

atomic ranch

MIDCENTURY MARVELS

10th ANNIVERSARY

SPRING 2014



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blasts from the past 42
mod budget makeover 12

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cover

We see a typical postwar architectural theme—private front facade vs. a wide-open rear window wall with seamless access to the outdoors—in this meticulously renovated Eichler in Orange, Calif. A new pool, modernist cabana, hardscaping and plantings give an inkling of the refreshed and restored finishes and features you find inside. Would you expect anything less from the owner of the iconic Kaufmann House? Story page 26.



meanwhile... back at the ranch

W

ith just a bit of exhaustion, it's deeply satisfying to welcome you to our 10th Anniversary issue. When we started publishing back in 2004 and received an enthusiastic response from readers all around the country, I knew that there was easily enough material to craft many years of magazines. But seeing the reality of 41 issues stacked on my desk is still a joy.

Certainly this achievement happened because of the many people who have kindly shared their homes and stories with all of us; often we were just the presenter. As for the longevity of the subject, it seems that every month we receive notice of a midcentury neighborhood achieving recognition status, or weekly hear from new converts saving a time capsule home from the '50s and '60s. There are still plenty of good stories out there.

We joke in the office that every one of our stories hews to this basic outline: "I found this dump, I fixed it up and now I love it." An unstated corollary is: "I'll never leave this wonderful house." But in reality, relationships, tastes and jobs change, and many people move on from their professed dream homes. In anticipation of this issue, a year ago I sent emails to our earliest featurees and, surprise, surprise, some actually responded and a few of *that* group were still living in their atomic ranches. That's the basis of our look-back story, "Blasts From the Past," on page 42. We salute these homeowners for their constancy; they are in a committed, long-term relationship with their home.

For Michelle and me, our first year was full of excitement mixed with the mundane. On the morning of our first issue's cover photo session, I discovered a flat tire on my Honda photo van. I had to pull out all the packed equipment to get to the space-saver spare, and then we drove at reduced speed on the freeway to the Glendale home, dreading that this was not a harbinger of our new endeavor.

Mornings seemed to present challenges: Arriving at another shoot, we found the proud owner still asleep. We cooled our heels for a while as he roused himself, and then Michelle had to make the bed presentable for photos. It could only improve from this point, we hoped, and in fact most homes have been spotless and ready for their close-up.

Ten years on now, memories and connections still pop up. While driving to this issue's spectacular Eichler cover house, I was amazed to realize that three previous cover homes (Nos. 8, 11 and 13) were all within easy walking distance—a truly remarkable coincidence, and a demonstration of the high quality of renovated homes in that neighborhood.

Of course it's our talented staff that helps make it all possible: Cheyenne Tackitt, who keeps the office running smoothly. Nancy Anderson, our art director from the very beginning, is particularly adept at turning out silk purses. Christina Walker finds the most interesting advertisers and keeps them happy. Carol Flores skillfully creates and assembles the ads that contribute to such entertaining reading. And Josh Tackitt instantly fixes our technology problems and maintains our website.

Our final thanks go to you, our readers; your enthusiastic support sustains us.

Jim Brown, Publisher

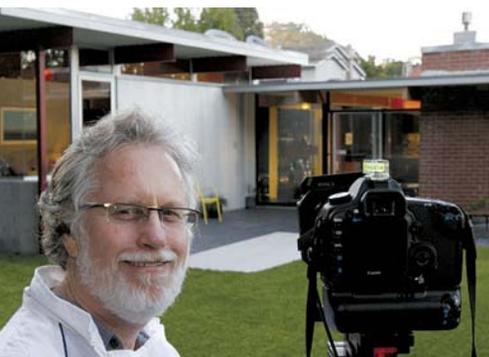


photo by Javier Szwarcberg

atomic ranch®

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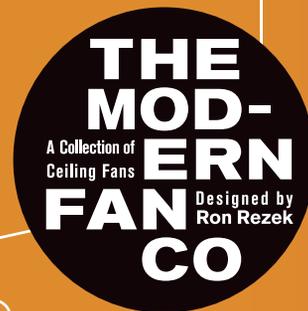
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Flow >> Matte Nickel with Bamboo Blades



Celebrating the modern idiom

modernfan.com

modernwisdom

Even though our house was built in 1978, it is a ranch very reminiscent of many mid-century modern homes. We recently remodeled our kitchen, which holds a pretty complete set of dishes purchased from a man and his sister who were costumers on Hollywood movie sets. The remainder of the house is decorated with many period-correct antique pieces



from the late '40s thru the early '60s—right up to our completely restored 1959 Olds Super 88 in the garage.

