

atomic ranch

MIDCENTURY MARVELS



SUMMER 2013



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cover

Aglow at dusk, this custom 1960 home in the Philadelphia suburbs was designed by Irwin Stein as a starter house for a dentist and his growing family. Expanded five years later, the double-height living room space and perimeter lighting emphasize the lines of the folded plate–variant roof. The second owners, a young, creative couple, have filled it with vintage furnishings and collectibles, resisting the urge to update—so far. Story page 22.



meanwhile... back at the ranch

Ada Louise Huxtable died in January 2013 at the age of 91. The celebrated and respected architecture critic for, first, the *New York Times* and later the *Wall Street Journal*, she won the Pulitzer prize in 1970 for 'distinguished criticism' and authored 10 books. Her last, *On Architecture*, published by Walker & Company (2008) was a collection of essays that spanned her four-decade career and is a good introduction to her writing.

Huxtable wrote about the big commercial and public buildings that were transforming our cities in the mid-20th century; both the good and the bad received equal attention. Possessed with an elegant style, she did not hold back on her trenchant opinions. Our readers who are architecture enthusiasts probably already know of her work, but for those who don't think they fit into that group, I'll let you in on a little secret: You are an enthusiast, too, you just don't know it yet.

If you enjoy Atomic Ranch and the homes we profile, you will soon realize that architecture binds our interests together. Our merchant builders and their tract homes utilized bits and pieces of the more revered architectural details, and you appreciate your home because of that. Huxtable didn't write softball pieces on houses and homeowners, but her connection to ranches was closer than you might think.

I can't claim to have known her, but we did exchange some emails when, in 2005, I sent her copies of our then-new magazine. To my great surprise she responded and became a subscriber: I was quietly flattered. She then accepted a copy of our first book and, when our second book was printed, I approached her again in December 2011. I allowed that, while my book was important to me, I understood that it might not be such a joy to a recipient who, after a long career, probably gets inundated with books all the time.

"Yes, of course I'd love to have the book; I enjoy every issue of the magazine," she wrote.

"I have been doing a lot of research on my ranch house book whenever I can—the writing hasn't started because my commitment to the *Wall Street Journal* takes up most of my time—but I had nice news today; I've received a grant from the NY State Council on the Arts to help with the work. Georgia, of all states, has put several developments on the National Register with exemplary research and application documents. And yet, when I tell anyone I'm working on a book on the ranch house, they still say, 'The what?' and then many confess they grew up in one. Thank you so much, and all the best to you both. Ada Louise."

In one of her numerous online obituaries, I read that her estate was bequeathed to the J. Paul Getty Trust, along with her archives. I have no idea how far along her efforts had taken her in the ranch project, but perhaps some time in the future a dedicated researcher will bring it all together and share her insights and commentary about ranch homes. I think we'd all like to hear from her again.

Jim Brown, Publisher



Ada Louise Huxtable, 1921–2013
Photo: David Malosh

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modernwisdom

smiled when I saw the Fall 2012 cover. Although there are marked differences, the Saarinen-inspired side table with a phone from *The Prisoner* made our rooms look very similar in theme. Our alarm clock

has a neon ring, and the artwork is by two Canadian artists, Norval Morrisseau and Ted Harrison; the carpet is on the way out.

David Stuckey
Picton, Ontario



* With respect to your editorial comments in the Winter 2012 edition [My 2 Cents], I couldn't agree with you more. As a long-time general contractor, professor of construction and architectural technology, and a member of the Construction History Society of America, I am no fan of most of the renovation schlock perpetrated by the various cable networks upon an unsuspecting public. The gross misrepresentation of the true process of renovating a home has single-handedly done more disservice to our industry than have the many unscrupulous, so-called contractors combined!

Renovations of any type don't happen in 30 minutes, less commercials. This is particularly true where design and construction decisions need to involve the nuance you refer to with respect to the treatment of architecturally sensitive midcentury modern ranch homes. In a recent conversation with William Krisel, he pointed out to me that midcentury modern is not a 'style,' rather a language. You don't learn a language simply by memorizing a few words or glancing through a dictionary.

I would humbly propose that Tracey and Jake Gorst (whose excellent video documentaries hold a respected place in my growing MCM library) consider doing a full-on documentary featuring atomic ranch homes. Perhaps enlightened broadcasters like PBS would showcase it to a wider audience and, at the very least, it would satisfy the constant cravings of us MCM aficionados for more visual inspiration and/or an escape back to our childhoods.

Ralph Lembcke
London, Ontario

Watch for more from Ralph in a future 'Keep It Up' piece on things to know when working with a contractor.

—ar editor

* Kudos to you on the HGTV editorial. My partner and I watch the shows hoping for some mid-century modern house to show up and, when they do, they are usually a poor man's version and the inside has been done up in Victorian style. Sigh. I agree the printed page is the best fix.

Here is a pic of our reupholstered Coconut chair in Orange Kato fabric from Knoll. The bucket portion itself is the original steel and has a tag underneath that says 'Lubliner & Himmel, Winnetka, IL, chair 5569'! The vintage Stiffel pole lamp is brass with black and white cones, while the familiar fences on the wall are original-condition Frederic Weinberg.



morewisdom

Unfortunately for us, the Chicago modernism show usually held every spring has been cancelled due to lack of interest, and we now have to rely on the fall show in Winnetka.

Hugo Hernandez
Chicago

* After reading 'My 2 Cents' in the Winter 2012 issue, I have a few observations of my own. Having watched housing fads come and go from Victorian to Santa Fe to Mid Mod, I can say that each movement goes through 10 phases.

From Discovery—the notion that the eyesores that crazy old folks in your neighborhood live in are actually special, once the overgrown vegetation and peeling paint is seen through—to Fad—the cable channels sense a mass trend forming and go for the couch potatoes—and finally, Left for Dead—the original folks who started it all either go into politics, TV or move to the middle of nowhere to escape the ubiquitous style, which now has a car named after it and appears on all sorts of T-shirts.

Perhaps you are sensing that we are in the late stages of Mid Mod, with its glitzy gloss-over redos. How about an HGTV show remodeling McMansions into tiny-room hotels?

Gary Gand
Chicago Bauhaus & Beyond

* Just wondering if AR has ever had a feature on small midcentury wet bars? It seems the only pics I can find are big, basement-rec-room-man-cave things. My wife and I are trying to outfit a 4'x8' nook next to the fireplace in our 1961 ranch and are looking for some inspiration.

If an article has not been done, please consider putting something together for a future issue. I'll bet others are looking for a place to show off their cool MCM bars and tiki stuff!

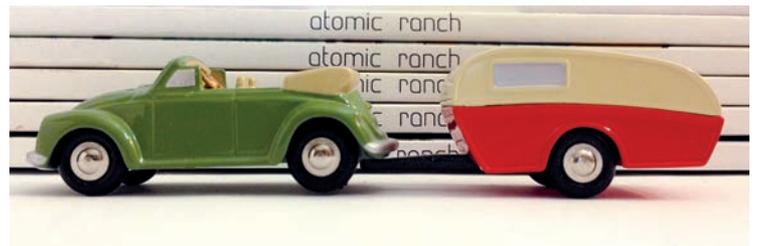
Marc Daffinee

In addition to the basement lounge in this issue, and both the cover house and Atlanta home in Spring 2013, we have shown a variety of bars in our first



book and in various articles, but haven't done a stand-alone feature. Many people convert closets or built-in nooks to liquor storage, but a plumbed wet bar presents a bit more of a challenge. For instant feedback, post your query on our FB groups and I'm sure you'll get some great ideas.

—ar editor



* I have been a fan of AR from the beginning and salute you for your courage and perseverance. I am also a car guy and really enjoy it when you are able to include cool vintage autos in your shoots.

The 'Cabrio and Caravan' picture is a love note to my wife. We are separated by a continent due to our careers; she is with my family in L.A. and I am on the East Coast. Sunday mornings, when the world is quiet, I compose small pictures of details from our life together that remind us of where we come from and what we have experienced as a couple. We are midcentury kids.

Eric Bausman

* I can't believe that when I opened the Winter 2012 issue, there was a wonderful article on refinishing Heywood-Wakefield furniture; perfect timing!

Having recently purchased a complete bedroom set

even more wisdom

of H-W, as well as the Wishbone drop-leaf dining table and four Dogbone chairs from a fantastic vintage store (Daddy-O's in Lubbock), it was with great enthusiasm that I thought I would refinish it all myself.

Even though I still have some work to do, it's a less daunting task now that I have David Call's advice and Beth Stireman's story. I'm glad to see that I'm not the only one that values the original finish enough to want to attempt it myself. I'll be ordering the Heywood-Wakefield finishing stain today!

Cindi Mladenka

Midland, Texas

* I grew up in the 1950s and '60s, and my parents were from Denmark. My mother liked Danish Modern



Before



After

and so did I. It wasn't until 10 years ago that an architect friend taught me there were real names associated with the styles I liked: Googie, midcentury modern and, of course, Atomic Ranch. With that new knowledge and a magazine subscription, my wife Carol and I set about revitalizing our boring 1955 Swiss Ranch.

First, we took on the most popular room in our house, the family room, where we added Armstrong ceiling strips, 3"x6" ceiling beams and 20" slate-like tiles. We've turned a cluttered room into a quasi-Eichler! Next up is the dining room and kitchen, which are very 1980s right now.

I want to thank you and your staff for the wonderful books and magazines. They all inspire us and, as the budget permits, we will continue throughout the house.

Kim Pedersen

Fremont, Calif.



* Greetings from Arkansas. This is the North Little Rock fire department station #7. I was stuck in traffic today and took this picture because it reminded me of something I might see in your magazine.

Brent Passmore

* We were lucky to find this 1968 MCM house in Burgundy, France, nested in a community in the middle of the woods. There are 19 other homes like ours, which were meant to be weekend and holiday houses for busy Parisians.

Some have been more or less kept in their original state, while others have been renovated without consideration of their style. When we saw our house for the first time, we knew that we would keep as much



we could of its 1968 look, so we gave the interior a '60s appearance, which fits so well with the house. We also wanted to import some Southern California touches with the Neutra house numbers and the desert-like landscaping in the entrance.

It took us six months for these results and there is still a lot to do! However, we enjoy our house every weekend as we escape the tumult of Paris. We invite you for a tour at flickr.com/photos/21673626@N06.

Karim Bennaziz & Marc Bouyssou

✳ A recent inquiry about the proper garden design for a house in Delaware reminded me of a book by James C. Rose. Mr. Rose was a pioneer in landscape planning in the '50s, and his 1958 book, *Creative Gardens*, is an excellent source for the soft/hardscape features of the era. It also contains some beautifully designed houses as well. Published by Reinhold, it is a must-have for those interested in period landscape design.

As a retired architect who now researches coastal environmental problems, I enjoy looking through this book from time to time, both for the beauty of its designs, as well as the design optimism consistent with the architecture of the time—and the tall tail fins on the automobiles.

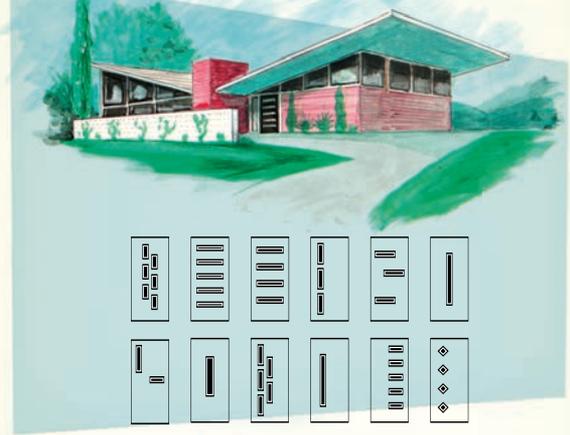
Jerry Berne

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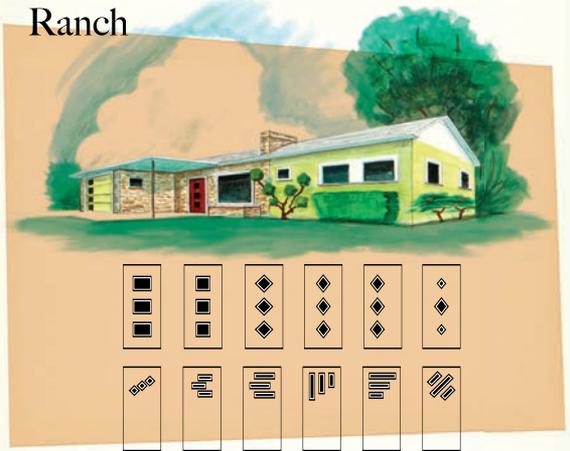
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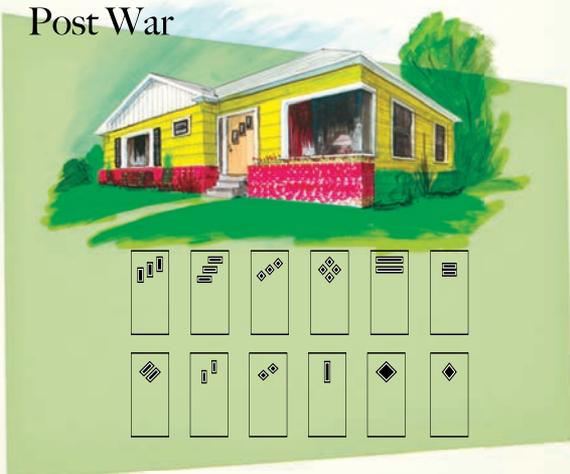
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Working Class

text Ernie Edmondson

photography Poppy Ruiz

As an avid fan of old movies and television shows, I loved the idealized midcentury home where love, life and highjinks seem to occur in a picture-perfect atmosphere. I've often wanted to crawl into the TV and live in one of those "Hi honey; I'm home!" settings. So why couldn't I?

One day as I biked through my neighborhood in Valley Glen, Calif., (which even sounds like a fictitious town next to the Cleavers), a house I had never noticed before was for sale. The exterior had been freshly painted and it looked just like it might have when it was first built. As I pressed my nose against all the windows, the inside did not disappoint. The interior had not been touched or updated in the usual off-the-shelf, home-improvement-store way. I quickly scheduled a tour, and the moment I walked in and saw the beautiful flagstone fireplace, I knew I was home. The original owner of this 1956 ranch had recently passed away and the estate was in probate. Working through the trials and tribulations of both selling my condo and closing the deal on my first house was not easy, but I did it.

