

atomic ranch

MIDCENTURY MARVELS



FALL 2012



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gambling on vegas 22

backyard addition 14

atlanta kitchen makeover 54

contents

features

- 14 backyard build-out**
A rear addition to a Dallas brick ranch
- 22 paradise in the desert**
Hanging onto history in Las Vegas
- 32 south land**
Color enlivens a custom Sacramento home
- 46 modern masters: paul mc cobb**
The truly accessible modernist
- 54 homework: miss daisy's facelift**
A well-worn kitchen and den get a makeover
- 64 open house: greenville, s.c.**
Doing right by a Southern ranch

14



22

32

fall 2012

departments

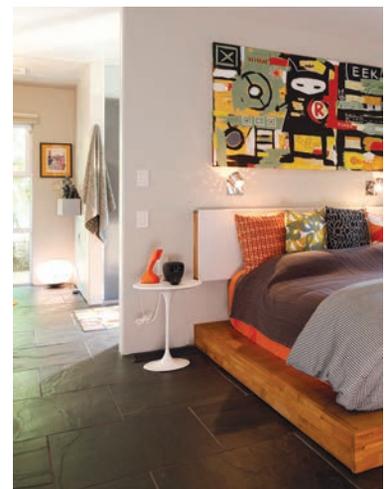
- 6 my 2 cents**
- 8 modern wisdom**
- 30 home page**
Pennsylvania, Washington and California on the fridge
- 43 books & backs**
- 60 keep it up**
Home maintenance, ranch style
- 70 ranch dressing**
Answering your questions on stonework, Hey-Wake and more
- 72 events**
- 73 resources**
- 74 retailers**
- 75 coming up in atomic ranch**
- 76 atomic advertisers**



54

cover

The downtrodden master suite in a Sacramento ranch was reimagined by the homeowners and interior architect Curtis Popp. The slate floors are a repeat of an original element elsewhere in the house, but everything else announces it's 2012. The platform bed and headboard are from Mash Studios' LAX series, while the artwork is by Bill O'Neil and the wall sconces from Studio Design Italia. The DWR Saarinen table holds an orange Ericofon and the pillows are from House Industries and Etsy. An affordable IKEA Jonisk globe lamp sits by the window overlooking the back yard. Story page 32.



my2cents

While developing our second book, we posted a call for entries that generated a flood of home nominees. The embarrassment of riches that followed was winnowed down by architectural style, interior design, story arc and location, resulting in a great range of homes that we traveled to shoot and write about.

The same method applies to the homes we feature in the magazine. Some are the result of outreach to midcentury groups or Realtors for two or three houses in a given community that our publisher then flies off to photograph. (This is why you're seeing a series of Sacramento ranches, like the one on this cover.) Others are emailed pitches from proud homeowners who are able to provide decent photos or an engagingly written story, sometimes both. Our departments (Home Page, Keep It Up and Ranch Dressing), short features (Homework, Open House and My Favorite Space) and major articles all happen this way.

Several times a month, we hear from someone who proclaims AR is his favorite magazine, followed by, 'Here's a link to our coverage in [insert the name of the blog, newspaper or magazine].' Hey, if you like us so much, wouldn't it be great to submit to Atomic Ranch first and actually BE in the magazine?

While we do work pretty far ahead—that means having editorial material lined up for a year or more—we want and need your submissions. Once a story is posted on a blog, the aggregate nature of online 'publishing' means the subject matter can be so widely disseminated that it quickly becomes old news for a print magazine like ours. A publisher I worked with previously called these 'Me, too!' stories. While the immediacy of seeing your house on your computer screen next week is appealing, think about having an ink and paper, permanent record of your beautiful ranch. You can frame it, you can send it to your granny, and you can lead by example, showing others what makes midcentury worth saving.

We travel regularly to shoot in Southern California, and our home base is Oregon and Washington. If you live in these regions and think your ranch looks like it belongs in a shelter magazine, send us some shots. If you're farther away but know of another house or two nearby with great interiors and friendly owners, get in touch. And if every single room isn't quite there yet, how about submitting to our new series, 'My Favorite Space,' which focuses on just a portion of a home?

For those of you who bring your critical eye and a my-place-is-way-better-than-that spirit to our issues, show us what we're missing. Tell us what's unique about your story and give us the grand tour. While you may picture us slogging through a dozen submissions a day, it's more like a half dozen per month. How awesome would it be to have your house professionally photographed or see your own photos in a handsome magazine layout?

Atomic Ranch is here because you need us—and vice versa.

Michelle Gringeri-Brown
editor@atomic-ranch.com



The Spring 2012 cover vs. the homeowner's scouting shot.



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modernwisdom

On Halloween, a young costumed cowboy appeared at my front door. I expected to hear the usual 'trick or treat!' Instead, he said, 'Hi mister; you have a cool house.' I thanked him for the compliment and rewarded him with two heaping handfuls of candy.

The future architect is correct: I do have a cool house. It was constructed in 1967 and encourages an active,



indoor/outdoor lifestyle. Twin sliding glass doors lead from the living and dining rooms to a front courtyard where evergreen shrubs add privacy. Another slider from the family room provides access to a rear screen porch. And a backyard patio is reached through the master bedroom.

Obviously the original owners enjoyed a lot of relaxing—and so do I.

David Fixler

Grand Rapids, Mich.

* I just completed a total rehab on a derelict mid-century modern home in Palm Springs. I want to thank you for Erik Rosenow's article in the summer 2011 issue about El Rancho Vista Estates. After reading the article, I went out to Palm Springs and bought a home in that neighborhood. What makes this even crazier is that we live in Ohio, over 2,000 miles away.

This has been a great experience and very profitable for me. The property was a bank-owned total dump. We redid the whole house, completely gutting the interior and installing a new kitchen, bathrooms, floors, electrical, ceiling, sliders and doors. Outside we built a

block privacy wall, swimming pool and spa, and put in landscaping.

Our house was chosen to be on the tour of homes for Modernism Week 2012, and we sold it four weeks after listing it. I just put an offer on a Donald Wexler-designed home in El Rancho Vista Estates, and am due to close in mid-May. Even in the worst market for selling homes in the country, midcentury modern done right will always sell.

Steven Weekley

* As the community development director of a small Southern California town where we like to joke that the majority of our housing stock was built over two or three weekends in 1957, I look forward to receiving my quarterly Atomic Ranch, as do my staff members in the



Planning Division. Desiring to lead by example, the Montclair Housing Corporation recently renovated a modest residence on a busy street.

The MHC owns approximately 100 residential units that are deed restricted for income-qualifying families. While most are multifamily units, there are a handful of single-family dwellings, including the 1955 ranch pictured. Eleven years after acquiring it, MHC undertook a modest renovation that respected the architectural style and vintage of the modest 1,200-square-foot, three-bedroom, two-bath home.

The original bedroom clerestory windows, which had been painted over, were replaced, the house was painted a conservative green, a new fence was constructed to provide the residents with a private yard to enjoy, and a hopscotch-style concrete entry path was installed.

more wisdom

A landscape palette of drought-tolerant and native plants and Neutra-style house numbers completed the transformation.

It is the City's hope that other homeowners in Montclair, which has more than its share of modest mid- to late-'50s ranches, will notice and appreciate this mini-renovation and replicate similar improvements on their own homes.

Steve Lustro

Montclair, Calif.



* The resort I manage has several typical log-cabin-style rental units. There is also a family home, built in 1959, with some mid-century modern furnishings and bathrooms. After reviewing your website, I thought you might like to see a couple of our bathrooms, as they would fit right in with your readers' interests.

Loy Helmly, House on Metolius

Camp Sherman, Ore.

* As a long-time subscriber, I found the Spring 2012 issue of AR was excellent, with the exception of the 'Missoula Makeover' article. Remember the old adage 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it'?

As someone who leans toward preservation of mid-century architecture instead of unnecessary renovations, I take issue with the article's claim that the renovation had a green aspect. How can cutting down trees to cover up what is described as siding in good condition be considered environmentally friendly? The

T-111 siding, which was used on Eichlers, Strengs, etc., is a favorite of most of us. It is a shame to see it covered up. Unless the brick chimney was in deteriorating condition and beyond repair, I find it abhorrent to paint over such a beautiful period detail, which many of us would covet for our own homes. I can just see a future article in AR in about 20 years' time, about new owners of the house restoring it to its original mid-century glory!

Jim Mallabar

Marmora, Ontario

* My wife and I enjoyed the Fall 2011 issue's 'Pet Pix' quite a bit. It merged two of our favorite things: pets and mid-century modern decor. It was great seeing not only 'normal' folks' homes and furniture, but the pets they love enjoying the furniture as well. While we didn't enter the contest, we couldn't pass up the



opportunity to share. Here is a photo of our boy, Bucky, lounging in front of some of our favorite Heywood-Wakefield and a retro lamp.

If you guys decide to have another Pet Pix contest, please consider this an early entry. If not, hopefully at least someone experiences the same 'Awww' we did.

Mike & Dana Moore

Morgan's Point Resort, Texas

* From everything I have read in your magazine, it appears that my 1986 custom ranch would not be considered mid-century modern. That being the case, I do not know what else to call it. I have tried to come up

even more wisdom

with a term for modern-style homes built in the '80s, but to no avail.

I purchased my house late last year and have spent the past months remodeling it and trying to bring it back to the contemporary feel it was meant to have. Besides new paint, I added bamboo floors throughout, opened up a wall to the dining room and completely



redid the kitchen. Even if it does not qualify as a true midcentury modern, I love the design and will refrain from correcting people when they refer to it as such.

Paul Rothstein

Bella Vista, Ark.

