
Silver Palaces

Airstream, Curtis Wright and Shasta aluminum travel trailers and their diminutive interiors, as well as vintage vehicles that might pull them—from a 1965 Plymouth Sport Fury to a 1937 LaSalle Sport Coupe—get the star treatment in this fun softcover book. Douglas Keister, 160 pp., \$24.95



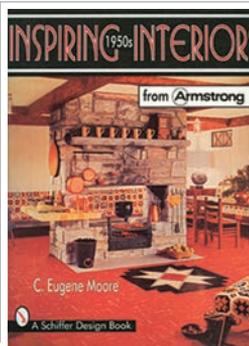
Preserving Resources from the Recent Past

This b&w National Trust booklet is full of great background info and accessible advice for the grassroots preservationist in you. Or use it to get started on researching the history of your own home. Jeanne Lambin, softcover, 28 pp., \$8



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., \$18.95

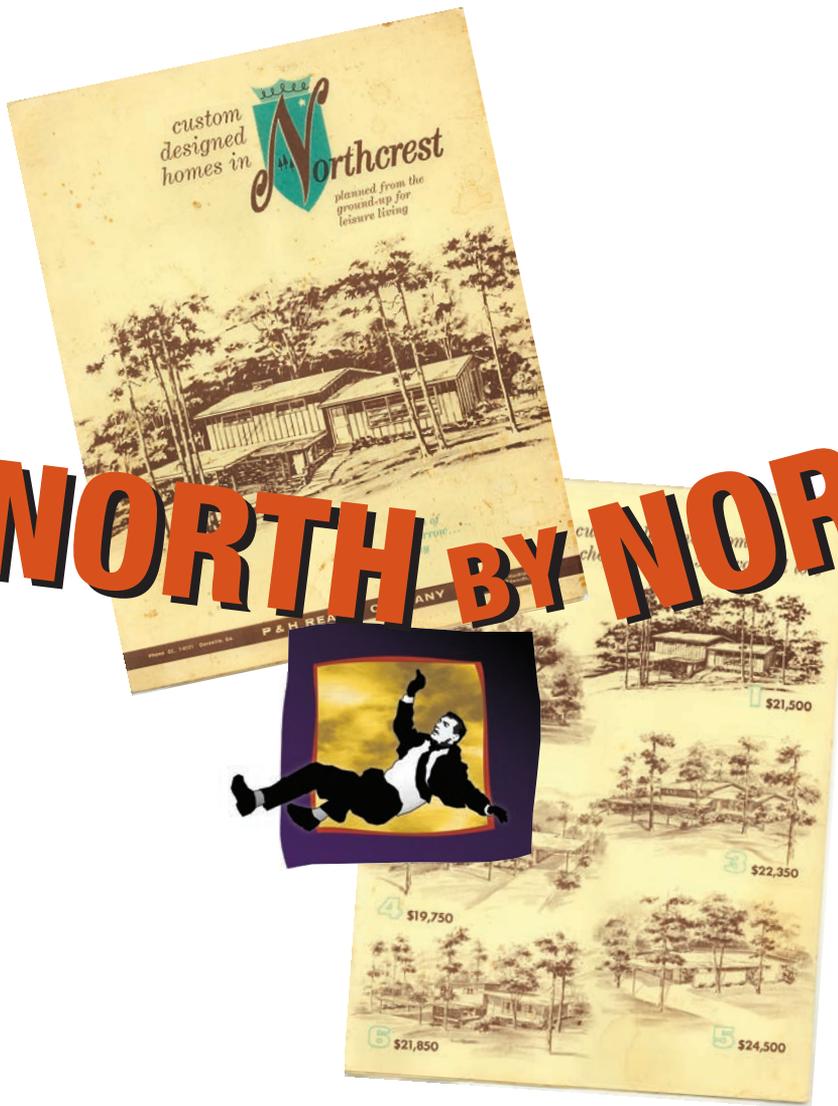


Inspiring 1950s Interiors

Over-the-top rooms from Armstrong Flooring vintage advertising are a great guide to re-creating authenticity in your own ranch. What colors were they using in living rooms? What bath fixtures should I be looking for at the salvage yard? Softcover, 176 pp., \$29.95

NORTH BY NORTHCREST

Atlanta's
modernist
'hood



text Brian Robboy

photography Clay Miller

research & production Doug Thornburg

Thomas Multhaup and Charles Hooper were pointed to Northcrest, a sprawling subdivision of more than 500 homes, because of the preponderance of midcentury houses rarely found in “Tara Land.” When they first saw their 1972 contemporary ranch, it had been vacant and neglected for quite some time. They knew it would be a big job to bring it back, but also saw its tremendous potential. Many original features—the secluded swimming pool and screened back patio, tongue-and-groove ceilings, exposed beams and skylights—now blend seamlessly with a high-end modern kitchen, slate-tiled entryway and three spa-like bathrooms. A mix of modern and midcentury furniture, along with Charles’ original artwork, pulls it all together.

Northcrest’s housing stock is mostly contemporary single- and split-level ranch styles not often seen in the Atlanta area, built between the late 1950s through the early 1970s on what was once farmland and pine forest. In those days, the area was pretty much a rural outpost: a 1962 newspaper ad invites, “Drive Out Today! Open Until Dark!” Today, its location near several major freeways is convenient to just about anywhere in the city, yet it has the quiet feel of a suburban neighborhood.

Builders Walter Talley, Howard Hardrath and Paul Edwards established Northcrest under the company name “THE, Inc.” (derived from their last names) in the late 1950s. Early on, Talley either became a silent partner or bowed out completely, leaving Edwards and Hardrath to continue under a new name, P&H Realty Company. P&H remained the primary builder in Northcrest, but sold a few lots to other builders with similar visions. Probably the largest development of contemporary homes in the area, Northcrest was a veritable oasis for those looking for something different in a new home.



Charles Hooper and Thomas Multhaup's remodeled home combines dining, living and music making all in one open area. Charles' colorful artwork is complemented by two red Arne Jacobsen Egg Chairs.



A variation on a midcentury theme, Laurie and Jeff Demetriou's phase-one house was built 14 years before the Hooper/Multhaup home on the preceding page but they both have similar vertical siding and now-painted brick facades on the lower levels. The interior walls are gallery white, all the better to display their growing collection of contemporary art.



For Elly Benson, who moved her family from Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1965, finding Northcrest was a relief. “We really wanted a contemporary home and everything we saw in Atlanta was traditional,” she says. “As soon as I walked in the door and saw the open floor plan and dual fireplaces, I knew this was the place.”

P&H initially offered six different exterior styles built around their signature “California Contemporary” tri-level floor plan. Five featured wide roof overhangs, single or double carports and clean, modern lines reminiscent of Palm Springs’ residential architecture. An updated Colonial model offered a more traditional all-brick face and a columned two-story front porch, yet still retained P&H’s innovative layout and modern interior features. A striking A-frame design, which featured a soaring, two-story living room and a loft above the dining room in the peak of the “A,” came just a few years later. Most homes are on large lots measuring roughly 100’ x 180’ or more.

Jeff and Laurie Demetriou’s home was built in 1958, and was part of the Phase 1 designs offered by P&H. Despite multiple renovations, many of the original architectural details still remain: the exposed wood ceiling, the tar and gravel roof and the original entry door and star-shaped doorknob escutcheon, which has been meticulously renovated. A new kitchen features several nods to the home’s midcentury character, and a collection of modern furniture and artwork makes their home a showplace.

Project 60 House

One of the first structures built in Northcrest was the Atlanta Home Builders Association’s “Project 60” Research House. Completed in 1959 for the Atlanta Parade of Homes and dubbed “The House of Tomorrow ... Today,” the Project 60 House opened up a new dimension in modern living.

With Atlanta Gas Light Company as a major participant, the Project 60 House featured an amazing array of advanced natural gas technology. Behind the traditional Georgian exterior were such innovative features as all-season central gas air conditioning (one unit cools and heats), automatic gas hot water service, and even a “lazy man’s built-in gas char-grill” on the patio. The beautiful kitchen was modern to the nth degree, with a Whirlpool/RCA gas refrigerator and icemaker for ever-ready ice cubes and a KitchenAid built-in dishwasher that

matched the cabinets. Billed as “the house that cleans itself,” the Project 60 House also included a central vacuum system with futuristic wall ports, and a natural gas incinerator.

Other innovative features included rounded ceilings, built-in dimmable fluorescent cove illumination, low-voltage switches with pre-programmed scene lighting, a sunken living room and floor-to-ceiling interior doors. The home’s two bathrooms each feature Formica wall tile (with a “wife-time” guarantee—no grout lines to scrub!), and a “paperless” commode with integrated swing-out bidet.