Now it was time to create a swinging pad that both Elvis and Ann-Margret might have settled into at the end of my favorite movie, *Viva Las Vegas*. First, I picked a color palette from the era that would unite, yet separate, the open living/dining room. I settled on 'Shrimp Cocktail' and 'Shy Turquoise,' which complement my collection of movie posters of the King of Rock-n-Roll and *Kitten With a Whip*. A kidney-shaped Lane coffee table, shag rug and Selig Z chair with a matching ottoman set off the living room. I separated the two rooms with simple pole dividers inspired by the Hollywood apartment in *I Love Lucy*. The long, rectan-

The living room houses a Selig Z chair and ottoman, a Lane coffee table, a tripod floor lamp from Lamps Plus and a Restoration Hardware Luc sofa.



Heroes

Viva Valley Glen





gular living room had enough space for an entertainment area where I can watch flicks or listen to my growing record collection.

My dining room furnishings are a combination of a Lane's Perception line table and chairs, and a marble bench and credenza that were left in the house. The china cabinet was the first Danish modern piece that I purchased, rescued from a Goodwill; I now blame it for my whole atomic obsession. The hutch holds a set of Franciscan Starburst dinnerware purchased from a retired set decorator who swore she used the dishes in a Beach Boys' movie.

The galley kitchen presented the biggest undertaking to update yet retain the period look. I removed the gingerbread trim and painted the worn knotty-pine cabinets for a sleek, timeless look. The original oven and cooktop were restored and re-enameled in white. Two layers of old flooring were scraped away, and I went with bold red linoleum tiles with yellow diamond insets to play off the



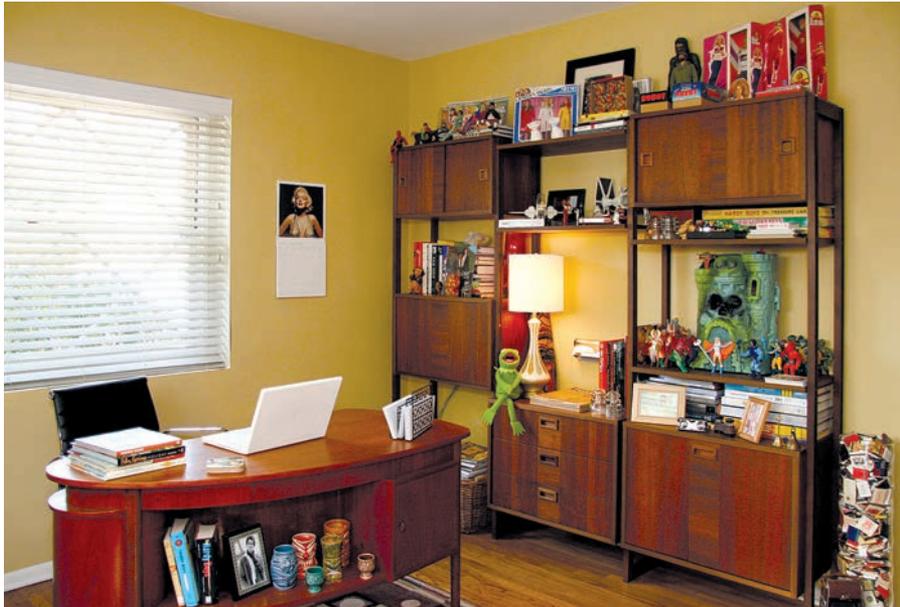


Opposite, top: Jonathan Adler 'Nixon' wallpaper greets visitors inside the front door, and a credenza that came with the house is still in place. The mirror was bought some years ago at Marshalls or another mass merchandiser.

Two new Rejuvenation lamps augment the original lighting in the updated but not remodeled kitchen. The Wedgwood wall oven and cooktop were refinished in white, and a refrigerator and dishwasher from the GE Café line replaced older models. The Armstrong linoleum floor and repro dinette set are modern but fit the home's age and aesthetic.

Opposite, bottom: Three Dora pendant lamps hang over the vintage Lane Perception table and chairs, and Franciscan Starburst dishes are stored in the midcentury china hutch.

In the bedroom used as an office, a Kai Kristiansen desk and a generic midcentury wall unit amid a myriad of personal and period playthings.



countertops and to look like a deck of cards. I also removed a few of the cabinet doors to display my collection of metal lunchboxes.

While Elvis and Ann-Margret rule the nucleus of the house, my bedroom and office wing belong to Marilyn. Keeping with the Lane furniture family, I chose a dresser with matching nightstands for the master bedroom. In my office, the crown jewel is a kidney-shaped desk, while a vintage modular wall unit is great for displaying my collection of pop culture toys, books and games.

One of the neighbors I met while moving in told me that I would probably want to get rid of the flamingo pink bathroom tile, to which I replied, "It's one of the reasons I bought the house!" I wish I could teach people to embrace what they have before they start mutilating these well thought out and well-built homes.

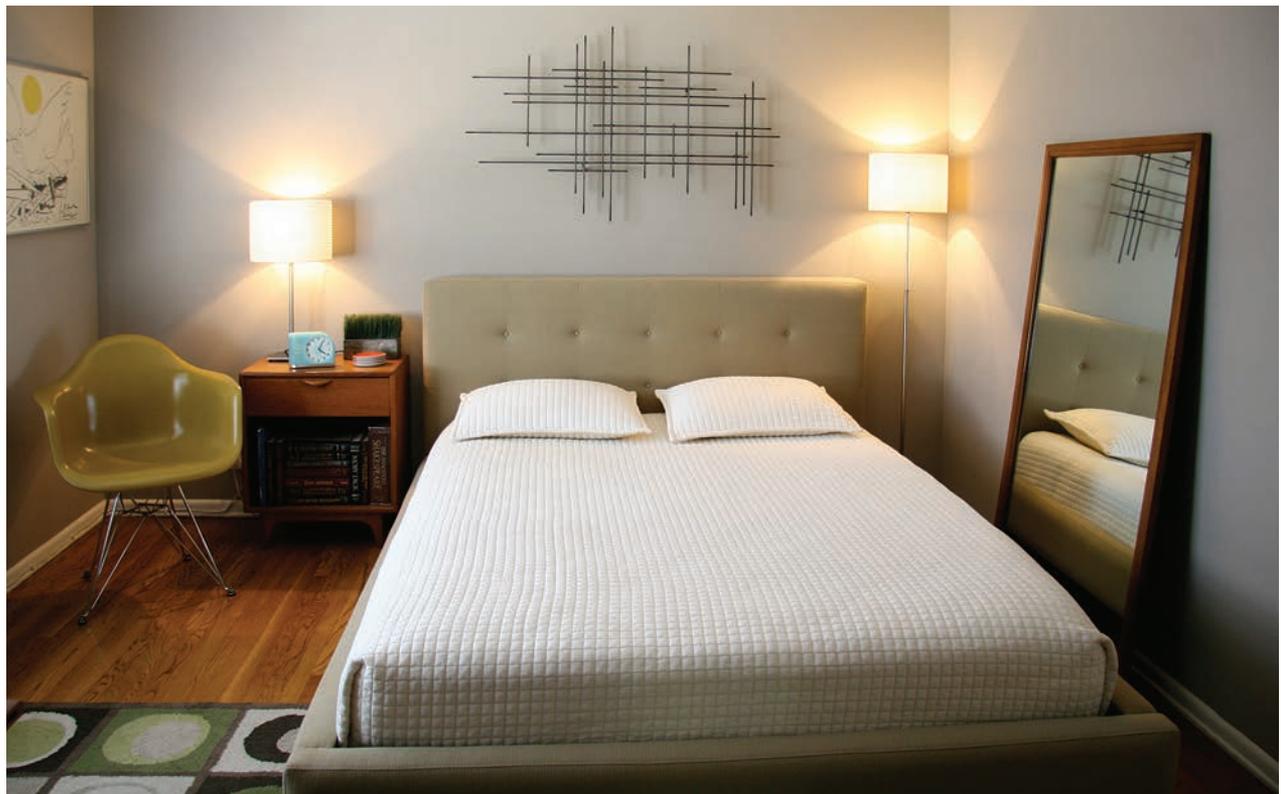
The L-shaped open floor plan still amazes me; I could flip the designated room areas around in so many different ways without building on. A small guest suite off the laundry room is perfect for company. And you can have so much fun creating something original, rather than putting granite countertops on everything. It's definitely a house that can grow and change with the occupants.

I love hosting theme parties from back in the day, like luau barbeques or white-elephant holiday parties. My friends



Despite his neighbor's prediction, the original pink bath with its built-in hamper is one of Ernie Edmondson's favorite elements. New details include a Donald wall sconce from Rejuvenation, rocket-shaped drawer pulls from Liberty Hardware (now discontinued) and inexpensive saucer knobs from Lowe's with Rejuvenation back plates.

Guests enjoy mostly contemporary furnishings with a dollop of vintage in the spare bedroom. The Tate bed and metal wall sculpture are from Crate & Barrel, the shell chair is a Modernica model and the clock on the vintage Lane nightstand is a Big Ben Moonbeam.



Making a Collection Count

Ernie Edmondson's collections imbue his ranch with personality without burying the architecture. Here are his tips:

Movie Posters

Don't settle for reproductions: You can find great deals on originals on eBay and other online auctions. Think of them more as fine art—you can't go wrong investing in any pop culture icon like Elvis, Marilyn, Hitchcock, James Bond, etc.; they only increase in value. If you find one in bad shape, you can have it linen backed and restored/preserved at affordable prices. The one that I and a lot of the studios use, Hollywood Poster Frames, took my Blue Hawaii British quad poster and Seven Year Itch half sheet from total rags and brought them back to life.

Lunchboxes

A few were mine as a child, like the Disney school bus, Six Million Dollar Man and Scooby Doo. Don't be scared of less than perfect ones; when all grouped together it adds to the charm and brings back the nostalgia of recess when you see the dents and rust stains from leaky thermoses. My grandmother found many of them for me at garage sales in the South.

Toys

When visitors go into my office they almost always tell stories of the toys they wish they still had or always wanted. I was very lucky that my mom saved most everything for me. I tell people if your folks still have some of your cherished toys, get them out of the attics and basements—heat and moisture are not so kind to action figures and board games, and I've had a few casualties.

Matchbooks

These are one of the easiest things to collect because they were free at bars and restaurants. I've picked up huge bags and jars of them at yard sales for next to nothing, and the graphics are amazing on the vintage ones.



know the protocol and get into the spirit, showing up with Jell-O molds, casserole dishes and martini shakers.

To complete my time machine, a 1968 Tahoe Turquoise Mustang convertible with white interior was a present from dear ol' Mom and Pop. When it's out in the driveway, sometimes I step back and look at the whole package. It's almost like I'm looking at the establishing shot of some retro show; best of all, the show is mine. Living the dream can come true. ✨

Resources page 75

Ernie Edmondson is a talent recruiter for Disney Television Animation and an aspiring writer; you may find him mowing the lawn while wearing a smart cardigan before shaking up a cocktail.

home page



Long Beach, Calif.

We bought our house in 2009 as a foreclosure that had been on the market for quite a while. Seeing the potential of the 1956 build, we snapped it up. After three years of nonstop renovations, we have a house that we can be proud of. It has the original slate floors, a blue tub and tile in the bathroom and a large open-concept great room. Its unconventional layout is an asset to us: A narrow lot put the living area at the back of the house and the bedrooms in the front. After a lot of sweat equity and on a very small budget, we love our midcentury shotgun house.

Ed Gomez & April Lillard

Sandy, Utah

Originally the 1966 House of the Year in Sandy, our home had been neglected since its original owners sold it. An unusual house for the 'burbs, I was struck by its big beams and pine ceiling. It shouted for me to transform it from an ugly duckling to a swan. After a five-month renovation and a lot of landscaping and elbow grease, people now stop and ask to see the inside, commenting on how good she looks. Sitting on a little over a half acre, it's like being in a private world of your own. Midcentury modern is like going home and staying for a long, long time.

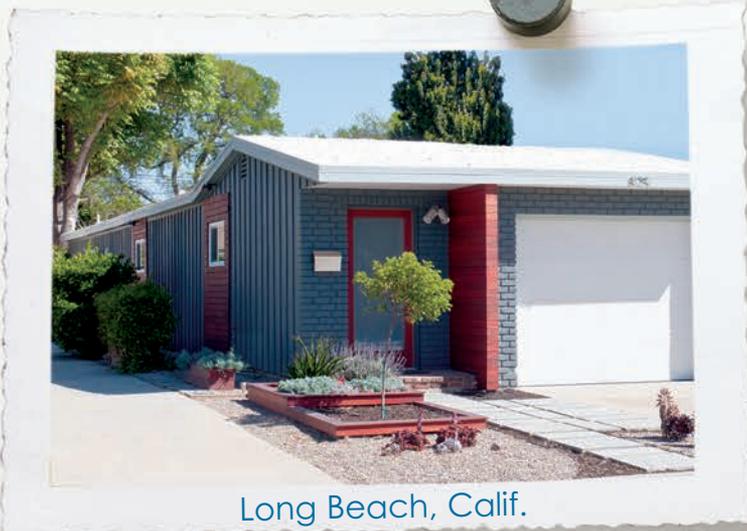
Charlene Stahura

Daly City, Calif.

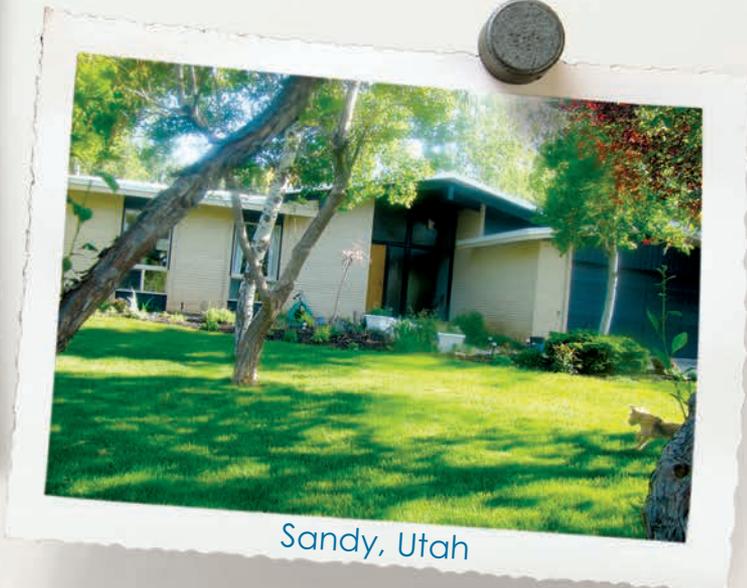
This house was built in 1956 and is typical of the modern designs found throughout our Westlake neighborhood. My wife and I shopped for a midcentury gem for over a year, and it was love at first sight when we laid eyes on this place. The oak floors, beamed ceilings, open floor plan and panoramic views of the San Francisco coast encompassed everything we were looking for. And to top it off, our three young boys and their dog all have ample room to play in the full downstairs den, at the park across the street and on the beach just down the road!