Not knowing anything about your typical local housing stock, our wager would be that the builder or person who commissioned it liked slightly older, traditional ranch houses, as yours includes midcentury touchstones like a stone fireplace, sunken living room and the wood valances over the windows. If those valances are a wood similar in tone to your new floors, they'd look great stripped. Just saying.

As for a term to describe an '80s home like yours (I'm guessing 'builder's ranch' doesn't do it for you), how about 'post midcentury modern' or 'neo-traditional ranch'?

—ar editor

✱ Thank you for producing such a great magazine, for both research and inspiration. As a recent subscriber, I would like to know if you have done any features on the 'Forever Homes' in Fullerton, Calif. I grew up there in the 1950s and '60s in the middle of the tract, yet our home was not one of the Forever models, just a tract ranch, with the wonderful Eichler-inspired homes all around us. At the time I didn't know what they were, except that they were different.

I drove through the neighborhood last month and noticed that there are still quite a number of the MCM homes in original, well-kept condition. This would be a great feature I could really relate to.

Recently I purchased a custom ranch in nearby Garden Grove that dates from 1959–1960. It has great bones (casement windows, organic stone inside and extending out to the front porch, etc.). Are there any readers familiar with this street (Stanford Avenue west of Brookhurst) of custom-built homes who would know who the designer/architect/contractor/builder might have been? Otherwise, is there any way to find out the architect/builder through public records?

William Heideman

Garden Grove, Calif.

According to Fullerton Heritage's website (fullertonheritage.org), the Forever Houses are Eichlers, some 280 to 300-plus models built between 1953 and 1956. The tract was called Fullerton Grove. The site goes on to explain that the homes were Jones & Emmons designs, part of a promotion on NBC's 'Home' show called somewhat confusingly, 'The House That Home Built.' In Fullerton, builder Pardee-Phillips sold the models for \$13,000 to \$20,000. There is a pdf for a driving tour of Fullerton on their site that features a Julius Shulman b&w of a housewife pushing her reel mower while her son sits on his bike in the driveway of their Eichler.

To research the developer of your Garden Grove neighborhood, you could post a query on the Atomic Ranch Facebook page, knock on neighbors' doors to find long-time residents, contact a local realtor who specializes in the area or visit city hall (or wherever



The Robinsons' kitchen

Garden Grove houses their building permits and property tax records). Some cities have their archives digitized, but other searches involve microfiche and persistence.
—ar editor

* I recently moved to Portland, Ore., from Phoenix. The previous owner built my new home himself and I believe it is hugely influenced by Eichler and Rummer: there's a flat roof, huge windows, gigantic fireplace, even a mosaic bathroom counter similar to the one in Dane Henas' Eichler in the Spring 2012 issue. I am just discovering this type of architecture and would like to make some updates to my 1960s home, but don't want to compromise too much of the original character.

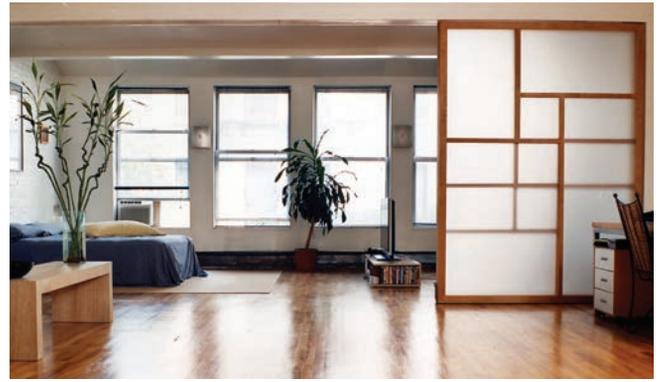
My main question is regarding the kitchen cabinets: I would like to add a few more pieces. Where can I find slab-front cabinets and drawers to match the originals? And what type of kitchen countertop would be the best in an MCM home? Currently, it is a very old sheet Formica with seams right through the center of the counters. Yuck!

Heather Robinson

Kudos for wanting to add to your kitchen, not gut it. You'll need a custom cabinetmaker to match your existing models, so take some detailed photos that you can email or share in person. Portland's mcmleague.org may have some recommendations on cabinet guys who 'get' it. Appropriate counter materials include laminate, 4" ceramic tile, stainless steel and solid surface products that read as laminate but are more durable. Our newest book (see page 43) has much more on kitchens; check it out!

—ar editor

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Backyard

Build-out

Kristen and Doug Devlin had considered their Roman brick ranch in Dallas a starter home, but after a few years and one child, they found that the mature trees, huge yard and location made it a keeper. The house had three bedrooms, two baths, a kitchen, a living room and a dining room, plus what they called a formal sitting room. But the couple, both in their 30s, felt that they were running out of space.

“Our first challenge was even getting an architect or designer to consider the project,” says Kristen Devlin.

Before



text Michelle Gringeri-Brown

photography Steven Vaughan & Ellen Sabin





First spread: Sustainable IPE exterior decking, reused brick and Hardi panels were chosen for the rear addition. The study is in the cedar-clad box, which backs up to an interior courtyard.

Top: “We popped the addition up a couple of feet as well as stepped down the floor to really give some drama to the interior,” says designer Jonathan Delcambre. The central pass-through fireplace is a new element that divides the media room in the original portion of the house from the added living room, which is furnished with a Foley’s department store sectional, an Eames lounge chair and ottoman, a West Elm side table and FLOR carpeting.

“We met with a few before finding Jonathan Delcambre. Every other person told us we should not bother remodeling the house because the area we were in was ‘not ideal,’ or that it would cost thousands to bring in the steel beams they said we’d need to achieve the modern feel we were looking for.”

But Delcambre felt the house had potential and was able to work with the \$150- to \$170-per-square-foot budget. “Doug and Kristen are MCM enthusiasts and wanted to bring this house back to the original ideals but in a more contemporary and sustainable fashion,” the Dallas designer says. “Keeping it one story—similar to the

other neighborhood homes—and saving all of the existing 50-year-old oak trees was very important to them. We talked about having an interior courtyard that space could flow around, as well as bringing natural light into the kitchen.

“The other [designers] thought that in order to provide an aesthetically pleasing design we would need to use steel for the construction components,” he continues. “Instead we used 2” x 6” advanced wall framing, which allows for more insulation. We also kept the design simple in its form and the construction similar to postwar homes in the ‘50s.”

“After finalizing the plan, which we all loved, we quickly found a contractor who we liked and who could work within our budget, Tony Robinson at Axis Design-Build,” Devlin says. “Though we were eager to break ground, we spent an extra month ironing out the final budget with revised drawings and estimates so that the financial aspects were as solid as they could be.”

The 1,100-square-foot addition off the back of the house includes a master suite, study, courtyard and additional living area. But getting access to the construction zone proved to be a challenge.

“When we finally broke ground in early November, our first issue after managing to get the huge drill rig into our back yard via a neighbor’s driveway, was encountering



Room and Board barstools at the kitchen counter were selected by interior designer Rebecca Handline, who also guided the purchase of vintage elements like the armchair near the fireplace and the table and chairs in the blue dining room. Designed as a media room, currently the family has it minimally furnished while it functions as a playroom for their two sons.

"The dining room was that color when we bought the house, and it was one of the reasons we purchased it in the first place," says homeowner Kristen Devlin. "I am not sure we would have had the courage to paint a room such a dark color, but we loved it immediately when we saw it. The vintage blue armchairs were bought from an editing house that was going out of business. The coffee table is petrified wood that my husband, Doug, inherited from his uncle." Bold FLOR carpet tiles fit the large-scale room.

"We wanted a strong contrast of the **new** and **old space** from an interior standpoint"



water at eight feet down,” recalls Devlin. “Despite doing core samples to 25’, somehow they missed the water. We had to remove the drill rig and lost three weeks while they figured out we would have to do helical piers at an additional cost.”

Because of the unstable soil in the Devlins’ yard, the load of the new concrete slab had to be tied to helical piers, which are like giant screws drilled down into stable subsoil. Another complication was while the roof was torn off, Dallas experienced some rare snow and torrential downpours. The tarps mostly held, but Devlin says that the area over their old master bedroom had major leaks and the insulation and ceiling had to be redone.

“During that whole period, I was six months pregnant. Doug and I and our 18-month-old had to live with my mother-in-law in Arlington for two full months, driving 45 minutes twice a week or more to check on the project. That

was by far the most difficult time of the remodel,” she says.

“After the roof was complete, things went much more smoothly. Despite losing a whole month to weather difficulties, our contractor was able to get most everything done a week before I gave birth to our second son in late June.”

The couple’s wish list originally included relandscaping and a pool, but the budget, which crept past the projected \$200,000 mark, didn’t stretch that far. Like most architects and designers, Delcambre relishes an aesthetic differentiation between old interior spaces and new, so the master bath is contemporary while the two originals retain their vintage tile and fixtures. Similarly, the existing hardwood floors of the midcentury portion were kept, and the addition has polished concrete to simulate terrazzo at a fraction of the cost.

“We wanted a strong contrast of the new and old space from an interior standpoint, but wanted the exterior to



The ceiling was raised to give the kitchen more volume, and now natural light comes in through the clerestory windows seen from the front facade (opposite).



blend as if it was never touched and was an original '50s midcentury modern. We felt preserving this house and adding on was a sustainable approach instead of starting from scratch," the designer comments.

"The addition took advantage of proper site and solar orientation to maximize natural daylighting and minimize solar heat gain. This can be seen with the clerestory windows added throughout the house. We reused the old brick that was taken off the back of the house to add a brick wall element on the east elevation. The only new materials on the exterior were cement Hardi panels and sustainable cedar siding.

"The water heater was updated to a tankless one and open cell insulation helped us achieve an R-value of 70 in the roof and 35 in the new walls," Delcambre continues. "We used sustainable ash cabinetry on the interior and thermal windows. And although there was over

1,100 square feet added to the house, the Devlins' utility bills were more than \$100 less per month that first summer after the addition."