The home, passed down to current owner Bette Hansen by her parents, who purchased it in 1962, still retains the original kitchen and the bathrooms remain untouched. The entryway has its original marble-patterned linoleum flooring, and the lighting and low-voltage systems are still in operation, including the dinner-plate-size rheostat on the living room wall.



Courtesy Bette Hansen



Brian Robb

Doug Thornburg's house is home to a remarkable collection of Heywood-Wakefield tables, midcentury furniture, funky lamps and other vintage decor.



The aqua paint job, a three-light steel door from G.W. Trapp Company and exterior lighting by Remcraft bring Thornburg's home back to midcentury splendor. Completing the effect is "Marilyn," a matching turquoise 1963 Mercury Monterey.

Opposite: Chalet Away: The colorful pendant lamp in Lora and Phil Buonpastore's A-frame living room was highlighted in an early 1960s *Atlanta Journal* article about the home.



Thornburg's basement has a full-on South Seas bar with travel posters, tiki mugs galore and vintage bar stools. Off camera, past the rattan armchairs, is a seating area with a cushy sectional, Heywood-Wakefield tables and tropical motif curtains framing the windows.

Doug Thornburg is only the second owner of a remarkably well-preserved 1961 tri-level, which he purchased in 2006. Doug has kept as much originality as possible, evident in the pink bath fixtures and tile, and the original sparkly Formica on the built-in vanity. He has added a new IKEA kitchen with '60s-style boomerang countertops, painted both interior and exterior in authentic midcentury hues and transformed the family room and built-in wet bar into a fabulous tiki lounge.

The 1963 P&H A-frame owned by Phil and Lora Buonpastore was featured in an early '60s spread in the *Atlanta Journal*. It hasn't changed much since then, retaining its yellow exterior, hardwood floors in the bedroom, mint-green bathroom fixtures and mosaic tile floor, and the colorful "beach-ball" pendant lamp hanging from the 24-foot ceiling in the main living area. The house is one of the few in the neighborhood to boast five levels, including a full basement newly remodeled in 2008.

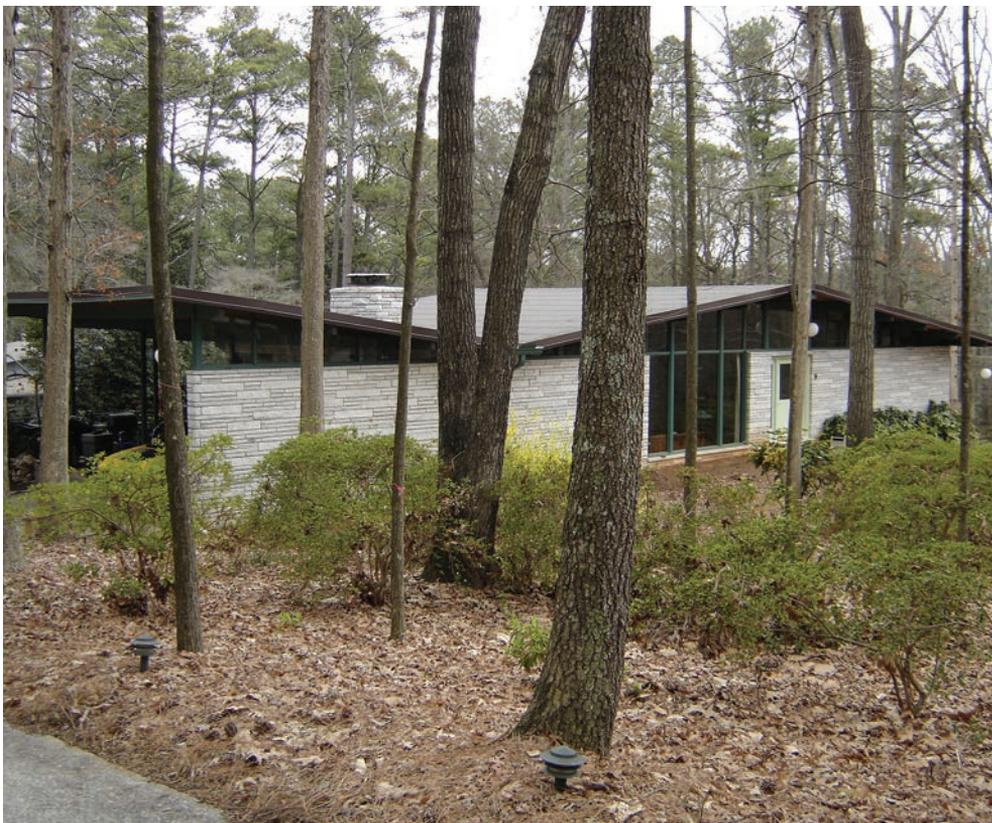
The basic P&H floor plan was "a marvel of modern design and efficiency" according to sales literature, with kitchen and baths located around a central core of mechanicals. Upstairs are a master bedroom and bath, two other bedrooms and a larger hallway bath. A single, sunken "Jack & Jill" tub (with sliding glass shower doors on both sides) allows access from either bath. The middle level features an open plan living room, kitchen and dining room with sliding glass doors to a rear patio. Downstairs are another full bath, a fourth bedroom and a family room with a fireplace. Additional square footage options were available, as some homes have extended living/dining areas, larger bedrooms and full basements.

"Planned for leisure living," a P&H home included front and rear patios, wood tongue-and-groove ceilings (in all but the traditional model), an indoor planter and a skylight. Also standard were deluxe General Electric built-in kitchen appliances, a breakfast bar, walk-in closets and wall-to-wall carpeting. Helen Nawrocki, who paid \$20,000 for her Northcrest home in 1962, notes, "I actually saved \$400 by opting for hardwood floors. That was a lot of money back then!"





Above: Daniel Troppy and Mitch Waldman's 1968 house has a double front door, a feature found only on the later P&H homes in Northcrest.



Opposite: Author Brian Robboy and Kevin Gnewikow's home was a tri-level as built in 1959. A three-story addition houses a garage/workshop, laundry, master bedroom and bath, and a full-on media loft.

Left: Inside the unusual exterior, the Sokol-Eaton butterfly roof house has a floating staircase, built-in planters, a master bath with black and gold tiles and fixtures, another bath in pink and black, globe pendant lighting and an early '60s Nutone intercom and music system.

The neighborhood's wooded, rolling hills and winding streets make it the perfect setting for contemporary homes. But the magic is really in the people who give this subdivision a true sense of neighborhood. While Northcrest began as a primarily white, middle-class tract, today it is home to an ethnically and socially diverse mix of people from various walks of life. Original owners, now in their 70s and 80s live harmoniously with young families, gay and lesbian couples (with and without children), single professionals, extended families and a surprising number of people who actually grew up in Northcrest in the '60s and '70s only to return to the neighborhood with families of their own.

Rob Roglin, whose late parents, Millard and Vivian Roglin, were original owners, remembers “a very social neighborhood—open back yards with no fences, kids playing on the front lawns and bridge parties with neighbors that often included cocktails at the built-in family room wet bar.” A neighborhood swim and tennis club, built on land donated by P&H, and the Hoe 'n' Hope Garden Club are still going strong today.

Most newcomers to Northcrest are looking specifically for a midcentury home to make their own, or at least have an appreciation for midcentury modern style. Some have restoration and preservation in mind, while others prefer to modernize. But most are keen to work within the original style, maintaining the clean lines and modern details of these historic homes.

Five years ago, Daniel Troppy and Mitch Waldman set out to find a home to go with their extensive collection of vintage midcentury furniture, which includes pieces by Florence Knoll, Mies van der Rohe, Jens Rison, Gio Ponti and Dunbar. They searched for months before stumbling upon Northcrest and their 1968 house, which had seen very few renovations. The original wood ceilings, skylight and built-in planter are all in fabulous shape, which has made it much easier for them to restore the home to the era in which it was built.

Cindi Sokol and John Eaton's home—often referred to as “the butterfly house” because of its roofline—is easily the most unusual in the neighborhood. This custom home was built in 1964 by P&H, but bears little resem-





Opposite: A year before their purchase, Hartmut and Stephanie Jordan's 1961 P&H tri-level was occupied by its original owner and covered in wall-to-wall orange shag. A complete renovation by interim owner and neighbor Wyman Heeden brought floor-to-ceiling glass panel doors and windows, an all-new kitchen and stainless steel ceiling fans and hardware to the mix; the original floating stairs, midcentury modern fireplaces and blown-glass light fixtures remain. The orange 1970 Plymouth Barracuda parked in the driveway belonged to the home's original owner.