Gordon & Cindy Richards

* Just a quick note to thank you for the balanced and well-written article in the recent issue under the 'Keep It Up' banner [Fall 2013]. All too often people just panic when they hear the word 'asbestos,' and Terence Davis does a careful job to instill respect with-

out fear. The reality of the situation is that we still allow asbestos on automobile brake pads in many parts of North America. The chance of being exposed to asbestos fibers at a major intersection is likely higher than being exposed to friable fibers in one's home.

Ralph Lembcke

Ralph is the author of 'What TV Doesn't Tell You About Working With a Contractor' in Winter 2013, another good nuts-and-bolts feature. Both back issues are available at atomic-ranch.com.

—ar editor

* I'm writing to you about a hidden jewel in Chattanooga, Tenn. Deck's Glassware has thousands and thousands of old dishes, discontinued sets, glasses, Pyrex, vases, etc.; it is a treasure trove. Chester Deck,

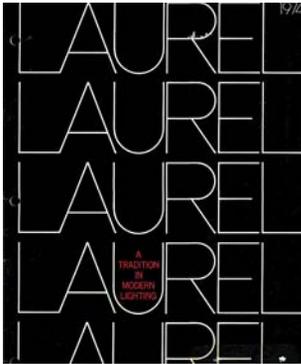


who owns it, will not have enough money to advertise, but here are two stories about the place: <http://goo.gl/7sjH4q> and <http://goo.gl/ZxRTiG>.

We were there yesterday, and a couple had driven down from Illinois to shop after seeing the article. Mr. Deck was ecstatic that we bought \$50 worth of stuff, including Fostoria Early American chubbies.

Betsy Alderman

morewisdom



* I recently discovered your magazine with the Summer 2013 issue and was very impressed. It will be a go-to resource for me, and I plan to subscribe.

In the letters section, a gentleman asked about Laurel Lamps and the dearth of information. I, too, have been frustrated with the lack of info on the company, but as luck would have it, I recently acquired a 1974 Laurel Lamp catalog. Here is a scan of the cover; it has a ton of photos and some info on the company. I am trying to figure out if there is any interest in this and how best to distribute the info.

Adam Chiavoli



* I am a current subscriber to your magazine and enjoy it immensely. My husband and I bought a home two years ago that was originally built in the 1950s and remodeled in MCM style by the previous owners. When they sold to us, the landscaping was only partially done. We are currently stumped on how to finish the front yard. I was hoping that someone from the magazine could offer their opinion or advice.



A few things to consider: We live in Las Vegas, we try very hard to conserve water and we have four small children under the age of six. Attached are a few pictures; one is of seven circular wood disks that we have in our possession, and we also have access to quite a bit of flagstone.

Thank you so much for any time and consideration that can be given to our curb-appeal project.

Erin Maffey

Both Adam's and Erin's topics are a perfect fit for the hive minds on our two Atomic Ranch Facebook groups. There are many enthusiastic midcentury modernists who love nothing more than writing about their experiences, making project suggestions and sharing resources.

—ar editor

* Do any of your readers know of one of these refrigerators still working 56 years later? My mother has a GE Combination fridge over the counter of a Mutschler kitchen from Nappanee, Ind. On the right is a freezer, and the other sections have sliding plastic doors labeled according to intended contents. I have to defrost it every six months or so, but Mom still has the original owner's manual.

The kitchen has a built-





in blender in the counter, a bread drawer, a liquor cabinet with a lock and a stainless steel General Electric range with push-button controls. Other parts of the house remain pretty much the same as when my parents had the home custom built in 1957 from a magazine floor plan. I have no idea of the provenance of her South Seas hanging clock, but I always thought that was Mom and Dad up there dancing, particularly since my mother has a thing for turquoise!

David Routh

✳ It was very gratifying to open the Winter 2013 issue and find several responses to 'Designs for Domesticity' [Emmite's article in no. 38]; it seems like it awakened several readers to some treasures in their own kitchens.

The stainless steel burners featured on page 9 in a letter from Nancy McDonald are from 1955. The Fold-back Surface Cooking Burners were designed in 1954 by Roger Crispell and Len Albrecht, and manufactured by the Frigidaire division of General Motors. The units



stayed in production until the late '50s, give or take a few years, and are relatively hard to find.