Though the beginning was a bit of a trial and they were unable to achieve all of their initial wish list, the couple feels it was all worth it. "Picking paint, tile, fixtures, the fireplace, the finish of the built-ins and the deck, and the exterior look were my favorite parts of the process," says Devlin. "As a result, I think our home is very individual to us and is exactly what we envisioned, despite a few bumps in the road during the process." ✿

Jonathan Delcambre's home was featured in the Spring 2008 issue. See Ellen Sabin's images of people and places at ellensabin.com. Steven Vaughn's architectural photography can be seen at stevenvaughanphoto.com. Resources page 73



The front facade retains many original elements, but the pop-up clerestory windows and virtually flat roof and entry fence give it the modern spin the Devlins craved. The roof is an R-70, single-ply white TPO (thermoplastic polyolefin) membrane system, while the front door is a Crestview door kit.

Opposite: The new master bedroom has a Room & Board bed, and end tables, bedding and an area rug from West Elm.



Before

paradise in the desert



Las Vegas
wakes up to its midcentury
housing stock

text Denise Heximer

photography Clay Heximer

Having been residents of Nevada for decades, when my husband, Clay, and I had the opportunity to purchase our first place together, we knew we wanted to buy in one of the few midcentury modern neighborhoods in Las Vegas. Three years ago we were instantly sold on a 1962 Palmer & Krisel with a decorative champagne bubble screen wall in front, a floating fire-place, dedicated bar room and a unique tri-level design.

Selling Modern

In 1961, construction began on the first master-planned community in the heart of Las Vegas. The 600-home Paradise Palms neighborhood was designed by a number of different architectural firms and included 42 award-winning models from Palmer & Krisel. Nestled among the homes were the Stardust Golf Club, where the Rat Pack entertained guests at the clubhouse; a private park; elementary and middle schools; and the first air-conditioned, enclosed mall in Las Vegas, built by the same developer responsible for our neighborhood.

With multiple models and floor plans available, buyers had the opportunity to modify their tract home, or could opt for custom, one-of-a-kind designs. Prices for the tract houses ranged from \$20,875 to \$42,500 and, according to developer Irwin Molasky, they sold a house a day between 1957 and 1959—before the project even broke ground.

Since it was about a mile from the Las Vegas strip, many celebrities chose to make Paradise Palms their home. Bobby Darin, Phyllis Diller, Debbie Reynolds, Johnny Carson, Joe Lewis and



Above: Built in 1961, this three-bedroom, two-bath Palmer & Krisel was ready for the wrecking ball two years ago. From drywall and electrical inside, to a new carport and decorative screen wall outside, it had a complete overhaul. The interior received a new kitchen and renovated bathrooms, and the exterior got a new paint job, roof, driveway and landscaping.

Below: Built in 1963, this home is nicknamed "The Caddyshack" because it's right next to the Las Vegas National Golf Club. The house features a nine-hole miniature golf putting course in the front and back yards.





Above: Built in 1964, both the interior and exterior of this custom home were featured in the movie "Casino."

Below: This 1976 custom home has three bedrooms, 2.5 baths and is still occupied by the original owner.

Opposite: The new owners were thrilled to find their home practically untouched. In one bathroom, they discovered the original tile was still underneath newer tile. Although the experts told them it would be impossible to save, they refused to give up. Today the bathroom is restored to its former glory with the original tile intact.



Sonny Liston were among them and, in addition, several casinos purchased properties to house performers and VIPs during their stays in town.

In 1995, Paradise Palms was featured in the movie "Casino." The residence that housed the main characters played by Robert De Niro and Sharon Stone is the most well-known home in our neighborhood. And in 2010, Paradise Palms was also featured in the Jake Grost documentary "William Krisel, Architect." That documentary followed a Paradise Palms resident as he purchased his first home.

Saving Modern



Las Vegas is known for tearing down its history to make room for the next big thing. Casinos are demolished to make room for mega resorts, and many older neighborhoods have become a shadow of what they once were. As Las Vegas grew in the 1980s and '90s, residents began moving to newer areas, making the center of town less desirable to some. But in recent years, there has been an increased interest in midcentury modern housing and more people are moving back to the middle of town and into Paradise Palms because of its architecture. Bad renovations are being undone, garages are being turned back into carports, original paint colors are returning and decorative screen walls are being rebuilt.

Since there was no historic designation in Nevada's Clark County, we worked closely with our county commissioner to help develop guidelines. Our preservation efforts have been featured on the local news and our neighborhood has been the subject of several articles written about our cause. We've established a neighborhood pride zone throughout the county, founded a Neighborhood Watch and recently organized a mass neighborhood cleanup that we plan to make an annual event. Street markings are getting a fresh coat of paint, weeds are being pulled from public areas and the sense of community is heightened. And on the first Saturday of every month we have a cocktail party at a different Paradise Palms resident's home. We use this social club as an opportunity to get to know our neighbors and discuss ideas and plans for the future.





Savoring Modern



Author Alan Hess has visited the tract several times and included us on a mid-mod tour he gave of Las Vegas. “The recent rediscovery of Paradise Palms is an important find. It reminds us that there are lots of hidden midcentury modern neighborhoods out there to be found and restored,” he said. “They can become tremendous assets to both homeowners and cities when they are restored—neighborhoods that may have been neglected and worn down can be returned to their original, well-designed, well-planned unity. That makes owners proud of their homes and cities proud of their neighborhoods.”

When we contacted architect William Krisel about this article, he wrote back, “The original Paradise Palms homes that I designed in 1961 still remain [among the] ones that I am most proud of. It is encouraging to know that the present owners continue to be happy with their Krisel-designed, midcentury modern, post-and-beam, language of architecture.”

Although the real estate market remains challenging here, together we are building a stronger community, reestablishing a sense of pride in one’s surroundings and preserving our place in Las Vegas history. ✨

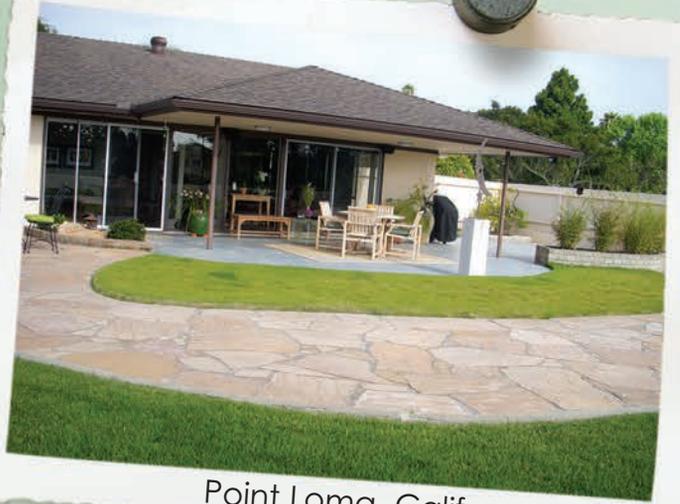
Clay Heximer is a photographer, drummer and the midcentury modern preservation officer for Las Vegas architecture and design history. He and Denise continue their campaign to procure historical designation for Paradise Palms. Special thanks to the Manuscripts Librarian of Special Collections at UNLV, Su Kim Chung; County Commissioner Chris Giunchigliani; Irwin Molasky; William Krisel; and the residents of Paradise Palms. Visit paradisepalmslasvegas.com to learn more.



Opposite, top: The original owners still live in this 1,380-square-foot 1963 Miranti-built ranch.
Opposite, bottom: The current owners purchased their 1964 custom home in 2006. They removed the hedges that hid the house and replaced the lawn with geometric rock beds and xeriscaping.
Above: The Heximers’ home hasn’t been extensively renovated and still has the original cabinetry, glass tile and marble countertops in the baths. One of the unique features of the tri-level design is that the carport is partially recessed under the home and leads to a ground-level bar.



Reading, Penn.



Point Loma, Calif.



Seattle, Wash.



home page

Reading, Penn.

Last year we were cruising through town on my wife's birthday, looking for the perfect house. We saw a beauty across the street from lovely Wyomissing Park. Sure enough, it had a For Sale sign out front. Turns out this beautiful house was built in 1949—the same year she was born. It's a three bedroom with a beautifully remodeled kitchen and breakfast nook, huge garage, huge living room with a big fireplace, plus a nice dining room and a two-season sun porch. My special room is the den, just off the foyer, with a very large enclosed bar to make the folks at 'Cheers' jealous.

Bob & Regina Button

Point Loma, Calif.

We purchased our midcentury ranch from its original owners five years ago. In the Fleetridge tract of Point Loma, a suburb of San Diego, the neighborhood consists of custom midcentury homes on large lots, many with city and bay views. Our ranch is L-shaped, with an expansive flagstone and concrete patio, large rooms, abundant storage and an excellent floor plan. Additional features include a terrazzo front porch, a sunken living room with a fireplace, and a rock-faced exterior that continues inside the front door. We love our home, and so do our two Siamese cats, Roxy and Buster.

James & Adrienne Churchill

Seattle, Wash.

One step in the door of our midcentury modern house let us know we were home, with its ample light, high ceilings, post-and-beam construction, pony wall, Formica wood grain cabinets, hand-carved front door and hardwood floors. We have updated all you would expect in a 1967 home (roof, windows, plumbing) while being mindful to preserve and enhance its character. The interior is painted in cool shades of blue and green, in sharp contrast to the vibrant orange exterior. The yard has been our final project; we worked to link the midcentury modern lines with architecturally appealing, yet functional planting boxes and an ipe deck. We love living large in our 1,300-square-foot home with our 3-year-old, Sam. Viva La Midcentury!