This page: Hector Pages and Ken Hedrick's three-bedroom ranch home features an open-plan living area with multiple skylights and vaulted ceilings. A separate wing tucks the bedrooms and baths away from the hubbub of the main living areas, which allows the couple to entertain easily and to enjoy their home as it was intended—with a focus on leisure activities.



blance to their more mainstream tri-levels. It features full clerestory windows across the front, that unique roofline and a facade wrapped entirely in "Cherokee marble," a white granite mined in north Georgia. Inside, a unique sunken living room, dining room and kitchen add to the ultra-modern feel. The home had been meticulously maintained in its original state by its former owners and retains nearly all of its original features. Since their purchase in 2002, John and Cindi have spent each passing year upgrading systems, renewing, cleaning and restoring; they consider themselves fortunate to have the opportunity to preserve this landmark home.

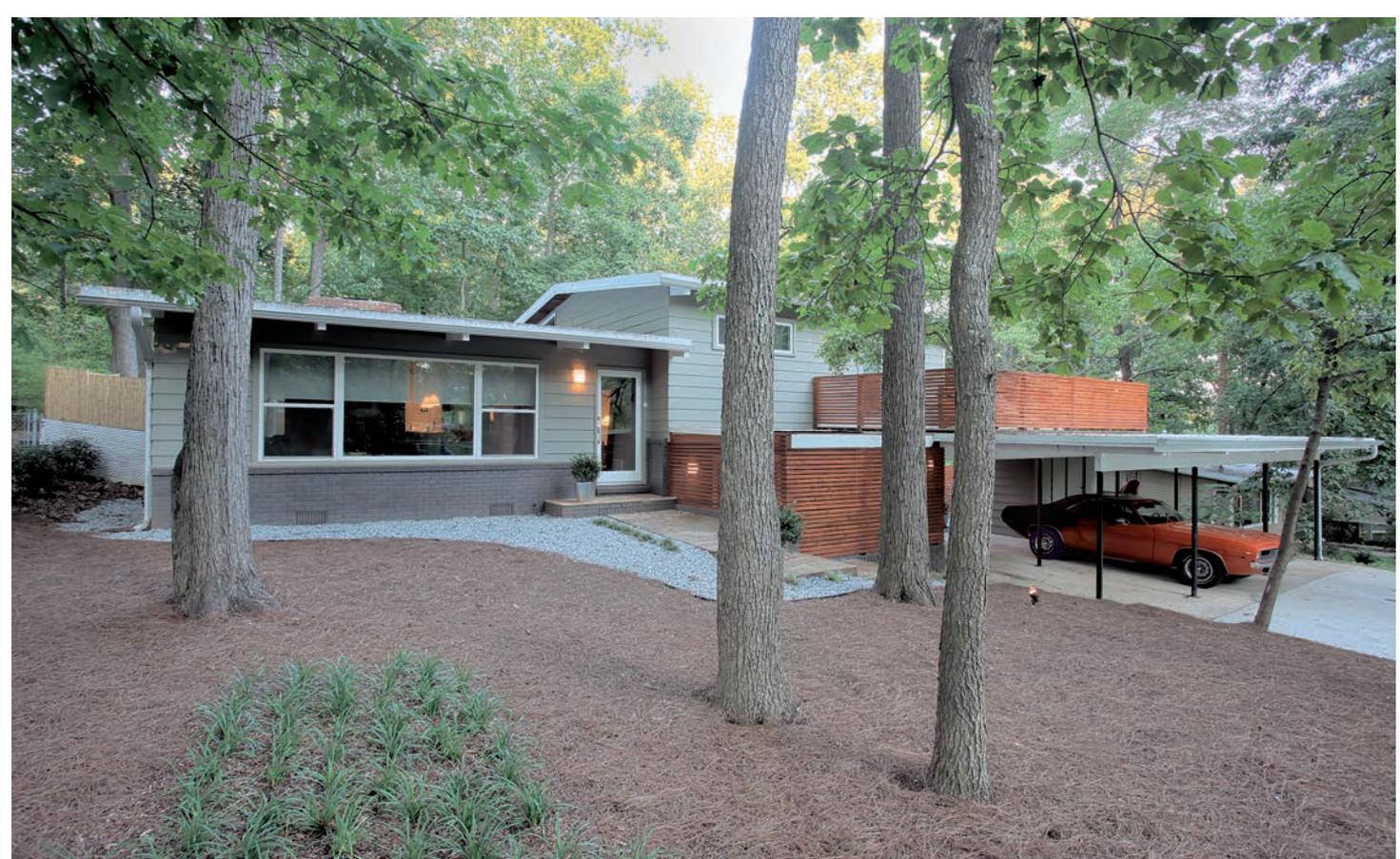
In updating our own 1959 P&H tri-level, my partner, Kevin Gnewikow, and I have strived to incorporate technology while preserving as many original features as possible. A pink hall bath and original hardwood floors live alongside Kevin's techno-toys and vintage Macintosh computers, and a Danish modern wall unit is home to my collection of retro kitchen appliances. Our kitchen also includes a few midcentury flashbacks: a 1960s KitchenAid trash compactor, a 1955 Nutone mixer/blender built into the Corian countertop, an abundance of Pyrex glassware and custom backsplash tiles I produced with images scanned from retro cookbooks and magazines.

The influx of homebuyers who have a true appreciation for the neighborhood's history, modern style and social atmosphere has contributed to a significant increase in the value of existing Northcrest homes. Along with the tract's consistent style, this makes the teardown trend found in many other older neighborhoods a far less attractive option in Northcrest and helps to stave off the invasion of the McMansions.

Today Northcrest is still a very social neighborhood. On a pleasant summer evening, you're likely to find any number of residents out walking, chatting with neighbors and their kids riding scooters and bikes. And it's not unusual to see one or two of them headed toward a neighbor's house with covered dish in hand. 🇺🇸

Graphic designer Brian Robboy is the grandson of an unclaimed freight dealer, genetically predisposing him to midcentury collecting. Doug Thornburg grew up near Palm Springs, where he developed an appreciation for midcentury architecture; he got serious about collecting midcentury furnishings about 12 years ago, and now considers his Northcrest home the perfect place in which to showcase them. Clay Miller has been a photographer in Atlanta for almost 20 years, shooting for department stores, advertising agencies, corporate America and magazines.

The author thanks John Eaton for the historical neighborhood information found on northcrestmodern.com, which was a major source for this article.



Working Class

Modest ranches are loveable, too.



Heroes

text Michelle Gringeri-Brown

photography Jim Brown



Humming an Original Tune

“We bought this house primarily because we needed a two-car garage,” says loan officer Kari Briggs, 36. “Our bungalow had a very small garage constructed in the 1930s and we need to house our two old cars,” adds her husband, David Wolski, a 44-year-old web designer. “Kari’s is a ’61 Falcon and mine is a 1973 Porsche 911. But we were never looking to buy a house—we got lost here on the way to the hardware store.”

That fateful day the couple pulled over to consult a map and saw a For Sale sign with an open house scheduled for the next morning. They were just diving into a bathroom project, part of a meticulous eight-year renovation on their bungalow, but decided to check out the traditional ranch with a view. It was in the quiet, hilly Mt. Tabor area of Portland, Ore., a world away from their neighborhood of tight bungalows on even tighter lots.

“All of the years we had a bungalow we didn’t want anything but that,” says Wolski, “but on walks and bike rides we saw other houses with more elbow room.”

“I’ve always been a fan of modern architecture—more, probably, than David has been,” Briggs relates. “This house was so expansive and so bright, and there were plugs in every room!” Figure in single-level living and as-built condition and the couple was sold.

“It was completely original and unmolested. In our bungalow, in order to fix something, we had to undo the previous owner’s repairs,” Wolski says. “This was a lot like my grandma’s house. When we saw it we just had that fall-in-love moment.”

Built in 1955, the house has an L-shape living/dining room, a gigantic kitchen with a breakfast nook area and tons of storage, two bedrooms and one bath upstairs, and another finished room and full bath in the basement. Oh, and that all-important double garage tucked underneath. Yet the 1,750-square-foot home had languished on the market for close to a year. They figure that was because most house hunters were deterred by its dirty state, modest main-floor bedroom/bath count and a lack of appreciation for the era. “This was 2003; people weren’t as excited with modern as they are today,” Wolski observes.

The pair poured on the steam to finish the bungalow bath renovation so it could go on the market while they closed on the Mt. Tabor ranch and planned their wedding. After surviving those pressures, projects at the new house included reroofing, electrical system upgrade, refinishing the hard-

The custom garage doors are made of mahogany and fir and finished by homeowners Kari Briggs and David Wolski. A local company assembled and hung the doors on the two-car garage, which houses the couple’s vintage cars, including the 1961 Ford Falcon.