Tell Sheryll Hanks that her NuTone Food Center is the first-generation design with the aluminum mixing bowl and light gray detailing instead of charcoal gray found on later units. That little round plastic cap in front of the pink blender is very hard to find; I would consider it rare. The cap was used to close the opening in the center of the plastic bowl used with the grinder so the mixture could be combined in the bowl. It wasn't included in later versions of that particular attachment and was made for maybe a year. And her GE Wall refrigerator is a treasure! It 'hangs on your wall like a picture,' as the original ad above states, from a bracket bolted to the wall, not the ceiling.

Finally, in the GE Kitchen Center on page 10 sent in by Bob Harman, it looks like the dishwasher is newer, but other than that—bellissimo! I believe [the unit] is Cadet Blue, a color that was made from 1955 to 1959. Designed in 1954 and introduced in 1955, the Kitchen Center won an Industrial Designers' Institute award in 1957 for Arthur BecVar and Robert Blee.

Maybe it is time for a major appliance article? I can help you with that.

And finally, thank you for making available the first issues of Atomic Ranch. I read how AR has received a lot of flack about the price, etc. All I can say is, I love having my Atomic Ranch [collection] completed with issues one and two and wouldn't give them up for anything.

Don Emmite

Houston

*Write us at editor@atomic-ranch.com
or send a note to Atomic Ranch, Publishing Office,
3125 SE Rex St., Portland, OR 97202.*

We'll print the good ones.

Working Class

Modern Makeover on a Budget

By January 2011, I had been househunting for four months. Luckily, my real estate agent, Su Harambe, was patient and more concerned with finding me the right house, not just a house. We had toured close to 100 different properties when I saw the listing: 'Distinguished by its open concept floor plan, this custom built 1959 rambler ...' I think I gasped out loud. The house was located in the Skyway area of Seattle, a distinctly midcentury neighborhood that had been built up mostly in the 20 years following World War II, primarily for employees of the nearby Boeing Company.

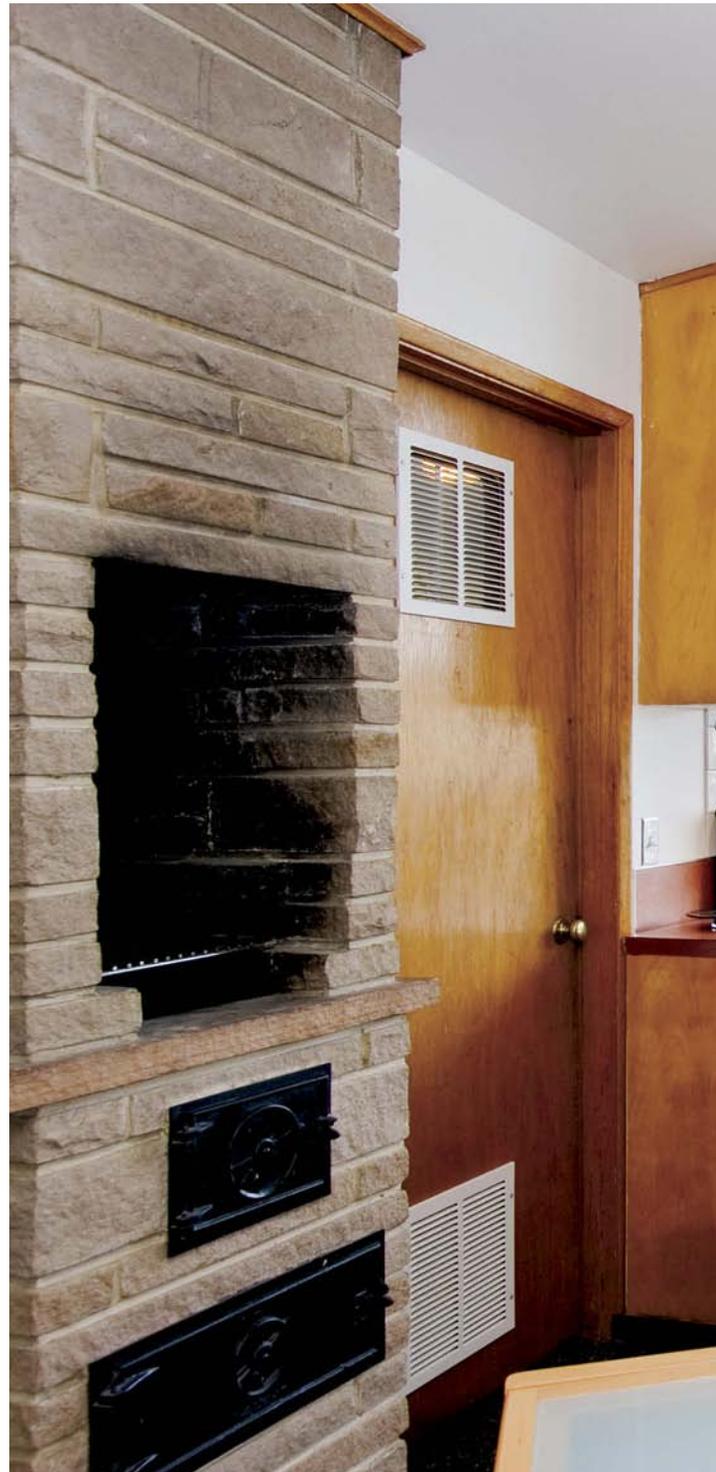
The advertised fireplace, clerestory windows, indoor barbecue in the kitchen, three bedrooms and bath and a half all told me this was the right house. After renting a downtown Seattle apartment for two decades, I was excited about the more mundane things as well: covered parking and hookups for my very own washer and dryer! I couldn't wait to tell Su about it and have her show me the house. I had fallen in love with it at first sight.