Leah Hunkins & Johanna Lindsay

Show us yours; 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.

south land

Mining for
Sacramento's midcentury gold,
one house at a time...

gretchen Steinberg and Kris Lannin Liang didn't really know what they were taking on when they decided to organize a Sacramento midcentury home tour in 2010. It was kind of their Judy Garland/Mickey Rooney "Let's put on a show!" moment. Little did Gretchen know she'd be pulling 12-hour days looking through microfiche as she researched the historical details of the California capital's postwar building boom.

They found 11 homeowners willing to open their doors, and with an assist from friend Dane Henas [see "Approximating Authenticity" in Spring 2012], came up with 22 additional points of interest and a full-color printed program. With Kris' community partnering abilities, Dane's graphic design skills and Gretchen's research

text Michelle Gringeri-Brown

photography Jim Brown





tenacity, they created a bit of a monster: something like 1,300 people wanted to come.

“We stopped counting after 1,200 because we were so slammed,” Gretchen laughs. “A week doesn’t go by without someone stopping me to ask when the next one is.” For now, their non-profit SacMod group is focusing on monthly events like film screenings and lobbying to keep the hyperbolic paraboloid-roofed entrance (picture the Palm Springs Tramway gas station) at the Sacramento zoo from being razed. As it turns out, the same architecture firm that created Steinberg’s custom ranch in South Land Park Terrace, Rickey & Brooks, designed those zoo kiosks.



Crime stoppers

The Steinbergs' 1961 home was built for pear rancher T.B. McCormack. "My previous house sold in two hours, then I had 30 days to find a new one," says Gretchen. She first saw this house online in a new-to-them neighborhood. "The minute we came through the red double doors, Alan zoomed one way, I zoomed the other and we both yelled, 'Hey—you've got to see this!' I saw the pyramid ceiling and the rock work."

"The house was dirty and it needed cosmetic work, but we saw right through that," says Alan, a lawyer. "I was looking at the slate floor, the exposed beams and the open plan of the den and kitchen."

Opposite, top: The watercolor of the house, found in a shed at the McCormacks' ranch, shows a cantilevered deck that succumbed to termite damage. Opposite, bottom: The glowing orange color (ICI Dulux 'Pumpkin Face') on the living room walls plays well with the wood ceiling and the copper fireplace hood. While Alan favors rectilinear pieces, Gretchen loves the curves of the purple Egg Chair, the biomorphic sofa and vintage Adrian Pearsall coffee table, which face the piano instead of the fireplace. Lighting includes copper-finish Donald sconces from Rejuvenation and a vintage George Nelson tripod Net Light. Below: The piano area shows the stripped original paneling, more decorative rock, a Gigi chair designed by Gerard van den Berg in 1998 and a Tom Dixon Star Light from the late '90s.





The den has been through several permutations, the most dramatic when the second owner, an architect, divided the open plan into discreet rooms to create a fourth bedroom. Gretchen's Dulux paint choices were 'Lemon Grass,' with 'Afternoon Tea' on the wall with the ray gun installation. The flooring is Finnish Saima birch parquet with a Chilewich area rug by the pedestal table and shell chairs. The bubble lamps, Eames lounge chair and Nelson bench are all reissues, while the daybed is vintage. "This room was challenging because it's long and narrow; it was hard to get harmony. The walnut paneling and buffet really helped bring it together," Gretchen says.





“Gretchen’s bungalow was really cute, but it was her style, her personality. We knew we had to create a space together. I always liked long, horizontal lines and the play of natural materials you find in a ranch. The second we walked into the house I thought, This is it; this is what we want.”

The McCormack residence was built for entertaining, with a pool, billiard room, two hot water heaters, low-voltage lighting and a Nutone intercom. It originally had a white rock roof and sparkly linoleum. All the doors and windows were wired for security, and the 2” galvanized water pipes delivered the highest water pressure in the city. Designed as a 2,600-square-foot, two-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath home (plus an office), subsequent owners divided the billiard room, turning the house into a four bedroom by the time the Steinbergs bought in 2000.

On the downside, someone had drilled into the ziggurat living room ceiling for track lighting, and the walnut paneling had been whitewashed, probably in the ‘80s. “There were crimes against the house that we felt we had to undo,” says Gretchen. Those projects included stripping the paneling in the living room, repainting throughout, installing new walnut paneling in the family room and recarpeting. Although Gretchen was very hands-on in her previous home, by now she’s acknowledged her limitations. As for Alan, well, as he says, “I make, fix and repair nothing; that’s why I’m an attorney.”





The storage unit was built by Burnett & Sons. The Steinbergs recently had back panels cut to fit the cubbies that were then primed and painted in colors inspired by the Nelson Sunburst clock above the fireplace.

Opposite: The kitchen was once open to the great room on three sides and had GE Textolite laminate counters. The vintage lunchbox collection on the soffit is mounted with flat rare earth magnets glued to the wall and another magnet inside the metal boxes. The Nutone intercom and the vintage rotary phone are prized details.



Windows in the new master suite are Blombergs, the Nelson Swag Leg desk and chair are reissues, and the pendant overhead is a Foscarini O-Space from Lumens. Abby in her dog bed is bookended by the Sapien Bookcase from DWR. In addition to the furnishings IDED on the table of contents, the bedroom is populated with punchy artwork that the Steinbergs can both agree on. Over the orange Eero Aarnio puppy are five pieces from John Yoyogi Fortes, and glimpsed in the bath is 'The Thinker' by Rhett Neal, all bought at Sacramento's Skinner Howard Art.

Opposite: The powder-coated steel vanity fabricated by FusionCor echoes the sliding doors on the LAX headboard in the adjoining master bedroom, and the walnut veneer cabinets repeat a material found in the den and living room. The fixture over the mirror is a Talo from Lumens and the rug is from FLOR.





Accent on modern

Their most recent and extensive undertaking was a remodel of the master bedroom and bath. “It was the worst room in the house—faux marble headcheese tile, and you could stick your finger through the wall in the bathroom. We wanted a larger bath, a sauna, a vanity, a separate WC and pocket doors,” Gretchen explains.

They approached Curtis Popp, now an interior architect at Popp Littrell Architecture. “We went into the first meeting with a list of furnishings and designers we liked, which gave him a great sense of where we were coming from,” Alan says.

“When we told him we wanted to be able to see the koi pond from the bedroom, he extended the windows to the floor. He surprised us by turning the room around; it’s brilliant, because it now allows people from the pool area to access the bath,” Gretchen adds. She explains that they actually had more than enough closet space before, so the bedroom is slightly smaller now.

“It’s a merger of our style with Curtis’. Gretchen’s strength is lighting and color,” Alan says. “It’s a totally modern room, but that’s what midcentury was about: trying to be modern, looking forward and designing spaces that were timeless.”

“The slate and the walnut veneer tie into the rest of the house,” Gretchen comments. “This house was the house of the future. There was no question in my mind that we were going to be pushing the envelope a bit in this area. The front of the house we’ve kept true to the era, but we didn’t feel constrained to do that in the master bedroom.”





The playroom was once a billiard area in a large open plan space and may yet morph again when the kids are older. Wool rugs from IKEA, a painting by Gary Dinnen and a 1:12-scale Bzart Kaleidoscope House with modernist furnishings are among the standouts.

Son Zev's room has a space/robot theme with a vintage Hotchkiss mobile, retro globe and IKEA and CB2 furnishings.



Sacramento modern

You'd think that ongoing improvements to the house and coordinating local modernist events would be enough. But when Gretchen went to an estate sale at one of the roughly 50 Eichlers left in town, as she likes to say, she "bought a \$2 vase and the house." While they rent it out now, the couple think they may move in when they're empty nesters and the maintenance at their current home becomes too much. In the meantime, the Steinbergs and the growing numbers of SacMod members will continue to spread the word about the importance of their local architecture.

"We'd like to start encouraging people to maintain and protect what midcentury we have left," Gretchen says. "The greenest building is the one that already exists, so the timing is right. And we've reached the point where 50 years has elapsed and we can start doing some preservation work.

"There is a lot of interest and enthusiasm from younger people, which is fantastic," she continues. "And there are some old-timers and original owners who thoroughly get it. But we meet some people who just say, 'This is my house, I bought it, I can do whatever I want.' All we can do is offer gentle guidance and encourage people to understand what they have." ✨

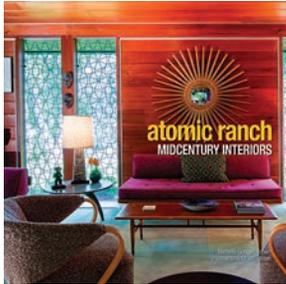


Daughter Sasha's bedroom has a tall vintage Interfold Lumalight, an IKEA bed, Chinese folk art and a vintage dresser and chair. The carpet is the same as that in Zev's bedroom and the living room.

Follow SacMod's events at sacmcmhometour.blogspot.com and read about the Steinbergs' Eichler at eichlerific.com; home resources page 73.

atomic**books**

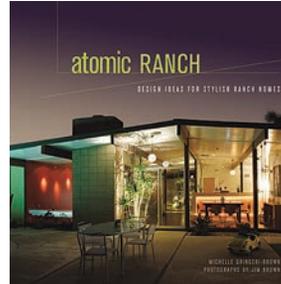
JUST OUT!



Atomic Ranch: Midcentury Interiors

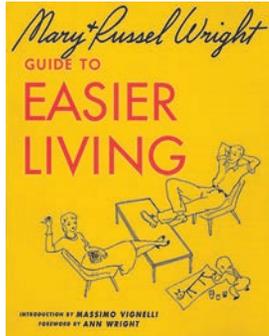
Explore eight fantastic ranch interiors in depth—from warm moderns and split-levels to tract homes and retro traditionals—in our newest book. The homeowners share their experiences with economical finishes and furnishings to adding on a master suite and reworking a tight floor plan. Gringeri-Brown/Brown, hardcover, 200 color photos, 192 pp., \$40

AUTOGRAPHED!