Briggs, a former bartender, concocted this special drink.

The Atomic Rancher

- 1 oz vodka
 - 1/2 oz dry vermouth
 - 1/4 oz apricot brandy
 - 1 1/2 tsp. grenadine
 - 1/2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
 - 1 maraschino cherry
- (Tipsy Cherries by Sable & Rosenfeld are the best!)



Combine ingredients in cocktail shaker with ice; shake well. Strain into martini glass & garnish with cherry.

wood floors, lite plumbing and fresh interior paint. Thirteen different paints to be specific, culled down from 22 Benjamin Moore samples. Wolski, who admits to being a research geek, says the color choices weren't necessarily slavish to the period, but still give a warm, homey feeling.

Despite the kitchen's copious vintage amenities—storage for a sheaf of cookie sheets and anything else you can imagine, a great floor plan for parties, 70-some drawer and door pulls, “cracked-ice” Formica counters and ye-olde-colonial-brick-patterned linoleum flooring—one thing they really missed was a dishwasher. The couple has since solved this with a Bosch model that their contractor, TopHammer, fit very carefully into the existing cabinetry.

“They removed two cupboards and a drawer, but reused the old materials to create a smaller, matching recycling cupboard adjacent to the dishwasher,” Wolski reports. “The original coved linoleum floor had to be carefully sectioned so it could be peeled back and the dishwasher slid in, then the coving rebuilt. With the loss of the cupboards and their interior bracing, new structural elements for the countertop had to be built—and all of this without damaging either the countertop or floors. TopHammer was very sensitive to the special needs of an older home, and even reused the old wood instead of buying new. When people come over, they don't even notice it—it looks like it was always there. I would strongly recommend them to anyone; we will be using them again.”

When it came to furnishings, much of what they have also lived at their bungalow. A pair of circa 1961 Robsjohn-Gibbings armchairs sits in the kitchen nook, a





A Dania couch in the living room is one of the few non-vintage pieces in the house. Next to it is a Heywood-Wakefield step end table and a black Saarinen 71 armchair.

Below: The bath in pre-perfect mode.

generic vintage table surrounded with dining chairs marked "Blowing Rock Furniture Co., Lenoir, N.C." are in the dining room, while the living room is somewhat eclectic and avoids the modern icons—just what they prefer. "If I see one more Noguchi table ..." Wolski pronounces in mock disgust. "I prefer B-grade players and locally made items. Authenticity is important—I'm not a big fan of reproductions."

Speaking of authenticity, Wolski showed off the upstairs bath with a touch of dissatisfaction. Seems its wall-mounted light was a Home Depot copy of a vintage model, which would have had more chrome and perhaps a basket weave shade for that understated elegance while you shave. Next time we visited, when their home was on a local architectural heritage group tour, the period-correct model was in place. Cross one off the punch list.

The couple is also proud of their garage door solution. "We ordered the doors in mahogany and fir, had them delivered in pieces, and we finished them with linseed oil to bring out the grain and natural color, then multiple coats of marine spar varnish," Wolski explains. "The manufacturer called back to confirm the order and said, 'Are you sure this is what you want? We haven't made anything like this in 30 years.' Music to my ears."

Still on their to-do spreadsheet are exterior paint and landscaping. But four years in, while they may occasionally long for their bungalow porch, they don't miss running up and down stairs, and they relish their architectural maturation from Victorian to bungalow to postwar ranch. "We walked in, took about three steps and gave each other 'the look,' " recalls Wolski. "It's like meeting somebody special: You say, Wow! This is the one."



Working Class Heroes

And a Green One ... (with apologies to Malvina)

text Cheyenne Wortham

photography Jim Brown

Coming home to a 30-day eviction notice sure was a great way to jump-start the home buying process. (Gotta love those not-entirely-aboveboard condo conversions!) Having already enrolled in a Home Buying 101 class at the Portland Housing Center, I was on track, but the timeline was, well, no longer my own.

Somehow my luck turned and I found a house the first day out with my real estate agent. It really stood out from the pack, as it wasn't a heavy fixer, on a busy road or a partially finished flip. And yes, it had style. Buried under five layers of wallpaper, but style nonetheless. A large open living and dining room, adorable scalloped built-ins leading into the kitchen, three decent sized bedrooms and an actual single car garage—not the tiny, dilapidated barn or



lean-to that can pass for one here in Portland. Other than a scary '80s wood grain bathroom remodel (how they used the four-foot-high showerhead still eludes me), there were no major changes needed. Well, that's before I realized just how many layers of wallpaper there were.

Suddenly, 80 appointments and a million signatures later, the 1949 ranch was mine. I definitely got more work than I bargained for, but when isn't that the case? Starting on the living room wallpaper, a baby blue tiny-flower pattern, it emerged that there were four to five layers in the living/dining room alone. And oh so thoughtfully applied directly to the unpainted drywall. Suggestions from drywall, paint and other contractors included "wet it," "don't get water anywhere near it" and "dilute fabric softener and spray away;

Opposite; a new cedar fence replaced the rotting original and, in the process we annexed a side yard to increase private outdoor space; border collie mix Jett approves heartily. Next step: killing off the weeds and grass by sheet mulching, then replanting with drought-tolerant, native and edible plants.

Below: A mix of new, modern and vintage fits us just fine. A '50s dinette table I've had since college mixes well with Salt chairs from DWR (it was quite a task to find chairs scaled appropriately for our not-so-large dining area). The Theatre sofa, also from DWR, goes surprisingly well with our trapezoidal coffee table, an elementary school cast-off.





Left: The original tub looks great after being saved from a beige resurfacing; it blends nicely with the Kohler wall-hung sink, one-piece Vitra toilet and IKEA Saltskar cabinet. Right: The Nelson Criss Cross Bubble lamp was my first house-specific purchase, as the lines mimic the scalloped edges of the adjacent built-ins. The kitchen got an immediate facelift from Marmoleum flooring in “Sgraffito,” while the new Frigidaire faces a late-’40s O’Keefe & Merritt stove.

it’ll just fall off.” Of course nothing actually worked.

My parents, boyfriend and I spent untold hours scraping as many layers off as we could, trying to not gouge into the drywall. Satisfying huge sheets would come off, just to be followed by stubborn giant swaths of wall that wouldn’t budge. Finally we called it a day(s) and hired a drywall professional to just recoat the living room, bathroom and master bedroom, where there was wallpaper hidden under a few coats of paint. The result was more texture than I’d ideally like, but with a tight budget, sometimes paintable is what you settle for and it’s just fine. And most importantly, I realized that a boyfriend willing to scrape wallpaper for hours on end was a keeper. Josh moved in a few days after I did.

The kitchen only needed a bit of work on the cabinetry, new Marmoleum flooring and a fresh coat of paint. My vintage stove (late ’40s O’Keefe & Merritt) and fridge (’40s Philco) fit perfectly into the tiny space, just requiring a gas line run for the stove. Sadly, a few months ago the darling refrigerator died, and since the handle had been problematic (and so unusual even the vintage repair specialist couldn’t fully fix it), I had to go modern. Not having the luxury of time, we just couldn’t wait for a stylish Big Chill or Smeg. The Frigidaire matches the other upgrade I sprang for early on, a new dishwasher. Both are the simplest modern styles I could afford, and I think that, while they might not add to the vintage look of the kitchen, they don’t detract either. And more importantly, they’re all Energy Star certified.

As simple as the kitchen was, the bathroom was my test of homeownership. What should have been a quick, mostly cosmetic change took the longest to finish and is ultimately still not terribly satisfying. Everyone who sees it is complimentary, but of course, I only see the flaws. What I failed to realize was that finding a capable person to install glass tile was the biggest part of the job. One independent contractor actually destroyed most of my materials with a shoddy installation. Getting some recommendations from a contractor neighbor, I went with a large company and, while the floor (penny rounds from ModWalls) looks fantastic, the shower’s mini-subway tile is a mix of straight lines and wonky stretches. A new low-flow one-piece toilet and wall-hung sink match the refinished, original tub.

While the previous owners went crazy with the wallpaper, they thankfully also carpeted the wood floors—leaving us with a surface that was easily refinished, probably the biggest visual impact and the best bang for the buck. There was a bizarre section of asphalt squares in the dining room under the carpet, but thankfully they were no match for the pros (Trinity Flooring). Painting the living room and hallway finished things and I could finally move in, almost two months to the day from closing.

It felt like an eternity, but after reading so many stories of living in and through remodeling, I’m very happy to have waited. And having moved from an area where I never could have afforded a studio condo, I actually have a home, something I couldn’t even dream of before.