But it wasn't going to be an easy romance. The house was a short sale with three lien holders who had to approve the purchase price, so although I submitted my offer in early January, I wouldn't close on the house until late July. Those were the seven longest months of my life.

patience rewarded

When I finally took possession, I jumped in with both feet. Between the offer and closing, I had had a lot of time to plan and dream, but once the house was finally mine, the reality was that I was going to have to prioritize my improvements. Having just spent the bulk of my savings on the down payment, I knew I needed to watch my budget when it came to remodeling and furnishing.

The kitchen cabinets were refinished with Daly's ProFin after this shot was taken, and they now look as good in person as they did in the photo. A used Hotpoint range came from a friend's remodel and the tile backsplash is courtesy of the previous owners. I chose a contemporary Home Depot faucet, a Broan range hood and a Frigidaire refrigerator for its midcentury styling. Still on my project list is replacing the worn Wilsonart Coppertone Glitter laminate counters here and in the bath, and removing the tile behind the stove.

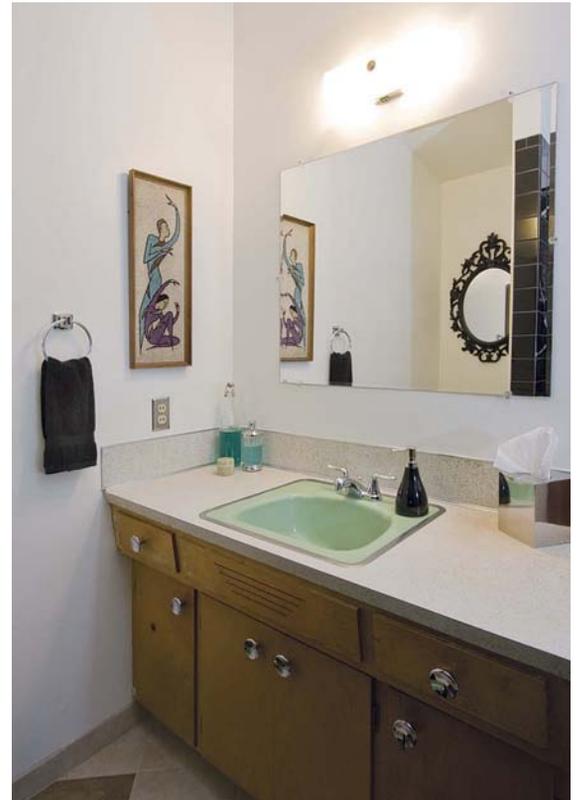


Heroes

text James Westerland
photography Claudia Groom



The full bathroom
was where I faced the most
serious renovation challenges.
The last big project was the kitchen...



Opposite: The double-bullet fixture over the kitchen sink originally had a copper finish, but about half of it came off when I cleaned it. I took it down to the aluminum body with Klean-Strip Premium Stripper. For my glass display, I try to buy cheap, but my head can be turned by the perfect piece. The two *I Dream of Jeannie* bottles were about \$30 each on eBay, but most of the others are from thrift shops and were less than \$5 apiece. I don't look for vintage exclusively, but I want them to be at least vintage-esque. I got home from Goodwill with one of my favorites, only to find that it had an IKEA sticker on the bottom.