Atomic Ranch: Design Ideas for Stylish Ranch Homes

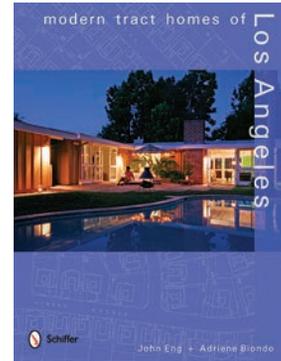
Plenty of ranches from our early issues to inspire you: modern kitchens and baths, DIY landscaping and tips on pulling together a retro interior. Resources, history, decorating on a dime—it's got it all. Gringeri-Brown/Brown, hardcover, color and b&w photos, 192 pp., \$40



Guide to Easier Living

Russel and Mary Wright personified modern design, and this reprinted vintage book shares their approach to informal living. The floor plans and advice about household chores and setting the dining table—with American Modern of course—still resonates today. Softcover, b&w illus., 202 pp., \$19

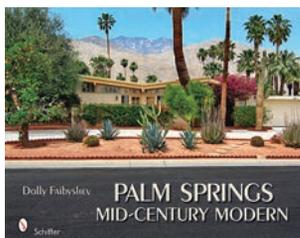
NEW!



Modern Tract Homes of Los Angeles

Take a tour of Eichler's Balboa Highlands, May's Lakewood Rancho Estates, Palmer & Krisel's Northridge homes, the Ain Mar Vista tract and more through vintage marketing materials and contemporary color interiors and exteriors. John Eng & Adriene Biondo, hardcover, 144 pp., \$40

NEW!



Palm Springs Mid-Century Modern

If you've wondered what you'd see on a driving tour of Palm Springs, this book delivers. Covering both iconic homes and typical modernist tracts in b&w and color photos, Dolly Faibyshev keeps the text super minimal in her picture book of the desert city today. Hardcover, 112 pp., \$30



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Westlake is home to the houses that inspired the 'boxes made of ticky-tacky' song. Resident Rob Keil takes you through his neighborhood and shows what makes this tract so appealing. Contemporary color and b&w vintage photos, hardcover, 144 pp., \$35

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no. 30 Summer 2011



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no. 34 Summer 2012

modern masters for your ranch:



Paul McCobb

text J M Cava

photography courtesy Wright

Design appeal is based on integrity of form, simplicity of line and true organic function.

*—Paul McCobb,
Interiors magazine,
July 1952*

This Bryce Originals 1953 enameled steel, glass and birch vanity and upholstered chair sold for double the \$2,000–\$3,000 estimate in 2011.

Opposite: Reform Gallery's L.A. Modernism booth included a peg-board door Planner Group unit with 'doughnut' pulls, wrought iron and bentwood Planner Group dining chairs and a Directional Pier mirror on the wall; a similar mirror sold for \$6,875 at Wright this past March.



Just about any topic you can think of seems divisible into two opposite types, and the world of mid-century design is no exception. On one hand, we're all familiar with the dramatically stylish pieces that radiate from across the room, even though they're often functionally obsolete and intolerant of lesser-pedigreed objects. These we might call the Marilyn Monroes of design, while their opposites, say, the Audrey Hepburns, evoke a quieter classical beauty. The Hepburns remain eminently functional over time and fit gracefully into any decor. The lovely furniture of Paul McCobb falls solidly into this latter type and, even if you're unfamiliar with his name, odds are you've unknowingly encountered a number of McCobb objects already. That's because his modest and self-effacing pieces gracefully enhance any room without calling attention to themselves.

McCobb achieved this in part by integrating a modern sensibility with traditional American furniture and taste, resulting in a modernism that was fashionable, yet comfortable with grandma's Regency credenza or favorite rocking chair. Much of his interest—unlike that of the more rarefied mid-century designers—was in furniture that was democratic in design, price and use. Created for postwar middle class budgets, his Planner Group line remains the best mid-century design for the price. That's changing rapidly, however, as his work gains notoriety among collectors. A rare example in the more expensive Linear or Calvin lines can fetch up to five figures at auction.

A case in point was the 1953 vanity and chair that sold for \$6,875 at a Wright auction in Chicago. "Works by Paul McCobb have become more popular in recent years," says

Richard Wright. "Most of our auction results suggest affordable prices, yet select McCobb designs have exceeded our expectations. The vanity [that] sold in October 2011 for double its estimate is a great example. This renewed interest has caught our attention as well."

A Boston native, McCobb had little to no formal training in his ultimate calling, but arrived at furniture design through career paths in product design, industrial design and retail display. He launched his New York studio, Paul McCobb Design Associates, around 1945 and quickly found himself in the spotlight as America's best-selling furniture designer since Russel and Mary Wright a generation before.

McCobb promoted standardized production and distribution, which he promptly achieved not only in furniture, but in designs for just about everything in the home: textiles, wallpaper, lighting, dinnerware, radios and televisions. But furniture remained the heart of McCobb's work, beginning with his groundbreaking Planner Group for Winchendon, a collection of simple modular pieces produced from 1949 to 1964. The line was so popular during the 1960s that, much to his irritation, counterfeits appeared everywhere alongside his originals.

The Planner Group collection is brilliant in several ways. Others had tried bringing modular furniture to the market-



Jonathan Goldstein



Jonathan Goldstein



Clockwise from left: This 1952 North Craft Lighting table lamp sold for \$1,250 in 2009. A walnut and aluminum room divider from the 1956 Linear Group in a collector's home. McCobb's Straws pattern water jug, cruet and coffee pot from the 1959 Contempri dinnerware by Jackson Internationale. A pair of 1955 McCobb lounge chairs from Custom Craft with heavy wear to the legs, disintegrated foam and in need of new upholstery was listed for sale on the Wright site for \$2,800. In similar shape is the Model 314 Directional lounge chair seen on page 5.



Jonathan Goldstein



Jonathan Goldstein

place, but the Planner Group was the first commercial success to employ individual pieces that could easily adapt to changing lifestyle demands. Benches and coffee tables, mixed with bookshelves or dressers, transformed into credenzas, storage units and even room dividers with the look of larger custom pieces. To keep prices low, inexpensive, solid American maple and birch were left unstained with a minimal natural finish. The most intriguing and unconventional variations in the series were the smaller tables and dressers with thin black iron legs supporting wood tops, panels and drawers, sometimes combined with slatted wood shelves resembling bamboo. These less-common pieces have a more abstract and ethereal character than their all-wood relations and, as a result, command higher prices.

McCobb's interest in production methods guided the designs of his Predictor Group for O'Hearn Manufacturing, which specialized at the time in stodgy colonial reproductions. Exploiting the company's turning and shaping technology, he created a set of simple prefabricated parts from which multiple variations of a modern chair could be easily assembled. One of his more assertive modern designs, it was praised by George Nelson in his classic compilation, *Chairs*, as a "fresh and individual expression" of American design.

Not to be left out of the upscale market, McCobb produced a series of highly refined furniture collections from around 1949 to 1962, all appearing generally under his "Directional" label, but also carrying a dizzying array of alternate titles and imprints. The more recognizable of these today are Directional Modern (Custom Craft),



Clockwise from above: A mahogany Directional Tripod table dating from around 1955 realized \$813 in 2011. The high-end Directional coffee table combines brass, mahogany and travertine; it sold for \$1,785 in 2010. Part of the Irwin collection for Calvin Furniture, this tea cart employs similar materials: bent wood, brass rod and travertine.



Perimeter (Winchendon), Connoisseur and Living Wall (H. Sacks), and the Irwin, Linear, and Calvin Groups, mostly for Calvin Furniture.

In these designs, the modular concept takes a back seat, but the pieces share strong aesthetic and material sensibilities. As a rule, they depart from the relaxed informality of the Planner Group, exhibiting both richer material combinations—walnut, brass, leather and marble—and thinner, more graceful proportions, lending them a delicate aristocratic elegance. The Directional line is easiest to spot, thanks to a beautiful catalog from 1956 (reprinted in 2000) where these classic and urbane pieces look as timeless as a Brooks Brothers suit. Here, a humble bookshelf evolves into a delightful and lively syncopated modern composition called a ‘living wall,’ functioning not unlike the Eames stor-

age systems of around the same time, but without the industrial influence. McCobb’s contributions to the genre (George Nelson also designed storage walls) were consistently lighter and more refined in character than those of his contemporaries.

By the mid-1950s, McCobb was one of the country’s most commercially successful designers. Dubbed ‘America’s Decorator,’ he racked up numerous museum exhibitions, awards, magazine features and consulting contracts with major corporations, and maintained showrooms in New York, Miami, Chicago and Los Angeles.

Like many great artists pioneering new forms and ideas, McCobb derived much of his inspiration from traditional design. Careful study of his output reveals influences from Shaker, Danish Modern, American Colonial and Neo-

Clockwise from right: A birch Winchendon Planner Group credenza and display cabinet sold for just under \$1,000 back in 2002. This 1530 model armchair was in constant production during the lifespan of the Planner Group. Another Wright auction Planner piece with two- and three-drawer stacking units sold for \$920 in 2002, just a touch over its low estimate.



Machine Age

Classic sources. This evident connection with the past certainly contributes to the historic significance and impact of his work. As a designer, he was not seeking to redefine our lifestyles but to merge timeless principles of aesthetics and function with contemporary materials and aesthetics. McCobb would have been pleased with this legacy, for he believed that well-designed furniture is neither dramatic nor boastful, but should instead “remain quiet and serve as a background for those who live with it.” ☼

JM Cava is an architect in Portland, Ore., where he teaches, writes and designs.