Working Class Heroes



Don't know why
there's no sun up in the sky
Stormy Weather

text Bromley Davenport

photography Jim Brown

You can almost picture a fading '40s ingénue floating down the stairs in her peignoir to answer the heavy oak door with a Pekinese tucked under her arm. But it's David Storm, a 35-year-old art director in the film industry, who invites us into his 1942 clapboard ranch in north Portland. Instead of a Pekinese, it's Curtis and Kathy, two very sturdy cats, and instead of a peignoir, it's a vintage-y sports shirt covering a tattoo of an atomic bomb.

Although he's set dressed glossy movies like "The Aviator" and "Bruce Almighty," and done his share of Bo-

Flex commercials, his home embodies the type of interiors he's becoming known for professionally: livable mid-century a la Norman Rockwell, places that feel real down to the John F. Kennedy portrait hanging in the basement rec room. The Polish brothers' "Northfork" and Wim Wender's "Don't Come Knocking" showcase his approach on a widescreen scale.

Storm bought the house in 2004 when he fled LA's rat race. "The era drew me in," he says. "My ideal house would be a fun, late-'50s ranch—simple, with Roman brick, but not too kitschy or cute. Basically middle America, something very livable, but not the sock-hop '50s."

The home has wide arched doorways in the dining room and wood window moldings, picture rails and a Deco-esque fireplace surround, all of which could have dictated

traditional furniture in another owner's hands. After pulling up wall-to-wall carpeting, Storm was happy to find hardwood floors in good condition and in the attic discovered the original wooden window cornices. He put them back up in the living room and bought pairs of vintage drapes from an old hotel while on location.

"Window coverings are something people skimp on nowadays; they're a lot of work," he says. "You have to have them cleaned once a year, and finding the right tracks and someone who does pinch pleats just right—it's not easy. But drapery really sells a period room; they're right for this era."

His background in affordable authenticity means he still haunts garage and estate sales, but he found much of his midcentury collection 10 years ago when things were more affordable. Renting pieces for jobs, Storm sees pop-



"The counters are Marmoleum," says David Storm of his back-to-the-'40s kitchen restoration. "Linoleum was the major material of the era for countertops and floors. As a set decorator I was kind of going for historical accuracy." The vintage-looking clock and cabinet handles are from Rejuvenation.

The backs of the living room sectional adjust into several positions so you can recline in comfort. "The good thing about vintage is, when these couches are worn out, they can always be reupholstered again," says Storm. "The same thing with the dining set; vintage holds its value compared to something brand new." The bomb casing table has since been moved outside and turned into a fountain, and a Heywood-Wakefield bookcase added to the mix.



We were charmed by the original bath, but Storm plans to tile the walls, replace the sink and reporcelain the tub. Vintage fabric under glass lends a decorative touch to a shelf without being over the top.

The Heywood-Wakefield dining room table and upholstered chairs date from 1953, the only year they made these pre-dog-bone-style chairs, the homeowner says.

Opposite: On a quiet block in the Piedmont neighborhood of Portland, Storm chose Sherwin Williams' Burma Jade for the trim on his lamentably vinyl-clad house, which he'd like to paint in a punchier color.



David Storm's Favorites

Vintage Furniture

Space Invaders, Long Beach, Calif.
Hawthorne Vintage, Portland, Ore.
Portland Modern, Portland
Lounge Lizard, Portland

Color Schemes

'40s & '50s: true reds, greens & black
'60s: chartreuse, teal, pink
exteriors: Sherwin Williams'
Suburban Modern palette

Vintage Lamps

California Raymor
Majestic
Continental Art Lamp Co.

ularity trends: "In LA, people younger than me, in their 20s, are buying chrome and Lucite '70s and '80s; nothing I'd ever have in my house," he says with a faint shudder. He bought Danish Modern at the Rose Bowl swap meet in the late '90s, but sees it as what you can afford before moving up to Heywood-Wakefield.

The living room has a "tropical feel with Asian and tribal influences" in the accessories and art. The stocky curved sectional is a hand-me-down from David Lynch (Storm worked on "Lost Highway") that he reupholstered, and the tables are an eclectic mix—from a Heywood-Wakefield side table to a repro boomerang coffee table and side table from Rejuvenation to a glass-topped bomb casing that holds decorative glassware and figurines.

In the dining room, Storm manages to balance "stuff" (a built-in china cabinet full of vintage and new Fiesta ware collected by his roommate) with "spare" (a Nelson bubble lamp and a graphic print in a modern frame) and "vintage" (the 1953 Heywood-Wakefield upholstered chairs and drop-leaf table). It leads to a small, unusually laid out kitchen that he rescued from a '70s almond remodel. The buffed version has red linoleum counters with a coved backsplash and aluminum edging, and green and yellow VCT tile on the floor. Storm says the great period images on plan59.com give him ideas for both home and work.

The 1,877-square-foot house has two bedrooms and one bath on the main floor. The low-ceilinged basement has

a game room with a pass through to a family room, another ad hoc bath and lots of storage and service crannies. A previous owner added a large bedroom up a steep flight of stairs, but its awkward architectural lines make Storm avert his eyes when he's out in the compact back yard.

Wanting to free himself from lawn maintenance, he spent about \$5,000 landscaping the corner lot. He considered replacing his chain link back fence with wood but was daunted by the \$2,300 quote so settled for camouflaging it with reed fencing for now.

Foundation, bedding and specimen plants include New Zealand flax, manzanitas, decorative grasses, hedges, evergreens and a sculptured shrub that hints at the '50s craze for poodle-cut boxwood. Most were bought at Cistus, a nursery that specializes in Mediterranean plants and hardy tropicals.

"I thought I'd have less work with less grass, but I have more weeding now," he notes. "Still, it's been a good investment. The neighborhood is changing for the better—younger 20- and 30-somethings are moving in."

There's a list of projects he'd still like to get to: insulation, electrical upgrades, a dishwasher and maybe different appliances in the kitchen. The most daunting one is removing the Sears vinyl siding, a bland facade he chafes under. He'd like to paint the exterior something sprightly like salmon. As he notes, "No art director wants a white house!" 🙄



ranchdressing

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



Q: I purchased a coffee table and three end tables from a neighbor who recently sold her home and was moving. I couldn't resist their "atomic"

design! She said the set belonged to her husband's parents and they appear to be made of walnut, but I can't find any markings or identification on them. I was wondering if you could tell me anything about them, such as who manufactured them, the approximate date and what their insurance replacement value might be?

Jo Grooms

A: *Nick Horvath's Denver take:* "The tables are Adrian Pearsall for Craft Associates, dating to the 1960s. Often misattributed to Vladimir Kagan, these Pearsall pieces were definitely influenced by the organic fluid lines of Kagan's work, but they lacked the quality and craftsmanship (the butt joints are instant giveaways!). As for value, they are really all over the board, and I would sug-

gest a few scours of eBay, mixed with some real website prices that will give you a comfortable value range. Nice score, by the way, as these tables are real hot right now!

In LA, Peter Maunu adds, "Your tables appear to be solid walnut and in excellent condition. The Kagan versions from the '50s are a bit more elegant (thicker glass, more refined sculptural forms) and would fetch a higher price, but these are good examples of midcentury biomorphic design and are definitely of value. I would leave the insurance replacement cost to a reputable local dealer."

Q: While surfing the free section of our local craigslist we found a 9' MCM couch that needs a facelift. It was only a few miles away from where we lived so how could we not go and get it? The couch has original fabric but somewhere along the line its legs were replaced with not so nice banister railing legs. Ick!



We thought a nice set of pointy blond wood legs would look correct and be easy to locate, however it has suddenly become clear that that is not the case. Before we commission someone to make us a set, I thought I would ask if you know of anybody who sells these types

of legs. Of course actual legs from the '50s are preferred but under the circumstances repros would not be turned down. Any leads or ideas would be appreciated.

Angela Pinegar

A: *Maunu writes, "For the sofa legs, you can try Van Dyke's Restorers, which has one '50s-type leg. It is not exactly the same dimensions as the sample photo sent, but it might serve your needs. To find vintage ones would be difficult, but you never know what will turn up at the flea market or thrift shop. vandykes.com/product/02024326/*

Two other possible solutions are found at Ian Maclean's hairpinlegs.com: 4" tall raw steel hairpin legs are \$14 each, or if the couch design is sleekly midcentury modern, he makes custom-height tube legs in round, square or rectangular profiles. Like a "free" puppy, this couch might become a great investment project.