Luckily, the house came through inspection very well. The hardwood floors had never been carpeted, but they did need refinishing, which I wanted to have done before moving in. That would prove to be my single largest expense, as the hardwood is in every room except the kitchen and baths. I told the refinisher that I didn't expect miracles, but he reassured me that almost all the flaws were in the finish, and he would only have to replace two damaged floorboards in the living room. He also convinced me to have flush hardwood heating vents built for the living room. I was hesitant at first because of the added expense, but now they are one of my favorite features and definitely worth every penny.

bathing beauty

The full bathroom was where I faced the most serious renovation challenges. The grout in the tiled tub surround had degraded some years ago, and water had gotten behind it. Both the existing tile—three different shades of green, none of which matched the tub—and rotting wall needed replacing. During my months of house hunting, I came across a bathroom with light blue fixtures and shiny black tile; I thought black tile would also look very chic with my Ming green tub and give the bathroom a vaguely Asian feel. As a bonus, it could be ordered from The Home Depot relatively inexpensively.

The failed shower wall was demolished, new WonderBoard put in and the 4" black tile installed. The original tile had only come up to the bottom of the pebble glass window, but my contractor suggested we have the tile go up almost to the ceiling. I love the way it turned out.

At some point, the original green toilet had been replaced with an almond one, and I thought I'd never find a matching green one to replace it. Fortunately, the toilet gods were

smiling on me: While visiting friends out of town, I found one sitting in the front yard of a house that was being gutted with a Free sign taped to it. I packed it into the backseat of my Volkswagen, and found it matched the sink and tub perfectly when I got home.

details matter

The last big project was the kitchen, starting with a peel-and-stick floor that needed to be replaced. I wanted a solid, dark color and at least a nod to the era in which the house was built. I chose black VCT with white flecks, and asked the contractor to install the tiles running all in one direction, instead of the more traditional right angles to each other. This contributes to the appearance of a smooth, solid floor.

Fortunately the original plywood cabinets had never been replaced or painted, but they needed refinishing and new hardware. And by new, I mean old. The original knobs were 2" discs with a copper finish. At some point, the finish had started to flake off and previous owners replaced them with small, unremarkable knobs. Being detail-oriented, those knobs drove me nuts. I found some reproductions from Rejuvenation, but I needed a lot of them—42 in all, counting the linen closets and a built-in desk. That would have cost a fortune and the reproduction ones were smaller than I really wanted. Fortunately, my friend Pat and I found a treasure trove of 2" chrome discs at the local RE Store that were just right. As a bonus, he even found the large, round back plates to use with the knobs on the desk drawers.

The final challenge in the kitchen was light fixtures. Some originals had been replaced, and in the adjoining dining area there was an ugly ceiling fan. Again, I looked to Rejuvenation, but was deterred by price. I ended up finding my pendant light fixtures at Lowe's, much to my surprise. They have a mid-century feel and cost about \$100 each, as opposed to \$600.



old friends

Furnishing the house was both easy and hard. Easy, because I already owned most of the furniture, hard because I had to work with what I had. The living room arrangement took some figuring out, because it has three focal points—the fireplace, picture window and television—further complicated by the asymmetrical shape of my sectional sofa. Fortunately, my reproduction Barcelona chair felt open enough that I didn't mind putting it in front of the window.

When it comes to home decor, I prefer to use high-contrast neutrals with splashes of bright color for accents.

Black, white, gray and natural wood provide a timeless background and make it easy to change the look of the room simply by changing the accessories. In addition, I also like juxtaposing angular shapes with flowing curves. In the living room, this is shown by the curved sectional vs. the angularity of the Barcelona chair and the rectangular bookcases; the square artwork vs. the round mirror and ball clock on the pony wall; the round bar cart vs. the linear separation between the kitchen and living room floors, etc.

My next big project is to focus on the exterior. I would eventually like to paint the house a darker color and replace the chain link fence. I found a lot of landscaping ideas, as



Left: A Flensted mobile hangs near the Lowe's light fixture in the dining area. The bookcases throughout the house are from IKEA's 'Billy' line and were purchased over about 15 years. Repeating them throughout the house provides a feeling of continuity, and I've been asked on more than one occasion if they're built-ins.



Right, top: The original green slate fireplace hearth wraps around the back, forming the front entryway. A Warholesque selfie and an inexpensive *Breakfast at Tiffany's* poster break up the monolithic brick surface.