Need to have a McCobb piece in your life? If you're on a budget, there remain a surprising number of examples in thrift stores, yard sales, on eBay or craigslist, but patience is required. Otherwise, good inventories can be found in most major auction houses and galleries. My own favorites are: the Wright auction house in Chicago, operating worldwide with a knowledgeable staff, and an accessible website with many archives (wright20.com); Machine Age, a modern store in Boston (machine-age.com); and Gerard O'Brien's Reform Gallery in Los Angeles, (reform-modern.com) containing an inventory of possibly the largest number of McCobb pieces in the world. Jonathan Goldstein (paulmccobb.blogspot.com)—a collector and historian in New York—is a great source on McCobb scholarship; watch for his forthcoming book on this wonderful American designer.

homework

Miss Daisy's Facelift



text Bromley Davenport
images Lee Grider Photography

The genteel “Driving Miss Daisy” was filmed a few streets over from Dave Smith and Michael Hammond’s ranch in Druid Hills, a planned community designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in Atlanta. There are many two-story historic mansions in the development, and since the 1970s it has been on the National Register. “We were lucky that our street of ’50s and ’60s modern brick ranches was covered by the historic district restrictions. Our 1961 ranch was protected during a time when midcentury homes were razed for McMansions,” says Hammond, an IKEA interior design manager.

Smith, a banking consultant and self-confessed eBay addict, had been stocking up on materials and design elements for several years before the couple approached Renewal Design-Build about a makeover for their kitchen and family room. “Most of our waking hours are spent in this room—cooking, eating, watching television, reading, entertaining—so we wanted open, flexible space and more



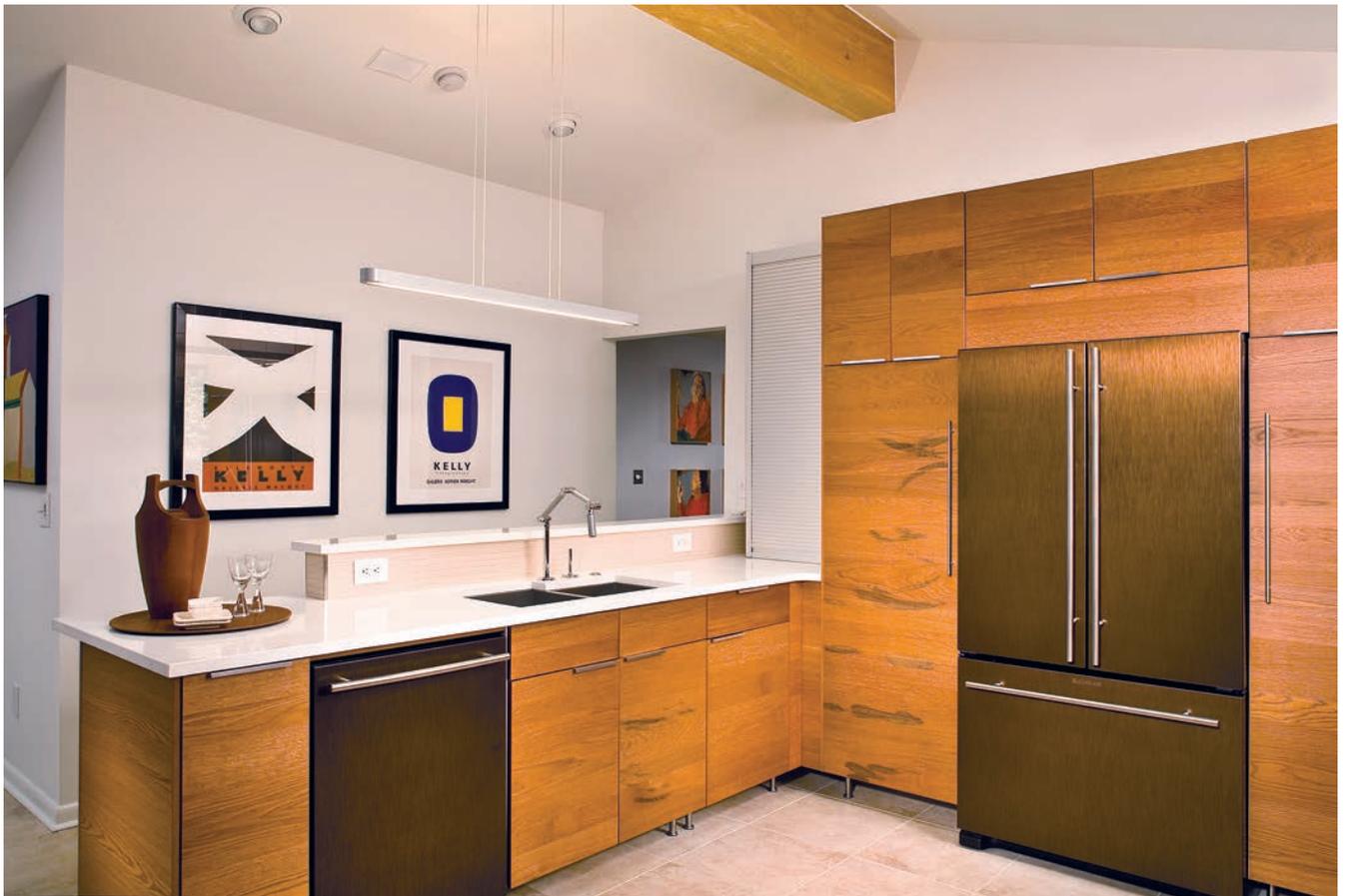


"The original fireplace brick had 50 years of dirt and grime; having the brick professionally cleaned by a mason proved to be a great investment," says designer Brent Potter.

Before



The Jenn-Air oiled bronze appliances are a warmer take on stainless steel, while the floors are porcelain tile and the counters quartz. The clean-lined pendant lamp is an Artemide Talo.



natural light,” Hammond explains. “We were interested in a midcentury aesthetic but didn’t want a time warp re-creation. We were more focused on taking the inspiration and approach and integrating it into our contemporary lives.”

“I like to preserve the original designer’s details and sense of space whenever possible,” says RDB project designer Brent Potter. “However, kitchen design and materials have seen a lot of improvements over the past 50 to 60 years, springing from homeowners now using their kitchens as the primary room of the house. There is a huge variety of countertop options and great improvements in cabinet design and door and drawer hardware. It’s always a shame, though, to see Craftsman columns on a ranch that used to have deco-

orative metal, or a cool midcentury built-in missing because the homeowner thought it was outdated. Don’t get me started!”

Since they were replacing just a few windows, sourcing energy efficient, brushed-aluminum models that closely matched the originals took a lot of research. Raising the ceiling and installing skylights delivered the daylight the homeowners were looking for and made a dramatic difference in the volume of the space.

“We vaulted the room’s ceiling by adding a three-piece LVL [laminated veneer lumber] structural beam under the roof ridge,” Potter explains. “A heavy, one-piece beam that the structure required would have been difficult to install in an existing room, so we used three LVLs sandwiched together



and wrapped with wood. This provides a wire chase for installing lighting on the beam, hiding the fan wiring and visually tying the sitting and kitchen spaces together.”

The couple requested a mantel for the fireplace, and Renewal Design-Build came up with a unique solution that left the original masonry undamaged. A custom cabinet shop built a mantelpiece of red birch stained a variety of warm brown tones that was hung from the overhead support beam and wall; they repeated the motif on the doors of the media storage unit that sits on the raised hearth. The treatment is modern, yet warm, and ties to the IKEA Nexus oak cabinetry in the kitchen.

“IKEA offers good overall design and quality hinges and drawer slides as standard,” says Potter. “But be prepared to

pay as much for assembly and installation as you do for the cabinet components. They also come in limited sizes, so space in a layout can be wasted by filler panels. For the money, they offer good cabinets, but they’re not as durable as real wood cabinetry.”

“We were amazed at how quickly the updated kitchen and family room felt like home—like it was always meant to be this way,” enthuses Hammond. “The RDB team we worked with came in on time and in budget. That was the best surprise: that there was no surprise.” 

Before and exterior photos, courtesy the homeowners.

Resources page 73



keep it up

Answering your burning questions about maintaining your midcentury ranch and its furnishings ...

Smeary Windows

Q: As I stare outside at what should be an amazing view, I can't help but be disappointed. We recently purchased a wonderful midcentury home with amazingly large windows.

We started replacing the exterior pins that hold the storm windows in place, and when doing this we decided to clean all four sides of glass. Now our framed views of exterior foliage have become panes with ghost-like strokes and smudges.



Do you have any suggestions, tips or tricks? Midcentury = lots of glass in general, so I can't be the only reader asking this question. Thank you in advance for

any help you or readers may have to offer.

Mike & Ann Dudek

A: We were Windex and paper towel people prior to buying our ranch house, but have since seen the light. Smeared panes can mar your view and are an issue on photo shoots as well, leading to painstaking Photoshop retouching.

What's worked for us is old-fashioned ammonia, 1/2 cup in a gallon of comfortably hot water, applied with a clean rag and squeegeed off. The squeegee is key to avoid streaking, and change your water when it looks dirty, roughly one bucket per exterior side of the house.

Avoid washing windows when the sun is directly striking them, and I'm paranoid about warm water on cold panes, so we wait until the weather warms up. Wear rubber or latex gloves, as the mixture is drying to your hands. The aroma is bracing, a bit like smelling salts, so if you're a delicate flower, this may not be the product for you.

A good quality squeegee does a much better job than a cheap plastic model from a big box store. You'll need to patronize your local hardware store, where they'll have the ammonia in big jugs as well, or try a janitorial supply or online. A pro line of window cleaning tools like Ettore will offer handy options like an extension pole to reach those clerestories, and you'll be using this equipment at least annually for years, so don't cheap out. (We also use a squeegee to clear the condensation on our single-pane picture windows during the winter.)