Q: It took me two years of living in a midcentury modern home to put a name on the architecture and another year to find your magazine. Accustomed to more traditional homes, I'm falling in love with my 1960 home in a beautiful Amarillo neighborhood.

My question is about exterior paint color: We have whitish brick, lovely terra cotta bricks and stained wood front doors with black iron security gates. We are considering painting the white brick and all other woodwork. Do you have color suggestions? We've looked in books and driven throughout many neighborhoods but still seem to be stuck.

Vivian Denham

A: *Greg McKinney, whose own midcentury home was featured on Apartment Therapy, has some practical first-hand advice: "Personally, I think the colors look wonderful as they are. Like painting any masonry, it isn't the best idea to cover a textured surface when that sur-*

face is still in good condition. Paint is intended to hide damage or repairs, and if there aren't any, leave it as is would be my advice.

If the brick appears soiled, I would recommend power washing with a high-pressure sprayer. If it still looks unpleasant after washing, only then consider paint.



Repainting will need to be done every few years by a professional crew, creating new costs and maintenance where it isn't needed now. For preparation, you'll have to dig into flowerbeds and power wash the brick or the paint will not adhere for long. And good luck finding a responsible contractor who'll take the time and effort to do it right.

If you are still convinced it needs paint, stick with something that matches the color. When it flakes off, it won't be too noticeable. Sorry if this sounds overly negative, but it's the truth—we have painted brick inside and out, and it's always flaking.

Erin Marshall from Kismet Design has some additional thoughts: "I am definitely going to second the advice of not painting your brick. The facade looks to be in great condition and the bricks are a pleasing color blend.

I do think that your house could use more pizzazz, though. Many ranch houses tend to look flat with their

ranchdressing

long, low rooflines and attached garages; yours is no exception, but you also have a pretty, bumped-out entry. You can add dimension by playing up the depth of the eaves and employing a sculptural landscape design.

It is almost impossible to work off photos when suggesting color, especially since sun orientation and surrounding properties are key. (I can only imagine the light quality of the Texan sun; here in Oregon, color is a different animal.) Looking at the grayed cedar roof, in combination with what I see as a warm pale-yellow and terra-cotta facade, here's a general approach to consider:

On Benjamin Moore's classic fan deck, I'd guess your light bricks to be equivalent to "Cameo White" and the terra-cotta bricks to "Audubon Russet HC 51." The window casings and fascia boards could go darker. I plugged in "Raccoon Hollow 978," or "Strathmore Manor 244," or "Free Spirit 245" for the fascia, window casing, rafter tails and garage door. These are rich, sophisticated neutrals that will compliment and enhance the other surfaces.

One point to note is these colors are a number three base—fairly dark, but they will still separate from the doors and look great with the black iron. Leave the underside of the eaves light; three steps up on the same chip card is always a safe bet. Also consider more interesting window coverings in your vestibule to the right of the door—woven woods or plantation shades will make the windows more of a feature.

Q: Any ideas regarding the manufacturer of this 4'-tall chrome floor lamp? I've seen it in a few different articles in various magazines and in a book, but I can't find any detailed info. I'd appreciate any ideas.

Karin Koller Webb

A: *Maunu replies:* "The lamp is a riff on the Bauhaus classic table lamp designed by Carl J. Jucker and Wilhelm Wagenfeld circa 1923–24. Yours is probably a



post-'70s product with an "X" base instead of the round base and, as a floor lamp, the dimensions are larger; I don't know the company or maker.

The original desk lamp is an icon of modern design, as the MoMA site indicates:

'Through the employment of simple geometric shapes—circular base, cylindrical shaft and spherical shade—Wagenfeld and Jucker achieved "both maximum simplicity and, in terms of time and materials, greatest economy." The lamp's working parts are visible; the opaque glass shade, a type formerly used only for industrial lighting, helps to diffuse the light.

'Initial attempts at marketing the lamp in 1924 were unsuccessful, primarily because most of its parts were still hand assembled at the Bauhaus. Today, the lamp is widely produced by Techno-lumen of Bremen, Germany, and is generally perceived as an icon of modern industrial design.'

"Many Bauhaus designs have been readapted for contemporary settings and are usually manufactured by Italian companies. I would suspect that your lamp is such a design."

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.

My heart belongs to Palm Springs. If you've been there, you'll know what I mean; if you haven't, you've got to go.

Palm Springs is an absolute treasure trove of all things MCM. There are enough remarkable homes, motels, commercial buildings, shops and trapped-in-a-time-warp atmosphere to keep any fan drooling for, well, forever. I wanted to share some highlights to make your Palm Springs experience as amazing as mine was.

PS: HOW I SPENT MY





SPRING VACATION

text & photography Tony Neal

Take advantage of the locals

If you are planning a trip, it is an absolute must to contact the Palm Springs Modern Committee. PSMODCOM is a well-organized, committed group of people who have a passion for all things modern in the Palm Springs area. They produce an indispensable, illustrated self-guided map (\$8 at psmodcom.com/maps.html) to many of the local mod hotspots. We found it to be extremely well researched and easy to use; just leave lots of time for your driving tour, because there is no shortage of places to visit.

If you time it right, PSMODCOM hosts an incredible one-day tour of local modern homes in the spring (April 4, 2009 is the next one) that allows tour goers into some of most drop-dead, drool-worthy houses in the valley. Many of the pictures featured here are from the 2008 Classic Moderns version of the tour.

Opposite: The iconic Kaufmann House recently sold at auction for just over \$16 million. Designed by Richard Neutra in 1946 for Edgar Kaufmann Sr., the family used it as a winter retreat, perhaps when weekends at Fallingwater, their Frank Lloyd Wright house in Bear Run, Penn., were less appealing.

Above: Built high on a hill on the west side of Palm Springs, the 1958 Russell House is cut into the hillside 200 feet above the rooftops of Palm Springs. You can soak in all of the Coachella Valley from the infinity pool and, like many great period houses, nature is integrated into the design.

Places to go, things to see

In case all of the extraordinary homes and buildings on the driving tour aren't enough, there is plenty more to pack a weekend. Don't miss the iconic Palm Springs Visitor Information Center, once the Encore gas station on the road to the aerial tramway up Mount Jacinto. Based on a design by Albert Frey, this is a great place to learn about Palm Springs, pick up a PSMODCOM map and soak up the ambience of one of the area's great buildings.

Looking for just the right piece of furniture for your pad? Palm Springs is loaded with great mod shopping. Try any or all of the Revivals locations (two in Palm Springs, two in Cathedral City, one in Palm Desert), Modern Way, the Estate Sales Company or any of the heaps of stores dedicated to midcentury and modern merchandise. The biggest cluster is on N. Palm Canyon Drive, but E. Palm



Jim Brown



Top: Shot in 2001 at a Lowey event, the 1963 Frey and Chambers Tramway gas station marks the entry to Palm Springs from points west. Today it's a fitting visitors' center for modernist pilgrims.

A 1957 Alexander-built butterfly roof house in the Twin Palms section of Palm Springs is a glowing example of the classic Palmer and Krisel tract houses in the area. Twin Palms is loaded with these houses, although few are as well kept as this one. Original architect William Krisel designed the landscape in 2006. You can spend hours driving around Twin Palms ogling a seemingly endless number of houses like this.



Jim Brown (2)

When it comes to drive-by touring, North Palm Springs is no slouch. Designed by Donald Wexler as tract homes, the seven Alexander steel homes stand testament to a grand experiment in prefab design. With the wind that blows in North Palm Springs, you've got to think steel might have been the way to go...



Canyon Drive has a good selection as well, leaning to the thrift store end of the spectrum. Just don't hold your breath on finding super-cheap deals. Expect to pay premium dollars, as these folks know what the stuff is worth.

If you want full immersion, stay in one of the many true-to-midcentury hotels and motels in the area. We recommend the Orbit In for its faithful vintage style, or Caliente Tropics for its tiki-themed kitsch.

Also go see the architectural sights in Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, Indian Wells, Desert Hot Springs, Bermuda Dunes and Palm Desert. While not as well-documented as those in Palm Springs, there are many great mod homes and buildings outside of PS. And you can pay your respects to Ol' Blue Eyes: Frank Sinatra is



Ruby's Diner, in nearby Rancho Mirage, harkens back to the golden era of the drive-in with its retro 1950s vibe and mile-long Cadillacs.

Caliente Tropics is one of the few remaining Polynesian-style Palm Springs hotels built in the '60s.

The Orbit In was originally named "The Village Manor" when it was built in 1957. Rooms done up in midcentury style surround a pool and boomerang-shaped bar inside the gated courtyard.