The interior badly needed painting. I stuck with white for the most part, but wanted an accent on the walls facing the large windows—something with a midcentury feel to it, without being too literal. Behr's Dark Ash met those criteria and enhances the warm tones of the woodwork and floors.



The patio area had been boarded up with plywood and blue plastic tarps and was being used as a storage area. Now, the existing latticework makes it a perfect almost-outdoor area, and it's so spacious it's like having a second living room. As such, I wanted to make sure the furniture was comfortable and could accommodate a small group. The Ohana outdoor sectional easily seats six and is very comfortable. Although not strictly midcentury in design, the simple, modern shapes blend well with the architecture of the house.



well as some period-appropriate fence designs, in a 1966 copy of the *Better Homes & Gardens New Garden Book*.

My house felt like home the minute I moved in. Now, after spending two-and-a-half years putting my own stamp on it, that feeling is even stronger. The work I've done has been surprisingly rewarding and I've met most of my neighbors when they stopped by to compliment me on the improvements. Even my oilman has remarked on the changes.

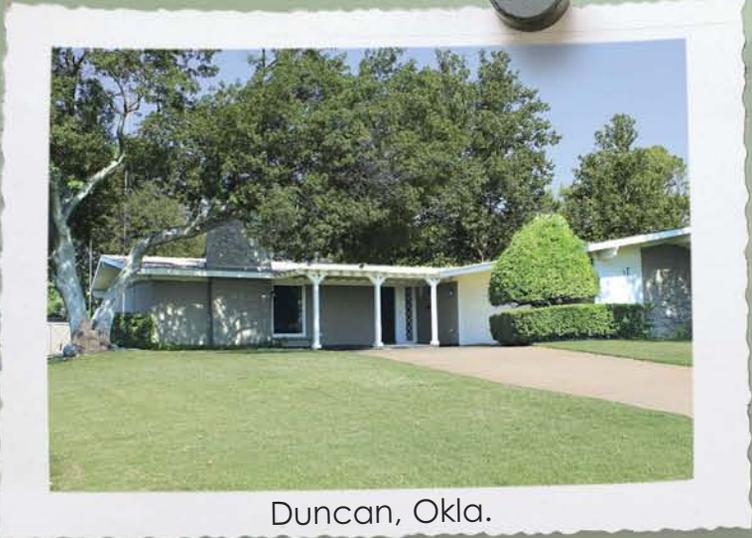
Twenty years from now, I might feel differently, but today I'm convinced that a home is never really finished. There will always be some other project to do, something to change,

something to move or something to replace. And that's what makes it so fun. ✨

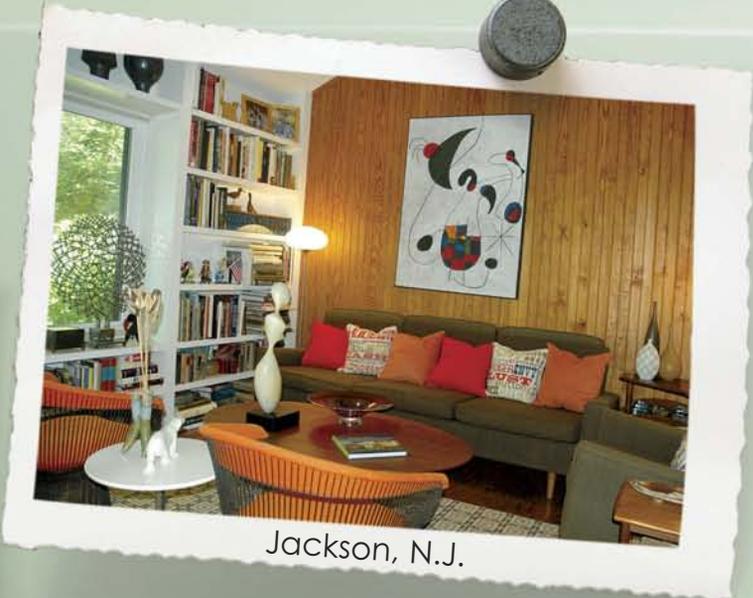
James Westerland works in Seattle in the publishing industry. Owning his first home has provided him with a creative—and expensive—way to spend every last minute of his free time. Claudia Groom is a real estate photographer living in Seattle who can be reached at claudiagroomphotography@gmail.com.