Bill & Mimi Sweeney

We can always use homes for 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 5.



Long Beach, Calif.

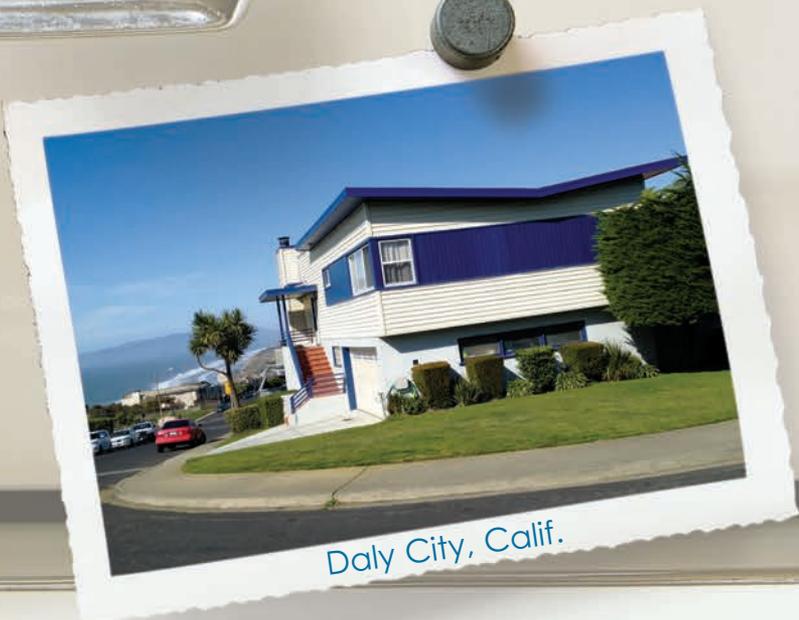


Sandy, Utah



P

H



Daly City, Calif.



Life Lessons

Irwin Stein visits the homeowners on photo day in September 2012.



In addition to two chairs from Matthew Fisher's family, details in the hearth area include a built-in sofa recovered in Maharam wool, a standing sculpture by Jason Seley, a metal wall sculpture of unknown provenance and a triangular magazine table similar to ones designed by Arthur Umanoff. Beyond the Plycraft chair you glimpse the sunken dining room, and directly above it are the acrylic window shutters of the second-floor master bedroom.

As a fledgling architect just a couple of years out of school, Irwin Stein was looking to build his practice in 1958. The then-28-year-old went on to build some 80 commissions, including garden apartments, industrial buildings, offices, automobile agencies and a dozen contemporary houses, primarily in the Philadelphia suburbs. But first he turned to those close at hand.

"Most young architects start out working for friends," he says today at age 82. "The Wachses were personal friends, and Mort was starting his dental practice and found the site. He wanted to build an office with an apartment above it—he felt that was all they could afford. I screamed and hollered that it was a nice site and they should be building at least the beginnings of a house."

Stein prevailed, and a two-bedroom, split-level home with an attached dental office was built for Morton Wachses and his wife, Elsa, on a wooded lot in Wallingford, Pa. The living area was on the same level as the office, while the bedrooms were up a level and the kitchen and dining room down a few steps.

Stein's modern aesthetic elicited some raised eyebrows, the Wachses remember. During construction, bystanders were fearful a gas station was being built, and a structural engineer neighbor warned the couple that the roof would blow off in the first windstorm or collapse when it next snowed. But that eye-catching roof was just a

text Michelle Gringeri-Brown

photography Jim Brown

manifestation of form follows function for the architect.

“I had never seen anything like it before,” Stein says about his folded-plate roof design. “It was simply an enlargement of the idea of the usual cross-bridging that you see in a floor for stiffening; the roofing and ceiling just followed that [design]. I used it on three houses ultimately.

“[Modern architecture] was a mixed bag: The people who liked it really loved it; others just dismissed it. I once designed a house using three geodesic domes in the '70s. After the clients died, one of the neighbors bought it and tore it down. There are some people who feel very violently about it.

“And it was not easy to get construction financing for any

kind of unconventional design. We built a scale model for [one of my] houses, got them to put it in the savings and loan window, and proceeded to bombard them with calls and letters about how nice it was,” Stein chuckles. “The client was able to get his mortgage that way.”

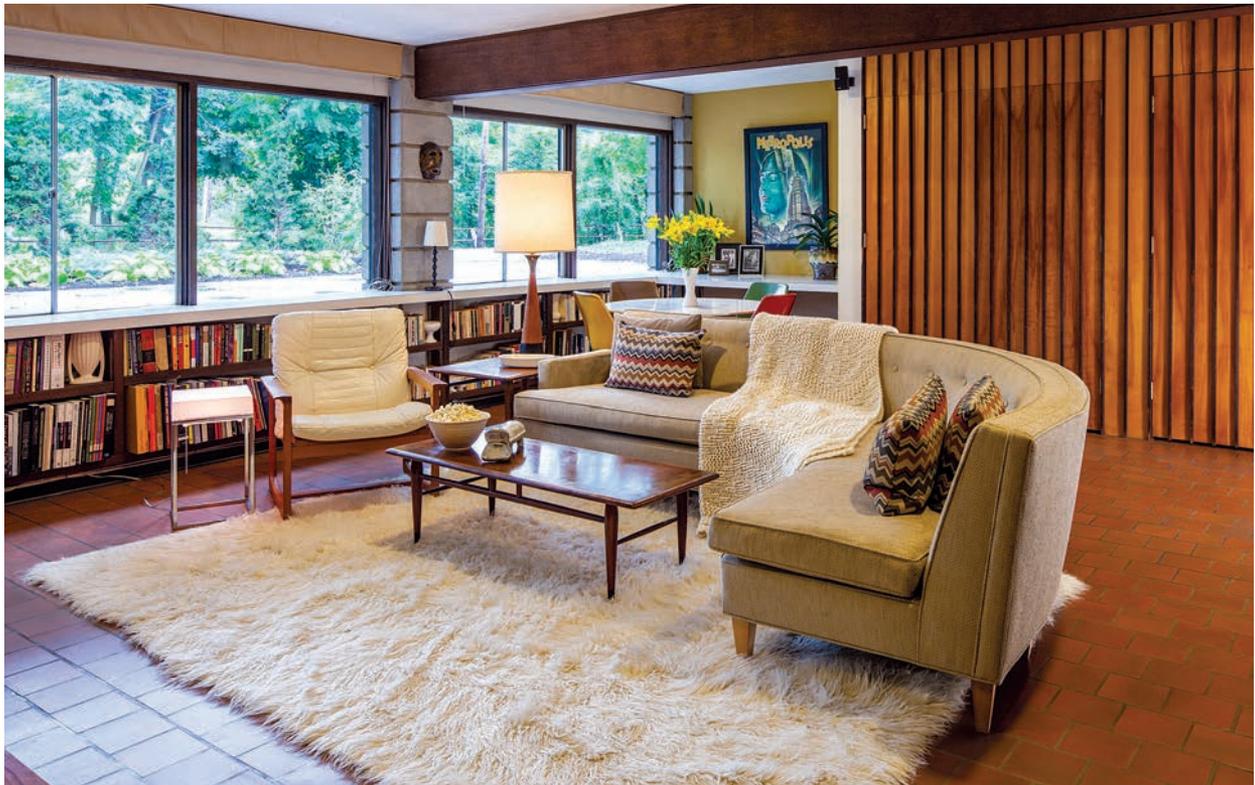
In 1965, when the dental practice was prospering and the Wachses had children, two additional bedrooms, another two baths and a playroom were added. The house had been sited on the lot with expansion in mind, and by the time the family numbered five, the extra space was welcome.

“When we designed this house with Irwin, we had no children,” explains Elsa Wachs. “It seemed so lovely to always





Left: The 24' tall ceilings in the living room shelter two distinct areas. "The fireplace, with the built-in sofa, Plycraft lounge and campaign chair, has more of a conversation pit feeling to it, while the other area's sectional sofa and coffee table are a great place to have cocktails and hors d'oeuvres before dinner," homeowner Bobbie Ann Tilkens-Fisher says. "I defined these areas through the use of Turkish kilim rugs and the furniture placement. When we have big parties, it is very easy to move a few chairs around and make the space feel unified." The daybeds still have their original upholstery, while the drapes on the corner window that looks out to the air conditioning unit are from the Wachses' era.



"In the den, there are also two areas—one for casual meals and one for entertainment. The room is very square and surrounded by white laminate built-ins, so I wanted to soften those lines and angles," says Tilkens-Fisher. "I did this by using round furniture: The vintage tulip-style table plays off the curves of the large sectional sofa, which designates the

entertainment area. That space is further defined by the large flokati—a must for a room with hard tile floors." Both the Danish armchair and table lamp are teak and leather, the wood tables are Lane Acclaim and the reupholstered sofa was a \$10 find.

be able to eat in the dining room. But after our first child arrived, the wish for a mudroom and an eat-in kitchen was strong and only became stronger with succeeding kids. The forethought that Irwin put into materials and design helped to make it an easy house to care for.”

In 2009, Mort and Elsa were moving to retirement housing and the residence was listed for sale, well above the budget that Bobbie Ann Tilkens-Fisher and Matthew Fisher could afford. Like many couples, they weren't really in the market per se, and after viewing the available Philadelphia modernist homes with Realtor Craig Wakefield, decided to stay put in their downtown row house. But one of the first places he'd shown them, the Wachses' virtually original home, stuck with them.



This page and opposite, top: When the addition was built, the front door moved forward, creating this terra cotta-tiled entry with steps leading to the new playroom. The wood floor portion under the Jens Risom teak cabinet was designed as a sunken planter and later filled in. A Peruvian weaving, a '50s brass coat rack and a Turkish kilim that picks up the colors of the architectural materials are other elements. On the facing wall, the black cabinet and chair are family pieces, and a Laurel mushroom lamp and 1953 artwork by William Fredericksen contribute to the vignette. The homeowners cite the low-rise-tread stairs and the perimeter cove lighting as unique Stein features they particularly love.

Opposite, bottom: The former dentist office waiting room has its original built-in seating, laminate-topped tables and vintage smoked-Lucite and upholstered armchairs. Tilkens-Fisher's midcentury design business is run out of this part of the home, where a Seth Thomas wall clock hangs next to a 1972 acrylic painting by Tom Johnston on the paneled wall.



More than a year later, Wakefield emailed that the property was still on the market and had been significantly reduced. They almost lost it to another buyer this time, but by May 2010 they had moved in. Other than repainting some rooms, taking up bedroom carpet and removing wallpaper in a bath, the pair have embraced the home's vintage charms.

"Our main focus these first few years has been on cutting back a lot of the overgrown and dying trees and shrubs, and refilling the space with new plantings," says Fisher, 43, president of an interactive design firm. "In the future we are looking to upgrade the electrical system and the kitchen appliances. I have also been researching custom-built interior storm windows that will allow us to retain the integrity of the original windows while providing some 21st-century insulation."

The 2,600-square-foot home and attached office provide more than enough room for the couple. "When we first moved in, we really had no idea what we would use the former dental office for," says Tilkens-Fisher, 38, an art history and museum studies college instructor. "But the house inspired me to start my own midcentury design business—At Home Modern—and gave me the room to run it.

"Initially, we were fairly certain that a kitchen remodel was our top priority. It's been two and a half years since we've moved in, and I can honestly say that the kitchen is far more

Original owner Elsa Wachs says the kitchen was redone in 1999 when the vintage two-burner, fold-down cooktop died. A built-in microwave, one of the first in residential use, was chosen in lieu of a conventional oven when the house was built, and the original flooring was 2" aqua tile.

The kilim in the dining room is new from overstock.com, while the vintage table and chairs are Lane. The white ceramic tile floor dates from the kitchen remodel, the decorative plate on the wall is by Bjorn Wiinblad and tabletop collectibles include Russel Wright, Danish teak candlesticks and unmarked midcentury ceramics. Looking back toward the living room, a Poul Hundevad cabinet and a flea market painting flank the tri-sided fireplace. Opposite, top: Tilkens-Fisher chose blue for the accent wall to bring out the warmth of the wood pieces, including this Broyhill Brasilia server with inlaid tiles by Athos Bulcão. The wood-blocks of children are by Kaoru Kawano and the salt-and-pepper shakers are Fiestaware; all of the other items are vintage unknowns.

The American-made walnut storage unit holds pieces from Bennington Potters, Frankoma, Bitossi and Rosemary Taylor; the wood armchair is a Thonet; and the swivel chair is an Overman.







Tabby cat Lucha lounges near a stereo cabinet that holds a Laurel Acorn lamp in the home office. The pagoda-top Danish desk is a family heirloom, and a Z chair, possibly by Kai Kristiansen, along with serigraphs by Bjorn Wiinblad are other notables. Pegboard shutters turned out to be an aftermarket feature according to architect Irwin Stein, but the couple likes the light control they provide.

Left: In one of the two original bedrooms is a wrought iron chair from a junk shop and a Danish teak trundle bed bought on eBay. Covering odd-size windows like these is a challenge; the homeowners are using the shades that came with the house.

Opposite: A Modernica bed in the master bedroom is one of the few new pieces in the house. The walnut nightstands, the dresser with a laminate top and Bertoia Diamond chair are all vintage, while the minimalist art over the bed is by Felix Gonzalez-Torres.



functional that I ever thought it would be,” she continues. “If we were to do a remodel, the ideal materials would be ceramic tile, laminate, walnut cabinets and concrete—all materials already used throughout the house. This home has been an inspiration in ways I never imagined.”

Beyond a few pieces inherited from their families, all of the vintage furnishings and collectibles have come from Tilkens-Fisher’s online searches and garage sales, flea markets, thrift shops and auctions. “What I loved most about studying art history were the stories behind the objects. I found myself wanting to find ways to get those tales out there to more people. I’m essentially a storyteller and a curator.