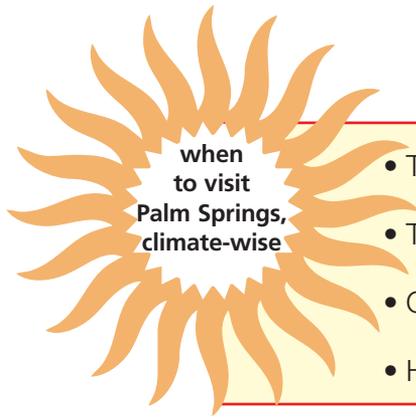




A 1958 Alexander in Palm Springs' Vista Las Palmas neighborhood. This sprawling ranch home in the west end of the tract has been immaculately restored. It has many elements of classic PS living, with a stylish enclosed front porch and a wonderfully landscaped backyard with a pool.

Its interior was packed with classic midcentury furnishings during the PSMODCOM "Classic Moderns" tour in April 2008.





- The average warmest month is July. **108°**
- The highest recorded temperature was in 1995. **123°**
- On average, the coolest month is December. **70°**
- High season is October/November through May/June. **91°-95°**

buried at the Desert Memorial Park in Cathedral City.

If you still have fuel in your atomic-powered self, return to the turnoff to the visitors' center and actually take the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway for a unique view of the Coachella Valley. To create real confusion, ride the tram in the winter, when you'll find snow at the top as you look out over the sun-baked desert. Or for a breather from all things midcentury, drive to Joshua Tree National Park. It's barely an hour from Palm Springs, but it will place you in a completely different world.

This brief tour only scratches the surface, but Palm Springs is easy to love. Anyone with an appreciation for modern design has to make the pilgrimage to the MCM oasis in the desert. The sheer volume and variety of great buildings and houses, combined with a fantastic climate, help make this town the perfect driving tour dream. 🏠

Tony Neal last wrote about Regina, Saskatchewan's postwar homes in no. 15, fall 2007.

Architecture tours, a classic car show, lectures and other special events will be part of the Palm Springs Modernism Show week February 13-19, 2009. For more PS resources and events, see pages 85 and 87.

Below: The Sieroty House is a great example of a very progressive Palm Springs vacation house from the early '40s. The home, restored in 1989, is a twin of the 1936 Halberg House; both were designed by Albert Frey.

Bottom: The hills above Palm Springs are sprinkled with homes that offer sensational views. Around every corner is a new surprise, like the 1954 Edris House sneaking up out of the rocks like it organically grew there.



N

ot long ago, my husband, John, and I came across a rare find, a listing for a 1951 house designed and built by the late, great architect Paul Hayden Kirk. At the time we weren't looking for a new place, but something about this particular space captured our interest.

The two of us met by chance, studying industrial design in England. After achieving our master's degrees, we agreed that it was time to try something new, to take a chance with one another and our surroundings. We moved to Paris, then Holland, Hong Kong and New York; the world became very broad, and we were pleasurably lost in it. The traveling, the culture, the diversity—it all seemed quite open, as open as we were to it.

During that time we had two children, our daughter Morgane, and soon after, our son, Oscar. While we loved the nomadic lifestyle we embraced as a family, we wondered if the next adventure might actually be settling down. We moved from New York to Seattle in 1999 with this in mind.

The home's open plan partitions the kitchen behind an L-shaped pony wall with built-ins on all sides. "This house is 2,000 square feet and Kirk managed to do four bedrooms of decent sizes, a playroom for the kids, a laundry and two bathrooms," says homeowner Laurence Barratt. "You feel like the light and the sun is always there, all day long." Refinished hardwood floors show off the minimal furnishings, including the modern table and chairs lit by a jumbo Nelson bubble lamp. The artwork is by Anne Simernitski.

text Laurence Barratt
photography Jim Brown



EUROPEAN



Accént

Opposite: The industrial designer homeowners researched period-appropriate colors, choosing quiet exterior hues that complement the Northwest landscape and punchy accent walls inside. The watercolors in the stairwell are by Laurence Barrett and the pendant lamp came with the house.

Vintage black Pollack chairs face a contemporary sofa in the living room, which is divided from the entry and stairwell by an original suspended bookcase.

Something Old, Something New, Something IKEA: The George Nelson reissued swag-leg desk came from Design Within Reach, the Eames side chair is vintage and the glowing bottle lamp is IKEA.

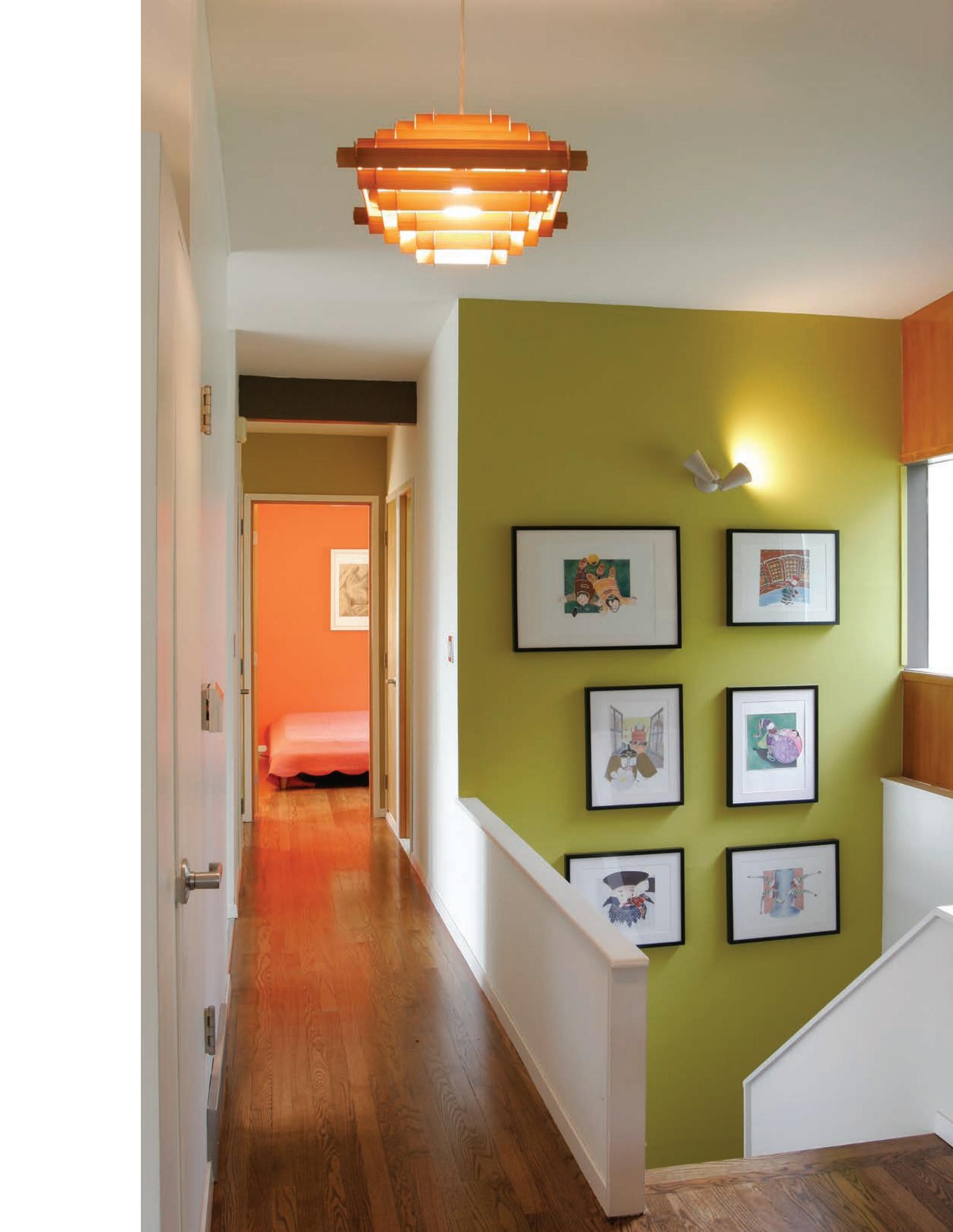


In our past we had always lived in, or very near, the center of a city. We considered the city our home, finding comfort in common places, people and our neighborhood. When we first arrived in Seattle, we felt somewhat similarly until we ran across the rare Kirk find. Considering this opportunity, we realized that, while we had always had a home, we had never, in fact, *made* a home.

With this last move I transitioned from industrial designer to real estate agent specializing in modern design homes. Not too long after, I joined 360° Modern, a group of Seattle agents with a passion for midcentury and contemporary modern architecture. From this perspective I knew opportunities such as this were few and far between.