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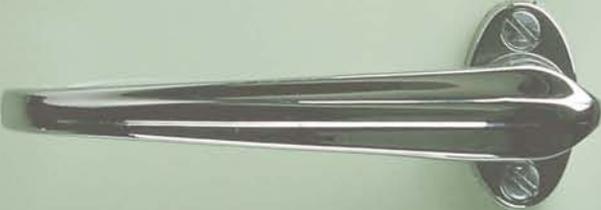
Duncan, Okla.



Jackson, N.J.



Three Rivers, Mich.





home page

Duncan, Okla.

Our house was built in 1959, one of four similar homes in what was considered the area's premiere development at the time. A few years ago my aunt, who had been a realtor in Orange County, Calif., came to visit. She thinks the house is a Frank Lloyd Wright design because it looks very much like the houses she once sold. I know that Wright designed a skyscraper in Bartlesville, Okla., so I suppose it is possible. The house has a large '50s-style rock fireplace, a big triangular skylight, marble floors and large rear windows. The front porch overhang was added a few years ago, and is not part of the original design.

Jayson Evans

Jackson, N.J.

We originally furnished our 1970 Boise Cascade tract home with midcentury pieces we could afford early in our marriage. I studied magazines and tried to copy what I saw. In the 1980s, I changed the decor to primitive country, and disposed of a Thayer Coggin couch and many other pieces that I would now treasure. After living here for 35 years, we decided to refurnish with authentic midcentury pieces. Now retired, we scour antique shops, websites and flea markets, lovingly incorporating our finds into the same home that began that way. Starting over is a wonderful way to spend our retirement!

Shelly & Dennis Newman

Three Rivers, Mich.

We've been in our house for less than a year and are having a ball. The hexagonal design is from a 1961 *House Beautiful* building manual, but it wasn't built until 1967. Blonde Norman brick was used instead of siding and all of the 60-degree angles were mitered; they just don't build 'em like that anymore. We're updating the kitchen and both baths but trying to stay close to the period, and just finished a patio extension on the back using the original house drawings as inspiration.

John & Peg Ashbury

Show us yours; send in a high-resolution photo or sharp snapshot and a couple of sentences about your cool pad for our next issues. See contacts page 5.

my favorite space



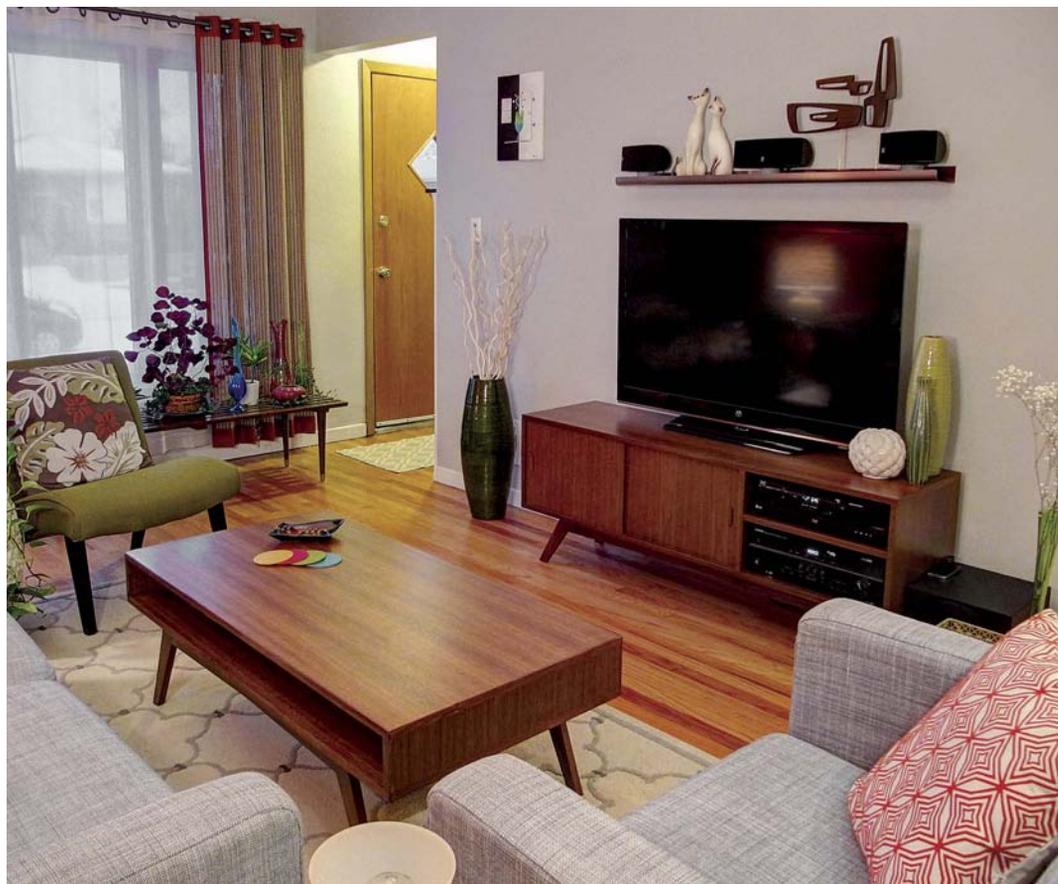
Michael & Jenna Coyle
Chicago, Ill.