“At first, I only purchased items for our home in suitable condition, like the fantastic midcentury sectional sofa I found at an auction for \$10,” she says. “The upholstery looked great, but our cats quickly took to shredding the fragile vintage fabric. We love this sofa, so I recently had it reupholstered in Crypton fabric, which is supposed to be rather resistant to claws. I had such a positive experience with this particular upholsterer that I’m no longer afraid to take on ‘project’ pieces for us or my clients.”

Her experiences with clientele and furnishing their own house on a tight budget have resulted in a thesis statement of sorts. “Sometimes, in a rush to furnish a newly purchased

midcentury home, owners will go ahead and buy a house full of new (albeit midcentury-designed) furniture from a catalog,” Tilkens-Fisher remarks. “The end result is too homogenized and sterile and does nothing to reflect the personality of the people who live in the house. The most intriguing homes are filled with items that are old and new, perfect and imperfect and that tell a story about themselves and their owners.”

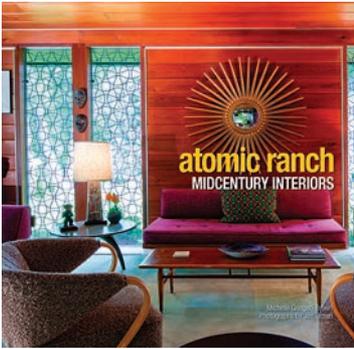
“It was interesting to see Bobbie and Matt’s furnishings; they weren’t wildly different than what Elsa had,” mentions Irwin Stein as he describes a huge macramé hanging that the Wachses displayed on the tall fireplace surround. “The fun of architecture is imagining something and then being able to walk around inside of it, realizing it’s gone from this dream to reality.”

The last word goes to Elsa: “We had become so accustomed to having expansive, exquisite views with natural light and colors that changed with each season. When we were condo shopping, it was difficult to find an apartment that would compare to that aspect of our living. I believe that the effect of almost 50 years in those light-drenched surroundings 24/7 became embedded in our souls.” ❁

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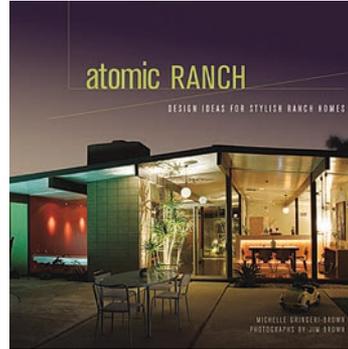
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Atomic Ranch: Midcentury Interiors

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



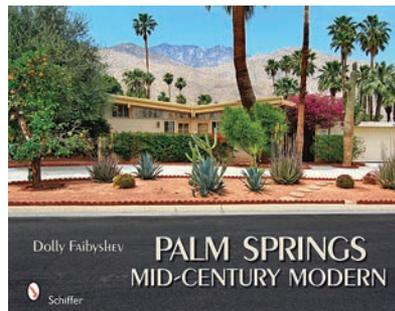
Atomic Ranch: Design Ideas for Stylish Ranch Homes

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



Trailerama

If you like midcentury Americana, this appealing travel trailer book delivers with its vintage ads, illustrations, family snapshots, Hollywood stills, postcards, toys and more on the topic. But you don't have to be a trailer enthusiast to enjoy its picture-book charms, and Phil Noyes' tongue-in-cheek text makes for lite reading. Hardcover, 192 pp., \$30



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

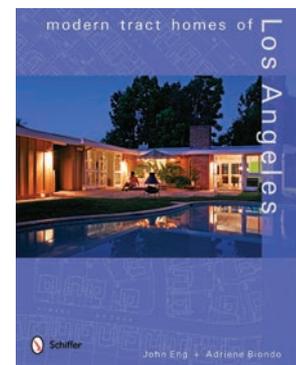
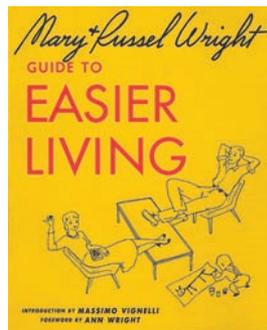
Little Boxes: The Architecture of a Classic Midcentury Suburb

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. Hardcover, contemporary color and b&w vintage photos, 144 pp., \$35



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 dinnerware of course—still resonate today. Softcover, b&w illus., 202 pp., \$19



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

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DESIGNS for Domesticity

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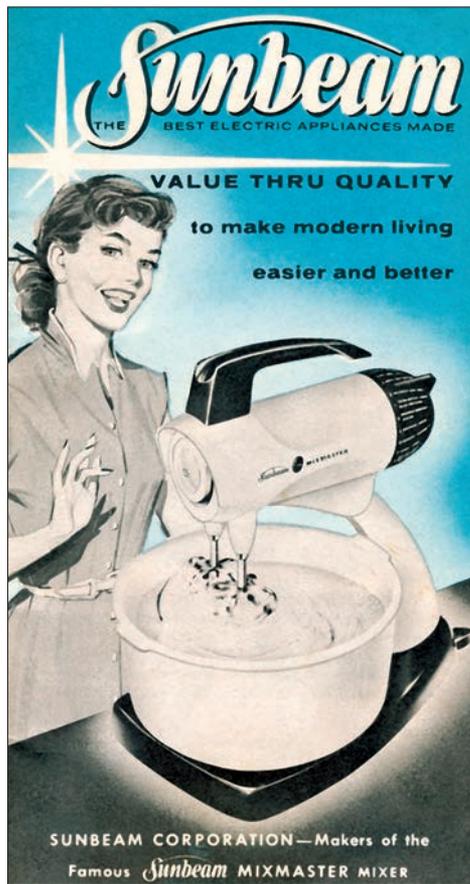


In 1959 Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev had a rather frank discussion about washing machines at the American National Exhibition at Sokolniki Park in Moscow. Even

though the Soviets had launched Sputnik two years earlier, in what came to be known as the 'kitchen debate' Nixon bragged about the choices Americans had, suggesting, "Would it not be better to compete in the relative merits of washing machines than in the strength of rockets?" Technologically speaking, product design was the area where America excelled during this era.

Without a doubt, the postwar years produced some of the best designs in architecture, furniture, decorative arts and household consumer products. For the most part, the latter have been taken for granted and not given the same significance. But with the popularity of the mid-century aesthetic, this facet of industrial design is garnering attention from collectors, enthusiasts and museums. Mixers, toasters, irons, vacuum cleaners and other appliances used daily in the 1950s domestic environment are looking more like art objects in the eyes of 21st-century admirers. Vintage appliances are loved not only for their ingenious and innovative details, but also because they conjure nostalgic memories for those who grew up with them.

The touted postwar appliances in this 1945 Universal ad were all futuristic models of modernity. For a dime, you could send away for *How to Plan Now for Tomorrow's Better Living*, a brochure designed to whet the homemaker's appetite for the new.



ASCENDANT DESIGNERS

Beginning in the 1930s, companies hired industrial designers—a new profession at the time—to restyle their products and boost sales during the Great Depression. Henry Dreyfuss and Lurelle Guild became associated with firms such as Hoover and Electrolux and, after the war, items could not be produced fast enough for a public eager to buy. Armed with wartime manufacturing techniques, the industry turned out wares that were both functional and beautiful.

Often consumer goods reflect the time period in which they were designed. Many domestic products borrowed details from the automobile industry or referenced the public's fascination with space travel and our solar system. "Smart," "modern" and "auto-matic" were used frequently in advertising to entice buyers. And each company had its own spin on the same product, giving the consumer many, many choices.

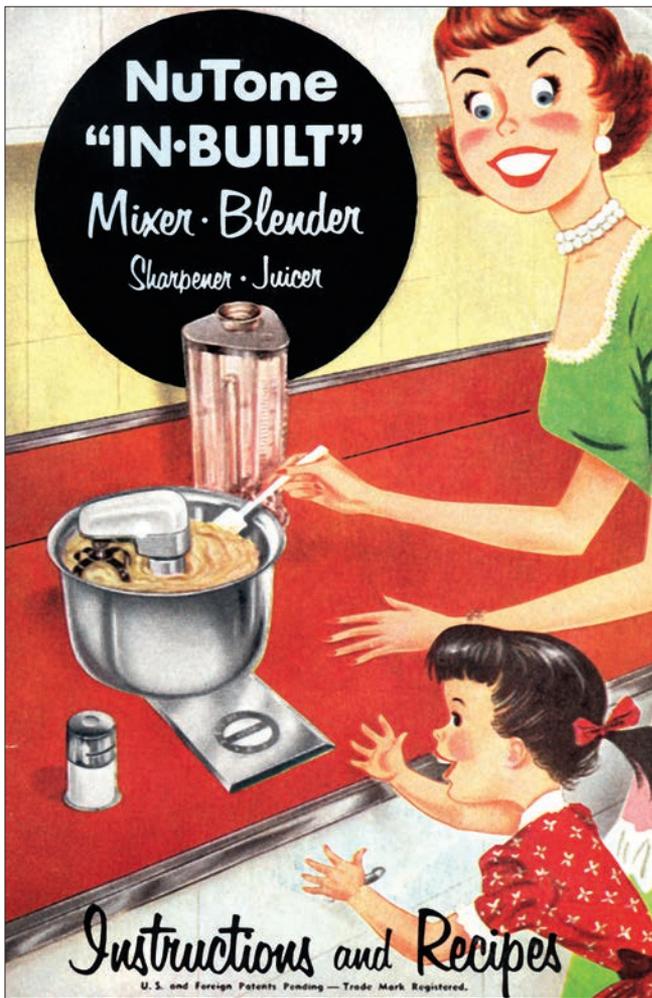
It has been said that modern design entered the home through the kitchen. Even in the most traditional house, kitchen appliances were modern, although the dining room next to it might be anything but. Open up a '50s domestic shelter magazine, such as *Better Homes and Gardens*, and you'll see the evidence for yourself. "Get Hep to Today's Vacuum Cleaner," proclaimed a 1957 article in *BH&G*. "The look and shape of tank and canister vacuum cleaners is something to marvel at—from globes to comets. The modern vacuum cleaner keeps pace in styling and color with other appliances in this design-conscious age."



COUNTER INTELLIGENCE

Collecting midcentury appliances can be fun and displaying them will elicit smiles from visitors. The purist may want to look for major appliances, but for those who need instant gratification, the snappy logos of Sunbeam, General Electric, KitchenAid, Electrolux and Hoover are a great place to start.

Many small kitchen appliances from the '50s sprouted fins and grills, cowls and headlights, mimicking that era's beloved American automobiles. Sunbeam Mixmasters are great examples of this, and the company also offered stunning toasters that are extremely popular today. The Sunbeam Radiant Control heat toaster of 1949, the work of Robert Davol Budlong, was the last word in automatic appliances: The bread silently lowered into the toaster without levers. This particular design has stood the test of time, with production continuing well into the 1990s. Most examples you find still work well and are affordable, so keep your eye out for these gleaming beauties at estate sales.



The NuTone 'in-built' Food Center became the choice of forward-thinking builders and architects. Early bowls were aluminum, soon to be replaced with melamine.

Introduced in 1956, the NuTone Food Center—the first built-in mixer/blender on the market—looked like something from *The Jetsons*. The basic principle was simple: The motor was out of sight under the counter, while a stainless steel plate housed the speed switch and attachment port. Available attachments included a beautiful pink blender, a charcoal and white mixer with the newly introduced melamine mixing bowl, and a meat grinder that looked like a rocket ship sitting on a launch pad.

QUEEN FOR A DAY

Even the most humble of appliances received the royal treatment. As early as 1946, General Mills' Tru-Heat iron stressed, "It's the shape that makes the difference!" in an ad that ran in *Arts & Architecture Magazine*. A 1955 Casco iron was offered in beautiful colors; it set itself apart from the rest as a 'modern miracle' with a flip top that allowed it to be filled



AT LAST... an end to cluttered-up kitchens!

NUTONE Built-In Food Center

U. S. & Foreign Patents Pending

Combination Food Mixer, Blender and Sharpener \$69.95
Fruit Juicer extra... \$3.95

ONE Motor Does Everything!

If you're tired of pulling heavy appliances in and out of cabinets... or if you get upset by cluttered-up work space in your kitchen... and if you're bothered by tangled electric cords from all kinds of appliances... then you'll fall in love with this fabulous NuTone Food Center.

Easy to install below any Kitchen Counter

It's Built-In... completely out of sight... ready for instant use as a powerful Food Mixer... or a 6-speed Blender... or a handy Electric Knife Sharpener... or a family-size Juicer. You can build the NuTone Food Center in your new home... also into the counter of your present kitchen.

Builders, Architects and Homemakers are saying that our NuTone Food Center is the *last word* for modern kitchens. A wonderful addition to your own home... and can you think of receiving or giving a more exciting Holiday gift!

Send 10c for 48-page Recipe Book —
 NUTONE, INC., 8H, Cincinnati 27, Ohio

See it at Department Stores, Electrical and Kitchen Modernization Dealers, and Sears Roebuck & Co. (Kitchen Dept.) — Also in Model Homes of Best Builders in your neighborhood. Fully guaranteed.

Table Model Model # 153
 Food Mixer & 6-Speed Blender. Plugs in Socket.
\$59.95
 Sharpener Extra \$4.95
 Fruit Juicer \$1.95
 At All Leading Dealers

Food Mixer

Blender

Sharpener

Juicer

Cut-away view showing **MOTOR** built-in below the counter.

It's the **SHAPE** that makes the difference!

Irons backward as easily as forward!

This is the famous Tru-Heat Iron with the shape that's different! See the unusual tapered heel! It actually lets you back into even the trickiest tucks and gathers. Roll the iron over on its Safety Side Rests and you'll see something else important, too... a permanently scratch-resistant mirror finish ironing surface that never loses its easy glide! Try it... soon as you can.

General Mills Tru-Heat Iron

SPONSORED BY **Betty Crocker**

Air-cooled grips, decorator colors and ad images that omitted the less-modern cords, the mid-'50s Casco iron was designed by Donald Deskey Associates and promised you'd 'have a wonderful time next ironing day.' The fictitious Betty Crocker endorsed General Mills' 1946 Tru-Heat model, designed to be rested on its side instead of on the pointed heel. Designers Francesco Collura and John Polivka took this old product and gave it a new form, resulting in Tru-Heat's inclusion in the Walker Art Center's *Everyday Art Quarterly*.

so lovely to look at...
IN THESE SMART, NEW DECORATOR COLORS!*

so light to handle...
WITH GRACEFUL, STREAMLINED DESIGN AND AIR-COOL GRIP!

so convenient to use...
JUST LIFT UP THE TOP-FILL IT RIGHT AT THE TAP WITH PLAIN WATER!