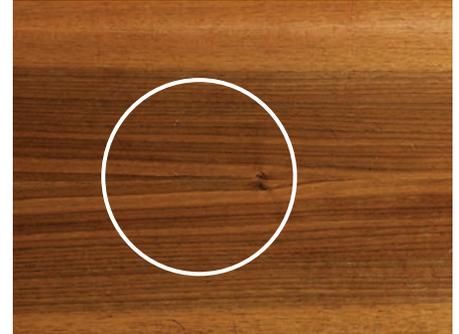
Wipe up the drips on the window frames as you work. Now that you're done with the exterior, go inside and do those surfaces as well. Martha would be so proud.

Wood Woes

Q: I have a great vintage hope chest, but its central location in my house means the top is also a popular spot for our cats to hang out. The lid now has multiple surface scratches and a hazy white spot from a hot laptop/heat-seeking cat combo. I know scratches are fixable, but all I've found online looks like wood colored crayons. How can I fix the scratches and mar? I just hate the thought of ruining vintage furniture; it's not a collector's piece, but it was 60 years old when I got it (and in better condition!) and I'd like it to continue its useful life.

Lucinda McBee

A: We get it. You wake up in the morning to discover that your cat has barfed on top of your beautiful



teak coffee table. What do you do now? Get a hungry, non-discriminating dog and put a tiki mug on top of the stain. Or, actually roll up your sleeves and fix the problem with these tried-and-true techniques.

I'm a sucker for beautiful oiled wood furniture; unlike paint, varnish or polyurethane, oiled wood has a porosity, depth and natural feel that other treatments can't match. There's a downside/upside to oil, however. While it's more fragile and subject to scratches and stains, it is renewable right at home and the list of possible furniture injuries is matched or even exceeded by the remedies. A little research for today's topic of a milky-white

to medium to fine. This advice only applies to oil-finished woods.

As the steel wool cuts into the wood, the oil will darken with dirt, wood and bits of steel; wipe with paper towels and add more oil. Eventually graduate to the next finer grade of wool until the finest, softest #0000 is reached. Finish the cleaning with fresh towels and a bit more oil. The resulting surface will be rich, lustrous and scratch-free. An important safety note: bunched-up oiled towels and steel wool will self-combust on a hot day (personal experience) so let them air dry and then soak with water before discarding.

For seriously deep, dark stains, a high-speed finishing sander and plenty of sandpaper may be necessary prior to using the techniques above. (Check the edge of your piece of furniture to see if it's solid wood or a veneer; if the latter, you don't want to sand down too far and expose the base wood.) Allow the sander to skate over the surface—don't apply excessive pressure. Initially the sandpaper will load up with oiled wood and look 'freckled.' Discard and use fresh sandpaper until just wood dust comes off the sander. Again, progress from coarse to fine sandpaper and then transition to oil and steel wool.

Renewing the luster when the wood looks a little dry or dull only requires an application of oil or wax. Be sure to wipe the surface multiple times so you don't end up with a sticky finish. Some of the products we've used with success are 'Restor-A-Finish' and 'Feed-N-Wax,' both from Howard, and Watco's Danish Oil Finish.



heat mark turned up the unexpected technique of a medium hot household iron buffered by an old tee shirt. I'll save confirmation of that method for some other time; for now I'll stick with rubbing and oil.

Surface problems with wood, such as scratches and water stains, will require a thorough approach to gently, smoothly removing the damage to reveal fresh wood. While the particulars change, the basic action is always to hand rub with a wetting solution of oil and ascending grades of steel wool, progressing from coarse (#3)

Send your queries and photos for our authorities' review, along with solutions that others may benefit from, to editor@atomic-ranch.com.



text Angie Hubbard
photography Mykal McEldowney

A five-bedroom, five-bath, 4,650-square-foot custom ranch was constructed in 1950 for C. Douglas Wilson, a prominent Greenville, S.C., businessman. A widower, Wilson built this home with his second wife, who lived there alone for a number of years after his death in the '70s.

My husband, Ed, and I were in an ultra-modern house that we loved and had only owned for three years. When our realtor called us about the Wilson property, Ed told her that we were very happy in our present home, but she insisted that we look at it. On the way over, Ed said, "We'll come home and love our house even more." I thought we might find some decorating ideas to copy, so needless to say we had absolutely no intention of purchasing it. Right.

From the late 1970s until 2009, routine maintenance was nonexistent at the Wilson house. For 10 of those years, it sat

vacant. The roof leaked. The paint peeled. The dining room floor and exterior kitchen wall framing were infested with termites. Windows no longer opened and closed. The paint, inside and out, dated from before the Nixon administration. The home sat unheated and unairconditioned for many years. The good news was, it was a perfectly preserved, high-end, midcentury modern ranch.

We took out a bridge loan and closed on the house Christmas week of 2009. Our realtor predicted that our current home would sell quickly, so our plan was to work on the renovation, put our house on the market in April and move in June or July when the project would be about complete. Instead, our sale closed at the end of April and we had to move into the new house in the midst of renovation. It was a crazy few months but well worth the hassle in the end.



Greenville, S.C.



Opposite: The aluminum frame windows are new, as is the landscaping. Like many postwar ranches, the front facade is intentionally modest.

The hardwood floors, ceilings and wood paneling were sanded and refinished, and the granite fireplace surround polished in the 15' x 30' living room. Two of our former homes were Craftsman-style bungalows, so most of the furniture is the Ekornes Stressless line.



The dining table is a custom design made from 2"-thick Knoll landscape panels, intended as office partitions, teamed with a Vector base. The Italian chairs are from nearby Shinola Art and Antiques, as is the light fixture and the art on the wall.

Lavish pedigree

Harold Cooledge designed the home in 1949. He switched his career from chemical engineering to architectural history, and it is believed that our home was one of the first that he designed. Cooledge was an apprentice of Frank Lloyd Wright, and the similarities to Wright's Prairie-style homes are stunning.

The house came with an incredible amount of documentation—original blueprints, project specifications and a book of receipts that documents every keg of nails, shipment of lumber, hour of labor and long-distance telephone call sourcing materials. Just the construction receipts totaled more than \$50,000, an amazing amount of money for building a house in 1950.

Structurally, the house is incredibly well built. The floors are poured concrete over steel mesh, supported by steel beams and brick walls. There are no piers or posts in the finished basement. The inside and outside walls are tide-water cypress, a wood used in a lot of Wright's homes. The only issue we have with the cypress is that both woodpeckers and carpenter bees love it.

The Wilsons enjoyed entertaining and they built a home with all of the latest amenities. Their central air conditioning was the first ever in a South Carolina residence; Harry Truman received central air conditioning in the White House the very same summer. There is off-street parking for 20-plus vehicles. The basement contained a commer-

cial walk-in cooler, and the room next to it held a second kitchen used by the servants to prepare food for large gatherings and their own meals.

Back from the brink

The house originally utilized radiant heating in the finished basement area, kitchen and bathrooms. For the rest, a gigantic commercial-grade boiler used an air handler to blow air across radiators. After a month of ownership, an \$875 gas bill arrived, forcing us to change the heating and cooling to current-technology systems. All of the old aluminum ductwork was replaced with high-efficiency, insulated ductwork and a foot of insulation was blown into the attic, resulting in much lower utility bills.

We first planned to restore the damaged wood windows and doors, but the cost and the inefficiency from a heating and cooling perspective made us decide to replace them with thermally insulated Pella Architect Series windows. In other areas, commercial aluminum and glass storefront-style units provide an appropriate look on a midcentury modern ranch, yet offer energy efficiency at a very reasonable cost.

The estate's grounds once occupied 26 acres, with a full-time gardener and live-in maid on staff. A private entrance led to separate servants' quarters, and call buttons are located throughout the home, including one at the head of the dining table. When termite damage was found in the dining room, that unique feature had to be covered, however, we were thrilled to locate the same wood for the replacement floor as was originally used throughout the house.

In the kitchen there was also a great deal of termite dam-

age that had been hidden during the inspection by dense stands of bamboo. When the contractor was installing new VCT flooring, he removed the toe kick from the cabinet and called out, "Ma'am, could you please come here and look at this?" With the bottom trim removed, one could see outside the house—termites had eaten straight through. This was devastating, as we were set on keeping the kitchen's original cabinets.

Luckily, we found a talented cabinetmaker who took the original metal drawers and hardware from the cabinets before they were removed. He then made identical lower cabinet bases reusing all of the salvageable parts. New

countertops were also now a necessity. We chose a boomerang-patterned Formica and period-style stainless trim to make the kitchen look as original as possible.

As Ed told our contractor, "If you purchase a home due to the original style, it would be unfair to the house and yourself to take the easy way out and put in granite countertops. Everything is still out there—it's just a matter of finding it." ❁

Ed Hubbard designs and sells commercial security systems and Angie is a Realtor. See more of Mykal McEldowney's work at mykalmphotography.com. Resources page 73



The original windows were left in the breakfast nook, which has doors to the porch and unique, individually painted tiles on the ceiling.



In the kitchen, previous owners converted the built-in ironing board [near the microwave] to a vitamin cabinet, but all of the florescent lights are original. Ed asked for a time-period stove, but I wanted something more modern. We found a Wolf model with an infrared grill that he loves and now we are both happy.

ranchdressing

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

Q: I recently acquired a set of four teak chairs that have 'Made in Denmark' stamped on the underside. There are no other marks or labels. I have been unable to find

any information about them and wonder if they might be a Hans Wegner design. If you could help to identify them and give me some idea of their value I would be truly grateful.

Brian Hosaluk

A: Lorin Hesse of *Danskmoderne.com* replies: "It is understandable that Brian might wonder if his chairs are by Hans Wegner, who emerged early on as one of the most important Danish midcentury designers. His pieces are not only



iconic, but were also much copied or, put more delicately, 'inspirational' to other designers.