An iconic Northwest architect from the 1950s, Kirk's style embodied the true beauty of the midcentury modern aesthetic. The residence was beyond exceptional—perfectly distributed and open and bright, it offered everything distinct to the modernist style. It was perfection, or at least, very close. To our delight, the house soon became our home, a home to finally make our very own.

Given our past, our family has a great respect for history as well as design. We longed to stay as true to the



The Midcentury Market

Realtor Richard Corff, the founder of 360° Modern who steered us to this and two other Seattle-area midcenturies, dropped by the Barratt shoot to chat. How is the MCM real estate market doing, anyway? Is it a fad that's fading fast? Here's our nonscientific, anecdotal report from nine regions ...

Corff says typical buyers fall into two camps: younger, techy, well-educated professionals and baby boomer/empty nesters downsizing to single-level living. "Ten years ago you couldn't give them away," he says of greater Seattle's midcenturies. "It's a super-heated modern market now, better than the rest of the market. I call it a flight to quality."

In Houston, Robert Searcy of Texas Real Estate & Co. sees several pluses to the increasing cachet. "Tonier areas are seeing Tuscan Villas and Faux Chateaus rising with frightening regularity in place of low-slung ranches and mods," he says. "On the positive side, the growing popularity of [these] homes with younger buyers in search of swank style at an attainable price has created a renaissance in formerly stagnating '50s neighborhoods. In Glenbrook Valley, for example, I can oftentimes sell a good mod for 10% more than a comparable traditional home."

in some other parts of the state and country, it seems we have been somewhat insulated from the worst. The two key factors in our area are location and architecture. I would say without hesitation that architectural homes in this area have sold quicker and for a better average price per square foot than more traditional home styles in the area."

"Regular ranches" are an easier sell in Portland, Ore., reports Alyssa Starelli of Bridgetown Realty. "Traditional ranches are much hotter than they were when I first started; people know the terminology and understand the aesthetic," she says. "I used to feel like I was cheerleading people into taking their first tour of a 'granny ranch'; now they're coming to me hoping to buy one. Clients prefer to restore or tastefully update and I'm seeing fewer Home Depot remuddles. Even some of the flippers get it; it's refreshing!"

Susan Rissover's Huff Realty site has some bargain-priced modern ranches in the Cincinnati area—\$150K, \$250K and up. "My typical buyer is a young professional couple—I work a lot with architects and designers, people who really appreciate good design but are working on a limited budget," she notes. "Although Cincinnati is a treasure trove of more traditional midcentury ranches, complete with incredible original baths, these have not caught on like the modern houses have and often become victims of well-meaning flippers who shop at Home Depot.

"But buyers are much more knowledgeable than they were a few years ago. Our local modernist group, cf3, has succeeded in not only bringing a group of people together who appreciate the architecture, but has worked ... to research and document our modernist homes and the architects who designed them. As our knowledge base grows, so does the appreciation," she writes.

"Our Mod houses still outperform the immediate housing that surrounds them," adds Peter Blank of Denver's Mile Hi Modern. "We command higher prices and fewer days on the market compared to the competition.

"Our buyer demographic is two-fold: empty nesters looking to downsize and first-time homebuyers. Most clients have an architectural appreciation and are actively seeking out non-traditional living spaces. We have also converted many people who have curiosity about the open floor plan and indoor-outdoor connection; the light bulb goes off in their heads and pulls at their desire to live less complicated lives," he says.

"One constantly sees modernist architecture in print ads, commercials and movies, giving it cache," writes Chicago realtor Joe Kunkel of Modern Property and cofounder of the Chicago Bauhaus and Beyond preservation group. "However, there is still a great need for in-depth education that goes beyond the style on the surface and delves into the history, structure and people behind this great movement."

It appears that midcentury ranch homes are more than holding their own in the housing market and helping to resuscitate under-appreciated neighborhoods in some regions. "We look forward to a time when the general population fully awakens to the benefits of more efficient modernist housing that reconnects people to their environment," says Southern California agent Tempereau. "Very simply, it is a wonderful way to live."



Vista Estate Imaging courtesy 360° Modern

Up in Austin, the overall real estate market is still strong, Drew Marye of The Marye Company writes us. "We're one of the few places in the country that wasn't hit hard by the economic downturn. The MCM 'trophy' properties always sell fast. These are architecturally interesting homes that are located in great neighborhoods; buyers are paying top dollar for these properties."

Southern California is reported to have had a 27% drop in the median price of a home—down to a bargain (cough) of \$370,000 from \$505,000 a year previous. Have MCMs fared better? Margot Tempereau of Deasy/Penner & Partners in the San Fernando Valley says yes: "The market downturn has certainly impacted Los Angeles, although less so in the midcentury modern market, which has remained remarkably resilient overall. [These] homes are more than a 'style' or 'design.' They offer a lifestyle choice that works especially well in the Southern California climate."

Doug Kramer of Ranchostyle.com, who specializes in the Cliff May neighborhoods of Long Beach, Calif., chimes in: "When I compare our 13% to 15% decline with the 20% to 35% decline



Pacific Northwest modernist postwar homes often include a raised, covered entryway leading from the parking area, similar to the AR summer 2008 cover home. While carports were more modern and less expensive to build than garages, midcentury architects still needed to address wet weather practicalities.

The rear of the house, with its recently installed hardscape, is mostly glass, including the bumped out breakfast nook. A walkout basement holds the children's bedrooms, a family room, a bath and laundry and utility areas.



original character of the house as possible. Our goal was never to remodel, but rather, to restore. We wanted to begin immediately, but instead decided to take a well-reasoned step back.

We started in perhaps the least obvious place, the local library. It seemed to us the better we knew our past, the better prepared we would be for our future. We spent a great deal of time researching midcentury style—from color to materials to form, exhausting the shelves.

We also researched Kirk and our new neighborhood, Norwood Village. We learned that it had earned a very special place in time: in 1947 the land was earmarked for returning veterans of World War II. Two architects, one of whom was Kirk, designed five house plans that were situated by the architects themselves to preserve the integrity of their vision. What was meant to become low-income housing became one of Seattle's great planning achievements—recognized as early as 1952 in issues of *House*



Above: In the downstairs family room, the homeowners have retained the original plywood built-ins and cooktop—for now. Oscar Barratt's boy toys can expand out of his bedroom into this TV-watching-lounge-around space that opens directly to the back patio.



In the kitchen, the Barratts traded one upper cabinet for a Bosch exhaust hood, replaced the degraded laminate counters with stainless steel and installed new appliances, including a refrigerator, oven and dishwasher drawers from Fisher & Paykel, a Bosch cooktop, Sharp microwave and Miele built-in espresso maker. VCT tiles run from the kitchen into the breakfast nook, a bumped-out area done by the long-time previous owner.

What was meant to become

low-income housing
became one of Seattle's
great planning achievements



Of two minds: Laurence Barratt would like new sinks and faucets in the upstairs bath, while her husband would prefer to keep it all original, like the half-century-old laminate counters.

and Home and *Living for Young Homemakers* magazines.

Armed with our newfound knowledge, we were at last ready and excited to begin renovations. Luckily, the house had only one previous owner and was never remodeled. Our work was cut out for us, but there was already the perfect foundation in place.

We started with the fundamentals: plumbing, electrical and the like, trusting that beauty was not at all skin deep, not in this case anyway. Next we moved to the floors, refinishing the original wood, which also included a wood wall in our living room.

We only recently finished painting the exterior and are now in the midst of having the landscape designed. In

future projects, we intend to preserve the original space, but we also want to rejuvenate it with redefined materials and textures. We plan to take the interior to the next level, improving the finishes, the bathrooms and the lower level, one step at a time with a promise to stay true to the spirit of the '50s. The respect for the architect, the research for the colors and the furniture we have chosen are all related to our careers in design.

Our family has lived in a great many places—each amazing in its own right, but it is here, in this home we've made together, that we are happiest. In years to come I am certain this house will both hold and inspire a lifetime of beloved stories. ✈

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Statement Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685 showing the Ownership, Management and Circulation of Atomic Ranch, published four times yearly (four issues) for September 15, 2008. Publication No. 1547-3902. Annual subscription price: \$19.95. 1. Mailing address of known office of publication and headquarters is 3125 SE Rex St., Portland OR 97202. 2. Publisher, Jim Brown, 3125 SE Rex St., Portland OR 97202; editor/managing editor, Michelle Gringeri-Brown, 3125 SE Rex St., Portland OR 97202. 3. Atomic Ranch is owned by Atomic Ranch, Inc., 3125 SE Rex St., Portland, OR 97202. Known bondholders, mortgagees and other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of the total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: none. I certify that all the statements made by me are correct and complete. Jim Brown, publisher

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