*P.S. Remember, only Casco has color!

Fully Automatic!
EXCLUSIVE NEW FABRIC DIAL WITH 6 SETTINGS FOR STEAM IRONING (other steam irons have just one)
Now you can safely iron silks, linens, cottons, wools and all the new "miracle" synthetic fabrics without fear of scorching or melting. Just turn the dial to the type of fabric you wish to iron... you automatically get the correct temperature and volume of steam every time, for truly "professional" ironing. Remember, no other steam and dry iron has this fabric dial feature!

Have a wonderful time next ironing day.
Just Ask Your Dealer For
15 DAYS FREE TRIAL!

These gay new Casco Steam and Dry Irons in today's smartest decorator colors make ironing a joy, never a drudge. From comfortable air-cooled handle to satin-smooth sole plate, Casco is truly a modern miracle in work-saving convenience. Gleaming, durable stainless steel, inside and out. Uses plain tap water, even in hard water areas. Lift up top makes filling and emptying a cinch. Steams generously up to an hour and more on a single filling!
To enjoy all the advantages of ironing with steam, choose a Casco. We guarantee you'll be happier with it! Deluxe models in Crimson and Gold, Blue Green and Gold, French Grey and Gold, \$19.95. Standard Model, Ebony, \$12.95.

CASCO
STEAM AND DRY IRON
Casco Products Corporation • Bridgeport 2, Conn.

THIS IS THE
General Mills Tru-Heat Automatic Iron
WITH SAFETY SIDE RESTS

Labels in diagram:
 - TRU-FIT Fabric Selector
 - TRU-FIT Handle shaped for natural grip
 - Permanently attached 8-foot cord with steel cord support
 - Tapered-Rounded Heel
 - 4-Way Full-View Ironing Surface
 - Safety Side Rest
 - Button-Saver Edge

Betty Crocker had an iron
It rested on its side;
It ironed rayons, cottons, silks,
And other things beside.

Now you have this modern iron
To help you reach your goal
And iron every fabric right
With its different heat control.

You get perfect toast every time the way you like it with the

Sunbeam TOASTER
AUTOMATIC
 with **RADIANT CONTROL**

The only completely automatic toaster!

Bread lowers automatically, no levers to push — no motors to wear out — Toast raises silently



Automatic Beyond Belief!

The Sunbeam Automatic Toaster with exclusive RADIANT CONTROL is the only completely automatic toaster. No levers to push, no motors to wear out. Sunbeam RADIANT CONTROL automatically adjusts toasting cycle to moisture content of bread. You get toast just the way you want it regardless of whether bread is thick or thin, frozen or fresh, rye or white. You can even reheat a piece of toast without burning. Ask your dealer to show you the new Sunbeam Toaster Today.

GIVES YOU UNIFORM TOAST EVERY TIME



THICK or THIN FROZEN or FRESH RYE or WHITE

© Sunbeam Corporation 1957

FAMOUS FOR *Sunbeam* MIXMASTER, COFFEEMASTER, SHAVEMASTER.

With the help of industrial designer Ivar Jepson, Sunbeam Corporation produced some of the most iconic products of the period. Their mixers, toasters, waffle irons and coffeemakers were regarded so highly that they were 'Merit Specified' by Arts & Architecture and used in the Case Study House program. The GE can opener personified form-driven, hard-edge styling and the space-age look when mounted on its chrome stand.



Miro Dvorscak

with ordinary tap water. And General Electric's 1959 automatic can opener—part of the "New Idea Line"—was a perfect example of good design in a small package. Details included a white, charcoal and coral color scheme and the ability to mount it on a wall or use the spider-legged metal stand.

Out of all the small appliances marketed during the mid-century period, the innovative 1954 Hoover Constellation vacuum, designed by Henry Dreyfuss Associates, was totally new in shape and concept. It was dubbed the 'spherical miracle' that cleaned faster, farther and easier. By 1958, the Constellation even floated on air like a hovercraft, adding to its space-age mystique.

Another ingenious design took its cues from split-level ranch houses—General Electric's Roll-Easy vacuum cleaner. Smartly color styled by Freda Diamond in turquoise and copper, it rolled up and down stairs on large wheels that served as the sides of the machine. And the Atlas vacuum looked like it could have come off an assembly line in Detroit. The 1958 model featured very obvious tailfins at the back, fender skirts over the wheels and a tailpipe-like exhaust. Why not drive your vacuum around the house as you would your 1957 Chevrolet to the market?

THE NEW

HOOVER

Constellation

CLEANER

MODEL 84

adds wings to your cleaning



NEW HOOVER[®] Constellation⁺

(with exclusive double-stretch hose)

cleans twice the area of any other cleaner



Less than 12 inches from swivel top to easy-glide base—yet it's the world's most powerful cleaner!



Actual photo! Look at the reach of the Constellation!



Exclusive nozzle takes fewer strokes because suction is effective clean across nozzle. And there's a full horsepower motor! Actually, you get more dirt with 1/3 less work!

Exclusive throwaway bag holds more dirt than any tank or canister cleaner. Lightening bag change-top—easiest of all to remove and replace. Your hands never touch dirt!

Exclusive telescoping wand—use it short or use it long. Doubles in length—no need for extensions. New beveled brushes reach into any nook—never leave streaks!

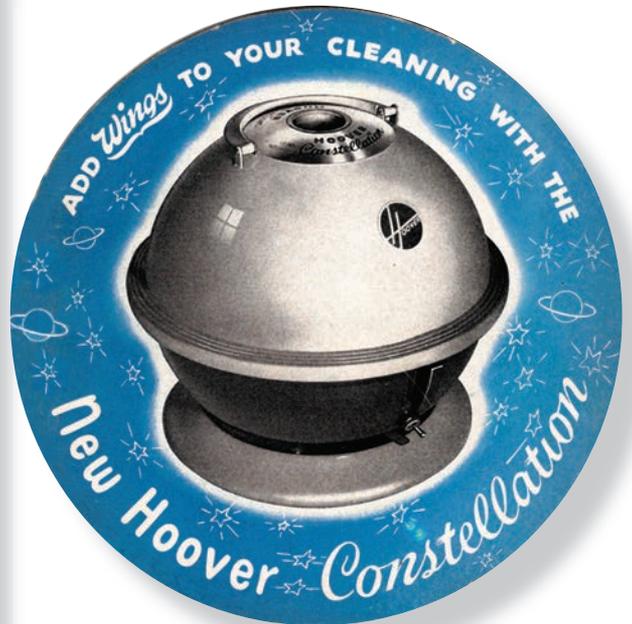
Now you can clean a 30-foot circle—clean from one room into another, or clean all the way upstairs, without moving your cleaner.

New double-stretch hose goes in and out and roundabout—no tote, no tangle, no twist. Most flexible hose ever put on a vacuum cleaner—and the only stretchable hose. It actually doubles its length, yet takes no more storage space.

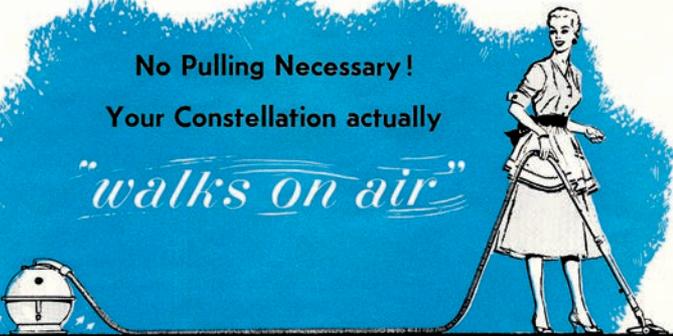
Let your Hoover dealer show you why this "spherical miracle" cleans faster, cleans farther, cleans easier.

Complete with Strato-Tools for all cleaning jobs. Attractive trade-in. **\$97⁵⁰**
Also available in Canada at slightly higher prices.

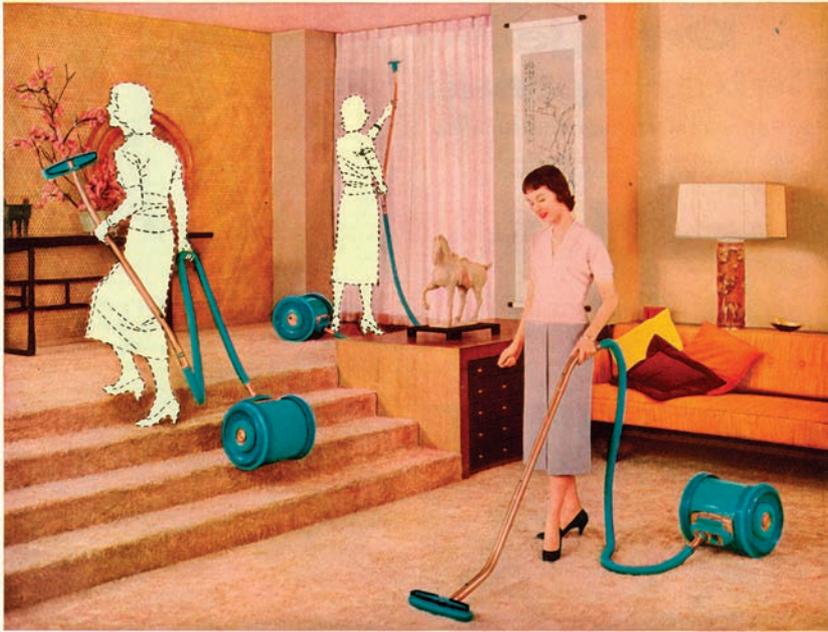
The Hoover Company
North Canton, Ohio



No Pulling Necessary!
Your Constellation actually
"walks on air"



Your Constellation cleaner has a very unique principle called "air lift" and with this feature your cleaner can be made to glide across the floor without any pulling or tugging.



Now—a vacuum cleaner you never have to lift!

It's entirely new and different!

ROLL-EASY VACUUM CLEANER ONLY \$79⁹⁵

It rolls anywhere easily—even up and down stairs—on its smooth-running, 12-inch wheels!

It's powered to clean every inch of every room efficiently and easily. And because its "Throw-Away" Bag is extra large, you have to replace it only a few times a year. This new cleaner stores easily, too! You

just roll it away until next cleaning day.

G.E.'s new "Roll-easy" Vacuum Cleaner is beautifully color styled in turquoise and copper by Freda Diamond. See it at your dealer's soon. Vacuum Cleaner Dept., Small Appliance Division, General Electric Company, Bridgeport 2, Connecticut.

*Manufacturer's recommended retail price. Trade price.

Only General Electric offers you this amazing attachment!



IT CLEANS RUGS!

IT TURNS ITSELF OVER!

IT CLEANS FLOORS!

Progress Is Our Most Important Product

GENERAL GE ELECTRIC

Look for the spherical shapes of the Hoover Constellation or the colorful General Electric Roll-Easy. If you're lucky, you might find the ultimate tail-finned vacuum cleaner—the Atlas. Designed by Carl Sundberg and Montgomery Ferar, two designers who met while working in the automotive industry in the 1930s, this model is a stunning example of their automotive background translated to a consumer product.



Only the *New*
Sunbeam MIXMASTER
 gives you all these advantages!

**LIGHTER...HIGHER...
 FINER TEXTURED
 CAKES!**

More even mixing and
 greater aeration with
 these new, exclusive

BOWL-FIT BEATERS!



See how all the batter is carried into and through the new large BOWL-FIT BEATERS—how their surfaces conform to the contours of the bowl. No piling up of dry ingredients on the outer edges. No unmixed whirlpools. No by-passed pockets. All the batter gets a thorough, even mixing in LESS TIME—automatically.

The larger outside BOWL-FIT beater is curved to fit the contour of the bowl all the way to the bottom. The larger inside BOWL-FIT beater is shaped to cover the flat bottom surface all the way to the center. You get these exclusive Bowl-Fit beaters only in the new Model 10 Automatic Sunbeam Mixmaster.



The above noted photographs show sections of angel food cakes made in baking tins with the beat of the ordinary food mixer and with the new Sunbeam. You can SEE and TASTE the difference when you bake with the new Sunbeam Mixmaster. Sunbeam Mixmaster's lighter, lighter, finer textured cakes are a result of the better mixing and greater aeration the new larger Bowl-Fit beaters give you.



Give Sunbeam and you give the finest

- 1 POWERFUL MOTOR
- 2 BEATING BEATERS AND BOWL-FIT BEATERS
- 3 CLEAN EASY-TO-REACH CONTROL DIAL
- 4 AUTOMATIC BEATER-EXTRACTOR
- 5 WHITE SAUCE POTENTIAL
- 6 WHIPPING POTENTIAL
- 7 BEATING BEATERS AND BOWL-FIT BEATERS
- 8 CLEAN EASY-TO-REACH CONTROL DIAL
- 9 AUTOMATIC BEATER-EXTRACTOR

Famous MIX-FINDER DIAL
 You have the perfect, automatic speed control mixing speeds right at your fingertips. They are all clearly indicated on the new convenient Dial. EASY-TO-REACH. LAST-10-501.

NEW, LARGER HEAT-RESISTANT BOWLS
 Each beater is now larger. The new larger bowls are made of heat-resistant bakelite for better aeration of batter.

<p>AUTOMATIC JUICE EXTRACTOR</p> <p>Chilling strainer automatically jogs the juice out of the pulp. Easier-to-use. Easier-to-clean. You don't attach this juicer—just turn down handle and set it on cone.</p>	<p>AUTOMATIC BOWL-SPEED CONTROL</p> <p>A nylon control button automatically keeps beater-speed and bowl-speed uniform at all times. The beater revolve by themselves. No hand timing.</p>	<p>AUTOMATIC BEATER-EXTRACTOR</p> <p>Tilt the handle—out drop Bowl-Fit beater individually, for easier cleaning. No pulling. No messy fingers. An EXCLUSIVE Mixmaster advantage.</p>
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By 1950, Sunbeam added fins to the Mixmaster control dial, an appliance introduced in 1930. With its chic black-and-white color scheme and streamlined beauty, this mixer graced the counters of many homes. Two years later, the rocket-shaped Mixmaster Junior was introduced, shown here in chrome. Later in the '50s you could buy a Mixmaster in pastel colors to match your kitchen; note the front of the machine mimics an automotive headlight.

Who Were These Guys?

Henry Dreyfuss, perhaps the best-known designer mentioned in this article, not only developed products for Hoover, but was responsible for such wide-ranging designs as the Princess telephone, Polaroid's SX-70 Land camera, Big Ben alarm clocks and the odd tractor and locomotive. Lurelle Guild, in addition to his Electrolux vacuum, designed Kensington aluminum



Miro Dvorscak

serving pieces for Alcoa and launched a door-to-door decorating service called Dale Decorators that sold curtains, wallpaper and carpets to housewives.