"Wegner employed a similar curved back/arm section component in his most well-known chair, model PP 501 (or 'The Chair') for *PP Møbler* in 1949, and went on to employ variations of it in several

other models (PP 502, 505, 201, 203 and others). But as you can see, the legs on Brian's chairs, rather than being tapered and circular, are tapered and oval/rectangular and do not extend up to meet the chair arms. The

chairs may not be Wegners, but they are, nevertheless, a fairly good example of a standard, late-midcentury Danish design.

"Values on Danish MCM are all over the spectrum these days, but seem to be rising gradually despite the economy. I would estimate a retail value on his set of four, if in very good restored/upholstered showroom condition, to be between \$600-\$900, depending on the dealer's market."

Q: My family's 1950s ranch has many pieces of Heywood-Wakefield furniture. The stamp is clearly visible on all of the pieces. I have never found a book or article that identifies or pictures Heywood-Wakefield in



this type of wood, with its beautiful gray finish. My mother thinks it is elm. Can anyone help me identify the wood or direct me to a resource for research?

Hope VanNortwick

A: Bay Area dealer *Vince Bravo* (*vincebravo.com*) knows a thing or three about Hey-Wake: "The Drop-Leaf Dining Extension Table (M1129G) and side chairs



PP Møbler, pp.dk



(M1134A) were both produced from 1955 to 1959. Your set is constructed from solid birch. While your mother attributes the color to the wood, what you see is the Sable Gray finish. Although many people identify Heywood-Wakefield by its Wheat or Champagne finishes, the company used a variety of stains. For more information, check out *Heywood-Wakefield Blond: Depression to '50s*, edited by Donna S. Baker for Shiffer Publishing, Ltd."

Q: I recently took a wall down to reveal the backside of a 1950s-style sandstone fireplace facade in our kitchen and I'm looking for advice on cleaning it, how to repair damaged stones and grout, and if it needs sealing. I live in the Bay Area, so was hoping to find a local professional.

In the Winter 2011 issue you featured a cover shot with similar stone. Did the homeowner do any restoration on his? Of course this house is now my inspiration and I want mine to look the same!

Karyn Wolff

A: Daniel Krog, an owner of the cover house in Studio City, says the family room wall is unsealed, while you'll note the curved hearth (above) has a somewhat glossy sealer applied by the previous owner. Due to its uniform height, we took the material to be a man-made product, but Krog thinks it's natural stone. Fortunately he didn't need to do any restoration since neither fireplace surround had been painted or covered up.

Allan Higgins of Acme Brick (brick.com) in Fort Worth has a couple of suggestions for your situation: "I can recommend two non-acidic cleaners from Prosoco—'BioWash' and '2010 All Surface Cleaner.' If a contractor needs a stronger acidic cleaner, I would suggest 'Vana Trol,' also made by Prosoco [prosoco.com]. And I can recommend their 'Sure Klean Fireplace Cleaner' for any

smoke damage.

"Natural stone doesn't need to be sealed, but that is really a personal choice. Prosoco has sealers on their website as well, and they offer free samples. I would suggest that route, so you can test product effectiveness and then buy the one(s) that work the best."

For a local stonemason reference, we emailed San Francisco architect Mark Marcinik. "Funny, I am looking for the same thing. It's kinda died out with the Great Generation, and since all the tech schools are closed, it's not being taught anywhere in this country. I'd contact Peninsula Building Materials [pbm1923.com] and ask for a referral."

To that we'd add that the Atomic Ranch Facebook and Google+ groups can be good places to post a request like this and see if homeowners have a local contractor to recommend.

croutons

✘ The chairs Jed Splittgerber has are Hans Wegner, CH-33s. [Spring 2012, pg 68]. Designed in 1958, it is a variation on the CH-30 theme. The curvature of the side rails is quite unique, and the seat back has been elongated from the CH-30. Google it ...

**Torben Ovesen,
Hansen Interiors**



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

atomic events



Art © The George and Helen Segal Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Three People on 4 Benches, 1980, George Segal

Through September 9 Tampa Masterworks of 20th Century Sculpture from the Martin Z. Margulies Collection

The Tampa Museum of Art chronicles important developments in 20th century sculpture with 20 works by Joan Miro, Isamu Noguchi, Willem de Kooning, Louise Nevelson, Manuel Neri, George Segal, Deborah Butterfield and John Chamberlain. tampamuseum.org

Through September 9 Portland, Ore. The Architecture and Legacy of Pietro Belluschi

Regarded as Portland's most important architect, this exhibition at The Oregon Historical Society covers Belluschi's homes, churches and office buildings with an assist from his family's archives. ohs.org

September 13–16 San Francisco 20th Century Art and Design Fair

Thirty exhibitors of decorative and fine arts at the Herbst Pavillion at Fort Mason Center. sf20.net



Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein

Marshmallow, George Nelson, 1956

Through September 16 Tampa A Hundred Years—A Hundred Chairs

The subtitle for this exhibition is 'Masterworks from the

Vitra Design Museum'; what else do you need to know? See chairs from Breuer, Saarinen, Bertola and Eames alongside their sketches, drawings and historical documents. tampamuseum.org

Through September 2012 Philadelphia Collab: Four Decades of Giving Modern and Contemporary Design

The Philadelphia Museum of Art's collection of modern and contemporary design is extensive, thanks in part to the support of Collab. Among their 250 objects are designs by Alvar Aalto, Ettore Sottsass, and Charles and Ray Eames, as well as Frank Gehry and Philippe Starck. philamuseum.org



Courtesy Philadelphia Museum of Art

'Valentine' typewriter, Ettore Sottsass, 1969; gift of Collab

Through October 2 Rochester, N.Y. Frans Wildenhain 1950–75: Creative and Commercial American Ceramics at Mid-century



©Rochester Institute of Technology

Bauhaus-trained Frans Wildenhain taught at Rochester Institute of Technology where 150 of his ceramic pieces are on display. More info at rit.edu/wild.

October 3–April 28, 2013 Long Island City, N.Y. Hammer, Chisel, Drill: Noguchi's Studio Practice

Focusing on the tools and methodology used by Isamu Noguchi at his six studios in the U.S., Italy and Japan, this exhibition at The Noguchi Museum includes photos, sculptures and a 1970 documentary film. noguchi.org

October 6 Nationwide
DocoMomo Tour Day 2012

Twenty-one states will host a variety of events celebrating midcentury buildings, interiors and landscapes. Go to docomomo-us.org/tour_day_2012 to see what's happening near you.

October 26–28 Las Vegas
Atomic Vegas

The Architectural & Decorative Arts Society is throwing a midcentury lifestyle celebration with discussion panels, mixers and a bus tour of four homes. adas-lv.com

October 31–November 3 Spokane, Wash.
National Preservation Conference: Beyond Boundaries

Events and educational sessions were still being finalized at press time, so check the site for updates on MCM topics at the annual National Trust for Historic Preservation conference. preservationnation.org

Ongoing Miami Beach
Cleaner, Healthier, Easier: Improving the Modern Home, 1900–1945

Designers created interiors, furnishings and timesaving appliances that spoke to the world's interest in an efficient, hygienic home in the years before and after World War I. Drawings, objects and ads at the Wolfsonian FIU illustrate the drive to make one's home modern. wolfsonian.org

resources

Backyard Build-out, pp. 14–19

Designer: Jonathan Delcambre, jonathandelcambre.com
✘ **Exterior siding:** jameshardie.com ✘ **Kitchen:** Counters, silestoneusa.com ✘ Tile, annsacks.com ✘ **Furnishings:** roomandboard.com ✘ westelm.com ✘ babyletto.com ✘
Area rugs: flor.com

South Land, pp. 32–42

Master bedroom: Design, Curtis Popp, curtispopp.com ✘ Contractor, John DiDomenico, jdidoconstruction.blogspot.com, didocon@gmail.com ✘ Windows, blombergwindowsystems.com ✘ Lighting, Mimimania sconces and O-Space pendant, lumens.com ✘ House Industry pillows, houseind.com ✘ Artwork, Rhett Neal and John Yoyogi Fortes, skinnerhowardart.com ✘ Bill O'Neil, etsy.com/shop/billoneil ✘ Reconditioned Ericofon, ericofon.com ✘ **Master bath:** Powdercoated metal vanity, FusionCor fusioncor.com ✘ Wood cabinetry, Paul W. Jacobs Studios, pwjacobs.com ✘ Lighting, lumens.com ✘ Rug, flor.com ✘ **Living room:** Paint, ICI Dulux, dulux.com ✘ Lighting, Donald sconces, rejuvenation.com

✘ **Den:** Flooring, saimaparketti.fi ✘ Custom bookcase, burnett-sons.com ✘ Bubble lamps and shell chairs, modernica.net ✘ Pedestal table, scandinaviandesigns.com ✘ Artwork, lostfoundart.com ✘ **Playroom artwork:** garydinnen.com ✘ **Daughter's bedroom lighting:** lumens.com

Homework: Miss Daisy's Facelift, pp. 54–58

Project Designer: Brent Potter, Renewal Design-Build, renewaldesignbuild.com ✘ **Kitchen:** Windows, betterbuyglass.com ✘ Appliances, jennair.com ✘ Pendant light, Artemide Talo, yighting.com

Open House: Greenville, S.C. pp. 64–67

Windows: Pella Architect Series, pella.com ✘ Binswanger Glass, binswangerglass.com ✘ **Cabinetry:** Joey Coggins, Faith Woodworks, faithwoodworks.com • **Kitchen counter laminate & edging resources:** homedepot.com ✘ newyorkmetal.com ✘ heffrons.com ✘ **Vintage furnishings & accessories:** Shinola Art and Antiques, Greenville, S.C., 864.616.6649, shinolaantiques.com

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