Donald Deskey, the name behind the Casco iron, also designed packaging and logos for Crest, Tide, Duncan Hines, Jif and many other brands, as well as the midcentury unobtainium plywood, Weldtex. Francesco Collura—half of the team responsible for the GE Tru-Heat iron—developed a spaceship-like blender for Waring in 1945, while John Polivka is credited with producing the street sweeper in the '60s. GE's Arthur BecVar not only pioneered the three-beater mixer, he was co-designer of a 1957 stainless steel kitchen center that housed a dishwasher, a sink with a garbage disposal, a range/oven, and a washer/dryer combo.

Sundberg-Ferar, the duo who designed the iconic Atlas vacuum, met at GM, where they

worked for Harley Earl; the pair went on to design computers for IBM, electric typewriters and mass transit vehicles for many different cities. Ivar Jepson, of Mixmaster fame, developed mixer attachments that allowed the homemaker to shell peas, grind coffee, open cans, peel fruit and sharpen knives, along with designs for electric frying pans, shavers and blankets. Robert Budlong worked with Jepson on the Sunbeam Shavemaster, and designed portable radios for Zenith, coffee makers and the beautiful 1930s Zephyr fan.

Egmont Arens' reworking of the stand mixer for KitchenAid was just one of the items that he contributed to the consumer mix. His wide-ranging career included designs for beer cans, plastic containers, cigarette lighters and toys.

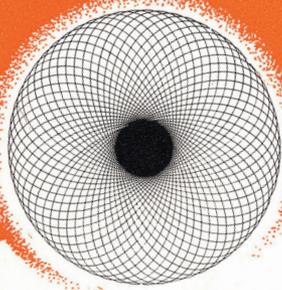
The only woman among these highlighted designers was Freda Diamond, who was behind the trendsetting Roll-Easy vacuum. Her postwar work with Libbey Glass resulted in packaged sets of affordable glasses with fun motifs, some of which earned the MoMA 'Good Design' award, along with other goods like dinnerware, canisters, lamps and wrought iron furniture. In 1954, *Life* magazine proclaimed her the 'Designer for Everybody.'

—Michelle Gringeri-Brown



THOROUGH MIX ASSURED
BY PLANETARY ACTION

"Planetary" action exclusive on KitchenAid Mixers, eliminates any need for turning the Pyrex bowl, and assures more thorough mixing . . . The beater or whip is carried around stationary bowl, while beater turns, on its own axis, in the opposite direction. Diagram (below) describes path of beater. Note complete coverage.



KitchenAid
model
3C



recipes...
instructions

There are hundreds of small midcentury appliances that are not only cool to look at, but also fun to use, while they speak to our nostalgic memories. How many of you can remember what mixer you grew up with, or the kind of vacuum cleaner your mom had? Next time you think of going out to buy a new toaster or mixer, think vintage instead to add additional icing to the midcentury cake. ☼

Don Emmite is a registered interior designer and longtime collector and researcher of mid-20th-century modern decorative arts and industrial design. His Houston home appeared in the Spring 2007 issue of AR. Our thanks to the Hoover Historical Center, KitchenAid, Jarden's Sunbeam archive, Broan-NuTone LLC and the Museum of Innovation and Science's General Electric collection for permission to reproduce their vintage ephemera.

LADIES' HOME JOURNAL

IT'S NEW!
The beautiful 1950
General Electric Triple-Whip Mixer!

19495 (Gen'l. Fed. Exc. Tax). Price subject to change without notice

WITH WONDERFUL NEW JUICER—ALL THESE FEATURES YOU'LL HAVE TO OWN!

3 beaters... and so easy to clean!
To give you faster, more thorough mixing, the General Electric Triple-Whip Mixer is equipped with three beaters. And these wonderful beaters are specially designed so that they're easy to clean. No troublesome motor shaft holders, no, no hand-tighten covers get in your way.

Built-in light!
You'll have the light that's built right in! It shines directly down into the bowl so you can really see what you're mixing! (And—to give you extra, and very welcome, mixing capacity—a four-quart and a two-quart bowl come with each and every mixer.)

New, automatic juicer!
Get set for a thrill when you use the superb new juicer that accompanies the 1950 Triple-Whip Mixer. Even when you juice more than a dozen oranges, the automatic strainer keeps juice pouring through. What a wonderful work-and-time-saver! You'll find this juicer a real joy to use!

New, improved speed selector!
New Speed Selector makes it easy for you to choose right speed for whatever you mix. You get constant power—even at low speeds, even when you're mixing the heaviest batter. And, as a portable, the Triple-Whip Mixer weighs only 3½ pounds. General Electric Co., Bridgeport 2, Conn.

You can put your confidence in—
GENERAL ELECTRIC

KitchenAid and General Electric also introduced new mixer designs in 1950. Egmont Arens designed a sleeker, seamless KitchenAid featuring 'planetary' mixing action that is still used today. Over at GE, Arthur BecVar, head of the industrial design department, developed the 'Triple Whip' mixer, departing from single- and two-beater models. While he was at it, he changed the location of the speed dial to the front to set it apart from others.



Miro Dvorscak

FROM DUNGEON TO LAIR



An architect crafts a basement lounge with exacting details

text John Conroy

photography Jeffery Tryon



As an architect, I wanted to create my own **Wow!** living space in the basement

Not far from where I grew up there is a small development of 1,100-square-foot ranch houses built in the late '40s and early '50s on an old potato farm. The appeal of this development is its adjacency to a park with a lake, shopping within walking distance, and a central location between New York City and Philadelphia with transportation to both cities only a few minutes away.

Twelve years ago, during my weekly Sunday open house visits, I came upon a ranch just like all the rest—until you went down the basement stairs. There, I found a classic 1960s rec room with knotty-pine walls and a checkerboard floor, complete with a wet bar that would seat a dozen. I thought to myself, What a great place to entertain—I have to get one! Less than a year later, I purchased one of those ranches and the dream began.

As an architect, I wanted to create my own Wow! living space in the basement, but there were various challenges to overcome. A clunky, dark stairwell, few windows, low ceilings and even lower ductwork, and ugly lolly support columns were some of the most obvious. Thinking back to the room I saw during my house search, I remembered how much I liked the warmth of the wood walls, the distinctive floor and the wet bar. I wanted the same thing, but with a contemporary style and clean detailing.

All good design starts with putting pencil to paper to work out the design and figure out how to eliminate or hide the deficiencies in a space. Here are the major items that I addressed to turn my basement into a lower-level masterpiece (if I do say so myself):

Pre Lounge

As part of the project, I had to revamp the mechanical side of the basement to make the living area possible. I built a workshop to house my tools and supplies, then reconfigured the laundry room, added a cedar closet with a wine cellar, and created a new bathroom space with a walk-in shower, vanity and an ejection pump to eliminate the step-up of the original toilet.

Ductwork

Reorganizing the ductwork to increase headroom in the circulation and occupied areas was key. This was done by slightly decreasing the depth and increasing the width of



Previous spread and opposite, top: With a ceiling height of 6'9" at the tallest, John Conroy chose to emphasize the womb-with-a-view qualities of his basement. Barely visible doors with Schlage lever handles lead to such necessities as a bath, mechanicals, workshop and laundry. The drawer pulls are from Häfele and the tile backing the as-yet-unfilled aquarium was ordered from Daltile, as were the slate flooring and the marble top on the storage unit by the sofa. The discontinued lounge chair and ottoman are from Bo Concepts, the Lind hide ottomans came from Room & Board and the sectional and built-in-seating cushions were custom fabricated by Mason-Art in NYC. Upcycled materials from Conroy's design office include Plexiglas used for the media storage door and glass for the coffee table's inlay and the bar shelves.

Opposite, bottom: The bar and niche area, showing the SunTouch radiant floor and slate tile ready for installation. The old stairs, duct configuration and furnace location were all revamped during renovation.





the ducts, while moving the main supply duct to along the exterior wall. My plan called for a 26' long, built-in credenza with integral bench along that wall. All other minor duct runs were repositioned between the ceiling joists; this part of the renovation was the only piece for which I brought in a contractor.

Natural & Artificial Light

I started with the obvious, and added three operable art-glass windows that span the width of the entertainment zone. To create the illusion of even more windows, I incorporated a mirrored display next to the bar that catches one's eye from the stairs, and a built-in, 240-gallon aquarium is located opposite the window wall.

And what basement renovation would be complete without a set of skylights—yes skylights! The beauty of living in a ranch is that the ceiling of a basement stairwell can still reach roof-access daylight via skylights. The new vaulted space at the stairs is what sets the whole tone for the project and removes any feeling of descending into a black hole.

For artificial lighting, I incorporated a series of low-volt-



age downlights in the main ceiling, a mirrored light cove along the credenza wall hidden behind the return air duct, and puck accent lights highlighting the bar.

Structure

Everyone usually looks at those round four-inch steel support columns and says, “How do I hide or even get rid of these in my basement?” Well, I did just the opposite

and told myself I needed more of them. Using the load-bearing columns as an architectural element to create a series of architectural bays, I then added faux ones along the credenza wall to balance out the space. These false columns are simple 4" PVC pipe from a home improvement store. Both real and faux columns were finished with metallic paint to further accentuate them.

Natural Wood

My choice of materials was carefully considered. The knotty pine I saw at the open house wasn't the look I had in mind; however, I still wanted the warmth of wood. Keeping things as light and airy as possible, I chose maple veneer plywood, which I selected from a veneer company that sells wood sliced into 1/32" sheets (or thinner) from a single, sustainably harvested tree. The veneer was sent to a plywood manufacturer to apply to a 3/4" plywood core in a slip-match pattern with all the panels labeled in sequence.



A U-Line under-counter fridge and Room & Board stools at the angled bar top.

Opposite, top: This is the view one sees from the stairs: Major air ducts are now concealed by the two box beams that run the length of the room, while minor ducts are hidden above the corrugated metal ceiling panels. Much of the custom furniture has legs from hairpinlegs.com, and other items were MacGyvered—such as the Tolomeo desk lamps that now have aluminum tube extensions. Vintage Knoll MR chairs surround the triangular table and the carpet is from Masland.

Opposite, bottom: The new windows, prior to their decorative art glass, are in place in the media zone; studs, insulation and vapor barrier are in progress.

When the 4'x8' panels arrived, I carefully organized them before fabricating all of the custom panels, wood furniture and built-ins. I paid particular attention to the grain features, aligning all the panels as they wrap the room and furniture; this is called blueprint matching. The bird's-eye-maple wall above the credenza was designed as a feature element, with the panels configured in a Mondrian-like pattern and washed with light from the cove above. To break up the expanse of wood panels and add a sense of depth, frosted and mirrored glass panels were placed throughout the space.

Overhead

The ceiling is a perforated, corrugated-metal panel painted with a metallic paint to match the columns. It is simply held in place with stainless steel screws and decorative washers spaced evenly along the ceiling. This not only made for a dynamic ceiling, but a section can be taken down if access is needed and then easily reinstalled.

Special attention was paid to the placement of the downlights so they were always located in the same place within the corrugated pattern of the panel. To break up the expanse of metal, wood faux beams that align with the lolly

columns were secured magnetically. Magnets hold up most of the ceiling and all of the wood wall panels, except for the largest ones that use panel Z clips. These strong magnets are a three-piece element: a 3/4" diameter rare earth magnet, a 3/4" diameter puck screwed to the opposing surface, and a cup the magnet sits in screwed to the panel.

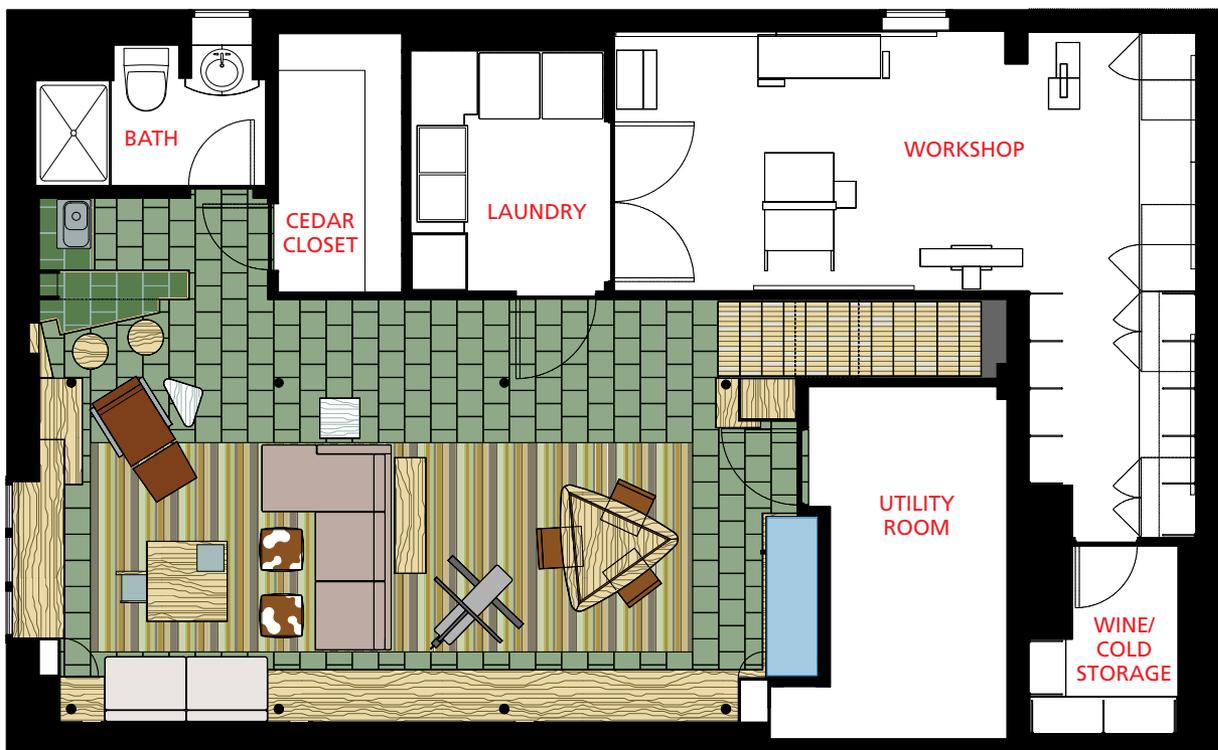
Underfoot

For the flooring, two materials were chosen: A natural green slate with a heat warming pad underneath defines the circulation zone and bar area and, in the main seating area, a bold striped carpet adds a pop of color and picks up on the stripes in the corrugated ceiling. The stairs are a transition between the main-level floor material and the lower level. The risers are slate, while the treads are white oak running in the same direction as the floor above. All of the stair components are held slightly away from the wall panels to give the illusion that the staircase is floating.

Furnishings

Most of the furniture was designed specifically for the

One would never guess that the modest ranch John Conroy bought in 2000 houses a bespoke entertainment zone in the basement.



I was almost able to **double** my living space without adding one square inch to my home.

space. The wood pieces are made out of the same slipped-matched maple-veneer plywood and were often inspired by furniture seen in Atomic Ranch. The sectional, complete with a pullout double bed, fits within the carpeted zone; my fabricator upholstered it and the bench cushions with textiles from Knoll and Sina Pearson.

Neighborhood Scale

Ranch homes in my area still sell at a premium per square foot, better than any multistory residence. Seeing some of my neighbors rip off their roofs and put on second stories, I knew that was not for me. Luckily, not too many have gone that route, but those who did cannot recoup their investment in the current economy. I was almost able to double my living space without adding one square inch to my home.

Before completing the lower level, it was hard to entertain during the winter months since my home is relatively small. Now, with the added space, wet bar and home theatre, it seems my midcentury home has become the hot spot to hang. Friends and relatives who see it for the first time fall silent and just gaze before saying how nicely it turned out. I guess my 10 winters of working on the space really paid off. 

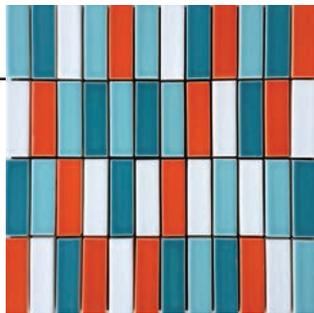
John Conroy is the founder of Princeton Design Collaborative in Lawrence, N.J., which offers architecture, interior, landscape, graphic and web design services. Jeff Tryon is the art director at PDC; check out their site at 360pdc.com.

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cool|stuff

The furniture equivalent of fusion cuisine, Revolution Design House's Belmont outdoor chair marries the solidity (45 lbs.) of an Adirondack and the madras-swim-trunks-vibe of a '60s aluminum lawn chair. Made in the U.S. from solid mahogany and aluminum with weather-resistant vinyl cushions—the company is based in Portland, Ore.—the piece measures 37" tall and will run you \$850. The line expands to include a chaise longue, pool chair and table soon; go to revolutiondesignhouse.com.



Ceramic tile was the original go-to material for millions of midcentury kitchens and baths—so much so that it might not be on your radar for that upcoming makeover. But Clayhaus Ceramic's contemporary palette would look great in any atomic ranch. Megan and Jason Coleman's custom tiles are available in 48 gloss and seven matte glazes, and their studio emphasizes reuse, green energy and a handmade aesthetic. Whether you're looking for classic 4" field tile in Vintage Pink or Mellow Yellow, 1" mosaics in a retro blend or one of their modern shapes—circle, hex, rectangle or ogee—they offer great options for the updated ranch. Priced from \$21 to \$50 a square foot through retailers or clayhausceramics.com.



Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark are arguably one of the world's most influential bands, particularly in the area of electronic pop, from '80s New Wave right up through today's electronic dance music. They are most widely known for *Enola Gay* and *Souvenir*, as well as *If You Leave*, popularized in *Pretty in Pink*. In April the band released *English Electric*, their 12th studio album, which includes a song called *Atomic Ranch*. The video track features an automaton voice plaintively asking for a house, a car, a robot wife and a perfect life. Co-founding member Andy McCluskey spoke to contributor P.F. Wilson from England about the song, his interest in midcentury modern architecture and his love of this Atomic Ranch.

Q: Was the song directly inspired by AR?

A: Certainly the title comes from that. I am an avid reader of Atomic Ranch magazine; whenever I'm in the States I always buy a copy.



Q: The editor pointed out what now appears to be a recurring atomic theme in your career, from *Enola Gay* to *Atomic Ranch*, and even the name of your former colleagues, pop-girl group Atomic Kitten.

A: (Laughs) Yeah, you could say that. My connection with Atomic Ranch [magazine] really comes from several directions. I've always had an interest in

architecture and, essentially, I'm a 20th-century modernist. ... I like constructivist and modernist painters: [Piet] Mondrian, [Theo] van Doesburg, people like that. I like Russian constructivists and Bauhaus.

When I was younger, everything was modern with me—20th-century modern. I didn't grow up in anything like an atomic ranch house—[it was] a very standard English brick-built semi. But growing up in the '60s I was surrounded by things that would certainly resonate with fans of American midcentury modernism. We had a lounge with bright-yellow, bamboo-patterned wallpaper and we had a wire coffee table—things that you would instantly recognize, even though they were British, as being midcentury modern. Funny thing is I wandered away from that for several decades, then came back to it, partly out of my fascination with Atomic Ranch magazine and because of architect Cliff May. My wife grew up in the San Diego area in a Cliff May hacienda-style 1930s house. Not quite an atomic ranch, but definitely in that style.

Q: Does your interest in architecture stem from your interest in history?

A: I'm fascinated in many ways by what the style of architecture—and in a broader scale, the design of a period—how that speaks to the mentality of the moment. In that respect, our song *Atomic Ranch* is an example of us analyzing the Utopian dreams of the postwar era that, by the '70s, certainly turned out to be dystopian.

Watch OMD's futuristic track on Youtube.

cool|stuff



Russel Wright is most well known for American Modern dinnerware, but his 1953 Residential collection was the nation's first melamine for home use and a MoMA design winner as well. The reintroduced Residential line is now available through various retailers such as Bob's Your Uncle, Pelago and Catchware. Durable and dishwasher-safe, the melamine comes in boxed place settings in black, aqua, yellow and bone. The charming serving pieces include retro divided vegetable bowls, a flirty sugar and creamer, kid-friendly tumblers and covered soup bowls that almost quack. Priced at \$4.50–\$55; bobsyouruncle.com, pelagopalmsprings.com and catchware.com.

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text Fred Huntsman
photography Taylor Callaway & Michael F. Hiatt



the Shack out Back

A few years back, my wife, Barb Roberts, and I flirted with the idea of moving from our 1929 Seattle house and into a midcentury, but there were two good reasons we didn't. We had just recently added a solar panel array to the roof and completed an extensive kitchen addition/remodel that we loved. It really opened up the house and connected us to the back yard. Plus, the thought of moving 25 years of vintage collecting struck fear in our souls.

So we stayed in our present house and lived vicariously through Atomic Ranch and old *Sunset* magazines. Then, an opportunity arose to add some midcentury modern architecture to the scene. We realized the answer

Beyond the partition behind the daybed is an area where Barb Roberts nurtures orchids in the studio's great light and cool temperatures; that section could be converted to a small kitchenette in the future. The thrift store coffee table has a practical ceramic tile inset, Fred Huntsman's painting is called 'My Trip to Earth,' and the front door is from Frank Lumber in Seattle.







The reupholstered Danish modern chair, floor lamp and metal sculpture are all thrift store or Craigslist finds, while the IKEA curio cabinet holds their Seattle World's Fair, Dr. Seuss, Marx 1960s Campus Cuties and Malcom Leland collectibles.

The space is equipped with DSL and cable, the shower has an on-demand electric water heater and there are three electric wall heaters for the winter months.

Opposite: The room has a bed-in-a-closet from Wallbeds Northwest, a stained concrete floor, a daybed from Urban Outfitters and a Modernica fiberglass chair. The couple looked into having the concrete floor polished, but the entry door was too narrow for the heavy equipment to fit through. The area rug and red chair are from mass merchandiser Fred Meyer, and thrift store accessories include a midcentury wall lamp, a starburst clock converted to a quartz mechanism and a red Memorex TV on a pedestal table. To keep cool in the summer, a Modern Fan Ball model stirs things up overhead.

to not moving and still having a MCM structure could be found in our own back yard.

It was time to address our 60-plus-year-old dilapidated, unusable garage; it needed to be torn down before it fell over and killed someone. So, we thought, why not replace it with a midcentury studio?



Prefab was an early consideration, but after checking into it, it seemed too generic for our vision. We had very specific ideas of what we wanted and how we wanted it to look. Our vision was of a MCM studio with a bathroom with a shower, a wall bed for company and a kitchenette area with appropriate appliance outlets. It also needed to have lots of window space to bring in natural light and connect it to the yard. The next step was finding an appropriate architect, someone who understood midcentury modern design.

The architect who had designed our kitchen—Andrew van Leeuwen at BUILD LLC, who was featured in AR [Fall 2011]—was unavailable, but he recommended local architect Kevin Witt of First Lamp, a design/build firm. After meeting with Kevin, we went ahead and had him do some initial drawings. His first plan was modern but not quite the MCM that we were looking for.

For inspiration, we sent him home with three issues of *Atomic Ranch*. When he returned, he had a wonderful design for a modern midcentury studio and, just as importantly, our AR issues were intact.

Once Kevin completed the plans and blueprints, we evaluated three different bids from contractors for the project. We chose Joe Kilbourne from Kilbourne Construction, who was the crew leader on our kitchen remodel in 2005. We liked Joe, knew he did quality work and had the previ-



Michael F. Hiatt

ous history with him. We were hoping to get the studio built on a budget in the ballpark of \$65,000, but the final cost came in around \$90,000. We used a line of credit from our bank and eventually rolled that into our home mortgage.

To help shoulder some of the cost, I took a week off from work and helped Joe drywall the interior. Barb and I

windows up to the clerestory level instead of in the tall fixed window. And we added a long concrete stoop with a recessed planter to the front of the structure. We've found from experience that it's OK to make alterations to get exactly what you want.

In the end, this project definitely scratched the MCM itch.

While we originally planned to use the space for an art studio—I'm too messy and would have paint everywhere—instead we grow plants, med-

itate, listen to music and do yoga there, as well as house friends and family when they visit. We've gotten our fix from the little studio in our own back yard. ✿

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Fred Huntsman and Barb Roberts live in the Crown Hill neighborhood of Seattle with their dogs, Asta and Hombre, who use the studio for squirrel observation and totally don't get MCM. Both humans work in the medical field. Taylor Callaway is an architect at First Lamp, and Michael F. Hiatt is a freelance photographer based in Des Moines, Iowa; see his work at flickr.com/people/mfhiatt.

In the end, this project definitely scratched the MCM itch.

also painted the interior and exterior ourselves, and she treated all the exposed wood surfaces, foam sealed the recessed lighting and did all the interior caulking. We purchased our sink fixtures, medicine cabinet and multiple light fixtures from thrift and salvage stores.

During construction we did make a few modifications to the original plans. To get that nice ceiling-to-floor window look in the sitting area, we had Joe lower the frames by a foot, so it would appear as if we could just walk outside into the yard. Otherwise, the studio would have looked boxier, and it was hard to visualize that until the window frames were built and in place. We also opted to move the screened, operable portion of the

ranchdressing

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

Q: I recently purchased a chair on a whim at an auction. I'm curious about the age, style, type of wood, value and what is missing to hold up the back cushion. It is heavier than it looks, and the wood has a definite grain, but I don't recognize it. The hair-on hide is not in extremely bad shape for the age-



'40s to '60s is my guess.

The bullet ends of the two posts on the back seem duller in finish than the rest, and I am wondering if there was something on them that tied the back into a proper position? I found no tags or identifying marks.

Bonnie Killion

Q: I bought this chair for \$150 because it was so interesting, and am wondering how I can tell its value. I started looking for a second one, and the prices are significantly more than I paid when I see them on the Internet. (There is one for sale in New York for \$9,500 at

1stdibs.com.) I guess this is a copy of an Arne Norell Sirocco chair. It is in perfect condition, the roping under the chair is mint and the leather seat cushion is removable by undoing the leather strap. The label says 'Made in Columbia, Exported by Scanform.' I emailed the company, but they have not responded. Any information would be appreciated.

Kathi Potter



A: *Julian Goldklang of Mid Century Møbler (midcenturymobler.com) pinged us back: "It looks like Bonnie has a Sirocco easy chair, first designed by Arne Norell for Norell Möbel AB around 1960. Unfortunately, it looks like someone has taken their creative license on the chair*

to accommodate some country-style living, but fortunately a good upholsterer should be able to fix that. An image search on 'Arne Norell' and 'Sirocco' should help



paint a better picture of how it was originally intended to look.

"Kathi's version [and likely Bonnie's] is a '70s Sirocco chair, since it has the Scanform tag. I believe all of the ones produced in the 1960s were made in Denmark, while the later ones were produced by Scanform of Columbia.

"These are commonly listed as being crafted in Brazilian rosewood, but they are also known to have been made in African wenge in the later 1970s." [A Design Addict posting says that Brazilian rosewood was banned in 1978, and Indonesian rosewood was used after that.]

Kathi's chair answers several of Bonnie's questions regarding the finish on the back uprights and the missing elements. Regarding value, it's all over the map: A brown leather version said to have an oak frame, sold for \$1,355 in the UK in late 2012, while a Palm Springs dealer was asking \$5,900 for a pair. Another pair offered in Sweden was priced at \$1,800, while a third duo (purportedly Colombian teak) were on offer for \$300 in Montreal. Sellers seem to often use 'Safari' in place of 'Sirocco,' as did Treadway Toomey Galleries when estimating a single Scanform chair at \$100–\$200 in 2004. The designer's daughter, Marie Norell-Möller, carries on the family company, which still produces the Ari lounge chair, Norell's most famous design.

Q: I bought this at an estate sale. It is nearly 11" tall, around 8" at its widest, and about 3 1/2" front to back. It obviously would not work as a vase because of the holes, but for the same reason it seems it would make a poor planter. There is not a single mark on it anywhere that I can see. It looks like a Scandinavian Pillsbury Dough Boy! Any ideas?

Meagan Baldwin

A: Designer Bobbie Ann Tilkens-Fisher, whose own



home is featured in this issue, (athomemodern.com) recognized your collectible: "This charming ceramic piece was most likely produced by Danish ceramicist Ole Christensen. Christensen produced planters, vases and candleholders in child-like forms in a variety of glazes and shapes. The pieces I am familiar with have paper labels instead of stamps or incised signatures, so it is very possible that the sticker on your piece has been lost. Use it in whatever way gives you the most joy, and congrats on finding a very fun piece!"

Q: I bought this lovely sectional in 1997. It was a burned-out mess, but the frame was solid and, at \$50, I couldn't refuse it. I had it recovered and my upholstery



guy surprised me by including the original label in the same spot as its previous incarnation. I have searched for information on 'Magnuson Seattle' for the last decade and have not found any information. I posted a photo of the sofa on the web and had a few responses, but no one could answer the question: What was this

ranchdressing



company? Can anyone help? I was also wondering about its value for insurance purposes.

Staci Rolfe

A: *Your label, nicely preserved by the thoughtful upholsterer, brands the retailer, not the maker, much as Pottery Barn or Macy's might today with its furnishings. The most solid reference to Magnuson Furniture we found was an essay on living room furniture written by Oscar Magnuson in a 1960 Homebook of Greater Seattle. An exhaustive primer on owning a home, and a vehicle for local advertising, Magnuson exhorted buyers to invest in quality pieces serviced by a reputable store, presumably one like his own.*

If your piece separates at the middle, it's a sectional; if not, it is more properly a sofa, couch or davenport. Despite the bargain price you paid, the frames of vintage couches are usually solid and well-constructed; bazillions of modern sofas were made, so its value is about what you invested in having it recovered. It looks comfortable and like a great addition to your home.

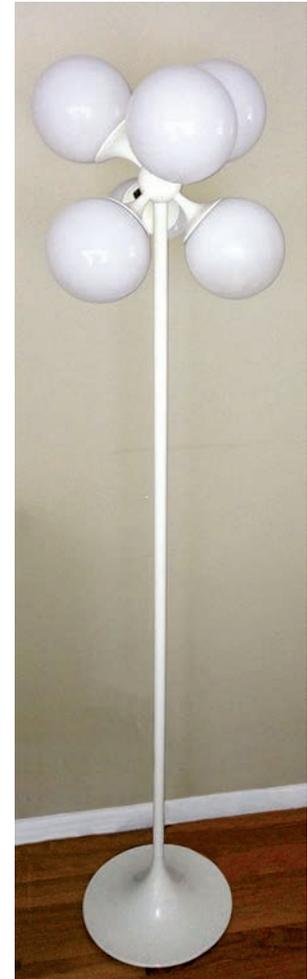
Q: I have a very nice Laurel Lamp with a broken globe. I have been frantically searching for a replacement, which piqued my interest in this company. There is another one for sale on 1stdibs for \$2,500, which made me cry; we bought ours for around \$50. Here's a link: fritzandhollander.com/portfolio/1967-laurel-lamp-company-standing-floor-6-globe-lamp.

There doesn't seem to be that much information on the web about Laurel Lamp. I find it fascinating that a company that made so many cool, iconic and sought-after lamps just ups and disappears. A company is making replacements for Laurel mushroom globes but not my model. (antiquelampsupply.com/product/4066_mushroom-lamp-shade--laurel-lamp-replacement-glass.) If you have any info, I would love it; maybe there's someone out there with the same broken lamp.

Dave Pardoe

A: *Bo Sullivan, of Arcalus Period Design (arcalus.com), understands your frustration. "I have also been stymied by the lack of information (and trade catalogs) from a company as prolific and influential as Laurel. The Antique Lamp Supply replacement mushroom globes are the only ones I know about; however, unless I am mistaken, these are just your basic opal globes without the fitter lip, so not sure why they are so hard to find. Everybody used them at the time, and I would expect Davis-Lynch might have them in their catalog (though I don't know if customers can buy direct): davis-lynchglass.com." [The five-inch size and lack of neck seem to be the challenge. Davis-Lynch confirmed they are a wholesaler only.]*

Sullivan suggested destinationlighting.com and eBay as further resources, and mentioned that a full set of globes would likely be needed. "There is a difference





between true opal glass (white all the way through) and cased glass (a white layer on a clear layer); cheap, Asian-made replacements are typically cased. There will almost certainly be color differences no matter what you find, so a full set of replacements may be better than a single."

Q: I just purchased a midcentury modern headboard, and there is a red & white embedded 'Made in Denmark' emblem on the back and another burned-in mark at the bottom. I can't read the first two letters, but here's the rest:

??ande Modelfabric
J.C. Ausen
Made in Denmark



I can't find anything about J.C. Ausen, or that metal emblem. The natural fiber fabric is glued to that inset piece, so I'm researching if it's possible to have the water stain repaired; I'm not sure what my options are.

Lori Nowlen

A: Julian Goldklang fielded this ID, too: "What a great find! The red and white medallion on the back of the headboard is the mark of Selig, a Massachusetts-based company headed by Robert Wexler that imported modern furniture from Denmark and Italy in the 1960s. It was later sold to mattress producer Simmons in the '70s.

"Most likely, J.C. Ausen was the designer (I can't seem to dig up any information, either), but the manu-

facturer, Brande Møbelabrik, produced many popular designs from well-known designers like Hans Olsen, Kurt Ostervig and Kofod Larsen.

"As far as the watermarks are concerned, check with a local shop that specializes in caning or wicker repair and they should be able to offer you some helpful advice."

Q: I bought this very atomic-looking, Gio Ponti-like coffee table for \$100 at a large antique sale in Atlanta recently. The seller said it was Italian from the '50s but did not know who the designer was. Any ideas?

Bob Harman



A: "I consulted with some of my other midcentury ID gurus and the consensus was that this is, indeed, an authentic Gio Ponti coffee table from the 1950s," Julian Goldklang wrote us. "I don't have too much other info on its origins or model number, but I can say for sure it's probably worth its weight in wood. Good find!"

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

June 7–September 14 Los Angeles

Windshield Perspective

The role of car culture in shaping L.A.'s urban landscape—specifically Beverly Boulevard—is the subject of the Architecture and Design Museum's entry in Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A.; pacificstandardtimepresents.org.

June 9–September 23 NYC

Le Corbusier: An Atlas of Modern Landscapes

MoMA's exhibition on Le Corbusier encompasses his work as an architect, interior designer, artist, city planner and more. Includes artwork, photographs and models of his large-scale projects; moma.org.

June 27–30 Lake George, N.Y.

The Luau at the Lake

Vendors, music, a traditional luau, hula dancers, lake cruises, miniature golf, libations and all things tiki at a Polynesian-themed motor lodge; luauatthelake.com.



August 23–25 Denver

Denver Modernism Show

Dozens of booths fill the 50,000-square-foot National Western Complex Expo Hall with vintage and new midcentury wares. Enjoy a tiki lounge, art gallery, car show, lectures, home tours, live bands and more; denvermodernism.com.

Through September 8 Los Angeles

A. Quincy Jones: Building For Better Living

The Hammer Museum examines A. Quincy Jones' Eichler tracts, as well as his custom homes in this portion of Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A.; pacificstandardtimepresents.org.

September 19–22 San Francisco

20th Century Art and Design Fair

The Herbst Pavilion at Fort Mason Center is the locale. Be sure to check sf20.net for updates and postponements.

October 29–November 2 Indianapolis

National Preservation Conference: Preservation at the Crossroads

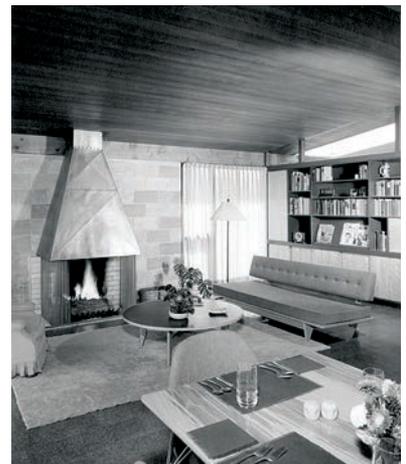
Events and educational sessions were still being finalized at press time, so check the site for topics of interest to midcentury enthusiasts at the annual conference put on by the National Trust for Historic Preservation; preservationnation.org.

Through November 2 Spokane, Wash.

Spokane Modern Architecture: 1948–1973

The city's architectural creativity during this 25-year period is showcased at an exhibit at the Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture.

Explore the work of Ken Brooks, Moritz Kundig, Royal McClure, Bill Trogdon and Bruce Walker through vintage photography, drawings, models, select furnishings and decorative arts; northwestmuseum.org.



Charles Decker House, Moscow, Idaho
1952 (McClure & Adkison)

Courtesy SPOMA

Through December 31 Sacramento

Ray Eames: A Century of Modern Design

The California Museum is celebrating the early work of hometown girl Ray Eames with an exhibition of family artifacts from her early life in Sacramento and work prior to meeting Charles in 1941; californiamuseum.org.

Ongoing Miami Beach

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

Interiors, furnishings and timesaving appliances that spoke to the world's interest in an efficient, hygienic home were popularized in the years before and after World War I. The Wolfsonian FIU brings together drawings, objects and advertisements that illustrate the drive to make one's home modern in this ongoing exhibition; wolfsonian.org.

resources

Working Class Heroes: Viva Valley Glen, pp. 12–18

Kitchen appliances: geappliances.com/products/cafe

✦ Vintage appliance restoration: savonappliance.com

✦ Kitchen floor: Armstrong Standard Excelon Jester Red and Soleil Yellow tiles, armstrong.com

✦ Bath pulls & kitchen, dining & bath lights: Donald, Jantzen, Dora & Cove models, rejuvenation.com

✦ Tate bed & Starburst wall mirror: crateandbarrel.com

✦ Eiffel Arm Shell chair: modernica.net

✦ Paint: Shy Turquoise Crayola colors, DK47, dutchboy.com

✦ Shrimp Cocktail, Behr #270C-2, homedepot.com

✦ Wallpaper: jonathanadler.com

✦ Poster framing & restoration: hollywoodposterframes.com

Life Lessons, pp. 22–31

Interior design: Bobbie Ann Tilkens-Fisher, athomemodern.com

✦ Walnut Case Study Bentwood bed: modernica.net

✦ Upholstery fabrics: maharam.com

✦ cryptonfabric.com

✦ Pillows: jonathanadler.com

From Dungeon to Lair, pp. 50–57

Interior Design: John Conroy, 360pdc.com

✦ Custom veneer plywood: doogeveneers.com

✦ veneer1.com

Acoustical wall panels used on ceiling: fryreglet.com

✦ Ceiling lights: RSA Lynx LX3101 black baffle downlights, cooperindustries.com

✦ Awning window: andersenwindows.com

✦ Radiant floor heating mat: sun-touch.com

✦ Slate flooring, marble tabletops, aquarium tile: daltile.com

✦ Hardware: Pulls, hafele.com/us

✦ Door handles, schlage.com

✦ Hinges & drawer slides, blum.com/us/en

✦ Carpet: Masland Silk Road Oasis, (to the trade) maslandcarpets.com

✦ Bay barstools & Lind ottomans: roomandboard.com

✦ Custom furniture fabrication: mason-art.com

✦ Upholstery fabrics: [Hacienda, sinapearson.com](http://Hacienda.sinapearson.com)

✦ Gusto CR, knoll.com

✦ Furniture legs: hairpinlegs.com

✦ Bar refrigerator: u-line.com

✦ Rare earth magnets: rockler.com

✦ Panel clips: Monarch Z clips, monarchmetal.com

Open House: The Shack Out Back, pp. 62–66

Architect: Kevin Witt, First Lamp, firstlamp.net

✦ Construction: Joe Kilbourne, Kilbourne Construction, Seattle, 206.353.1488

✦ Door: franklumberthedoorstore.com

✦ Wallbed: wallbedsnw.com

✦ Ceiling fan: Ball model, modernfan.com

Two Things

Recently, almost 400 readers took our online poll concerning interest in a paperless edition of Atomic Ranch. “When are you going to offer a digital edition?” is a recurring email query and, due to the time and costs involved in developing one, we thought we should see just how widespread that desire was.

At the same time, we took an updated snapshot of the typical reader—more accurately, the typical survey taker. Demographics have remained fairly constant since 2004: An average reader is female, between 31 and 50 with a college degree, and owns a home worth \$251,000 or more (thanks, Great Recession). Her household likely earns under \$100,000, and her aesthetic leans toward new midcentury or contemporary furnishings. The good news is almost 80% have patronized Atomic Ranch advertisers.

Many respondents interpreted our underlying question to be an either/or scenario and stoutly lobbied for print. “Needless to say, I think a love of old simplicity probably runs thick for all fans of the magazine. I love my magazines—real paper, frameable covers, etc. I’ve been waiting for monthly mags to begin, rather than seasonal!” Jody commented. “Yours is the only magazine I read (I read a lot of blogs), and I prefer to have a hard copy to collect,” wrote another. “Visually-oriented mags should be on paper,” said a third reader.

Forty-two percent thought both formats would be great, but 58% of those also thought digital should be included in our hard-copy subscription price. Since one-year U.S. subs are still at our introductory \$19.95 price point, and a ballpark estimate for the development of a digital app has come in at \$50,000, I don’t think even Wall Street could package this as a viable investment.

When an improving economy, affordable technology and a more robust advertising base coalesce, we’ll readdress the topic. For now, we hope you continue to enjoy the classic print format.

OK, the other thing was a Facebook group kerfuffle when remaining copies of Year One were released at a price in line with eBay resellers. Posters had some heated opinions about greediness, intrinsic worth and how we could just reprint them whenever we wanted.

Here’s the real deal: Our permanent archive had been winnowed a bit in the past, but after almost 10 years of publishing, storage is an issue. We decided to reduce stock to the bare minimum and release the remainder to the zealous collectors. (We’ll be doing the same with Issue no. 5 and forward, pricing them competitively.) An old issue of Atomic Ranch may not be worth \$150 or even \$15 to the average reader (or us), but we cannot sell them at face value only to have resellers auction them off at scalpers’ prices.

As for reprinting, in 10 years technical requirements have changed and the early issues would need to be re-created from bits and pieces. Today, a typical web press print run is \$40,000; when our first issue was produced, it cost more per unit than the then-\$5.95 cover price. And even creating downloadable pdf files would entail notable production costs, plus investing in a consumer delivery platform.

If you’re looking for a missing issue for your library, please check the back issues page at atomic-ranch.com. But let’s save the discussion boards on FB for sharing midcentury finds and helping your fellow enthusiasts solve their ranch house questions—not second-guessing that our motives are mercenary.

Michelle Gringeri-Brown
Editor

comingup



- ◀ Creating curb appeal in Denver
- ▶ A. Quincy Jones heads to the hills
- ▼ Showcasing a Sacramento Streng

Plus, collecting to the max, dealing with asbestos and a Montana ranch house



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