The West Beverly neighborhood on the southwest side of Chicago is a working-class area where homes are often passed down from parents to children. It's not a place where you're likely to see a \$5,000 Eames leather recliner or a \$9,000 Adrian Pearsall sofa. Yet, the majority of the neighborhood's 1950s raised-ranch houses have at least a hint of midcentury modernism.

When we bought our home in 2012 from the original owners, we wanted to respect the era in which it was built. My previous knowledge of art and architecture stopped with Frank Lloyd Wright. Somehow, I always skipped right over the '50s and '60s to arrive at Modern, which I must admit is actually too sterile for me. My wife, Jenna, introduced me to MCM; it hits that sweet spot between Art Deco and Modern.

As soon our offer on the property was accepted, we began collecting links to items we wanted. Because we had to furnish an entire house, we needed to spend our money wisely. Using Photoshop, we created



We sourced many of our furnishings online, including the rug, bullet floor lamp, coffee table and the El Gato Gomez artwork hanging above the table lamp. Vintage elements include the pierced-metal side table and the slat bench by the windows, which holds under-\$20 examples of Viking and Blenko glass. How does our green \$200 Safavieh Noho slipper chair compare with the similar-looking Delia chair from Room & Board at \$700? This time, triple the cost is not worth it IMO: Both chairs are only marginally comfortable. And while we were surprised to find a lampshade at Target that matched the Sphinx Zanzibar area rug, we were more surprised to see it shown in Don Draper's *Mad Men* bedroom.

The shelf above the Radius media storage cabinet holds a wood sculpture from Bruce Yager at Jetset Retro Design and vintage Siamese cat figurines; on the wall is a painting by Robert Atom. As Jenna says, "Loving MCM means you're constantly on a treasure hunt, tracking down pieces to build a collection one by one. When we first bought our home, the Type A in me wanted everything to be done immediately. But I've come to really enjoy finding the perfect MCM knickknack or the ideal bedroom set—and those things take time."



Since the slipper chair had black legs, we tweaked our IKEA Karlstad sofa and armchair by painting their legs, too, and giving the Billy bookcases a green back panel. The IKEA furniture has been great for the past three years, but the fabric is starting to stretch. We're eyeing a Nixon sofa from Thrive or an Anson from Room & Board as higher-end replacements that will take our room to the next level. Pillows came from Kohl's, Target and Home Goods, the picture rails are from Room & Board and \$1 frames were sprayed white for consistency.

Below: Our Photoshop mockup.

detailed mockups of each room, pasting in Web images. This was an invaluable tool, as it allowed us to experiment endlessly with wall colors and furniture styles.

Since color is very important to us, we used a website where you can search for palettes by keywords. 'Mid Century Modern' led us to colorhunter.com/palette/221490, which we printed out on a calibrated printer and took to the paint store to find matching Behr paint colors. We also kept a copy in the car so that if we stumbled on something like the Pier 1 curtains, we could check it against the palette.

In the living room, we anchored our midcentury style by incorporating a beautiful walnut credenza and coffee table handcrafted by Radius. These items will last a lifetime, so we spent a little more to get exactly what we wanted. Art and sculptures were another area where we worked hard to find just the right pieces. While the sculptures and canvases are new, their style is so heavily influenced by the atomic age that it allowed us to sneak in more modern items that otherwise might have seemed out of place.

By purchasing the white bookshelves and gray chair and sofa from IKEA, we freed up money for other items from Radius and Room & Board. To drive home the midcentury feel, we also scoured thrift shops and antique malls for



accent items and tchotchkes. Many of these are the same as ones that were either in my own house growing up or in childhood friends', which really resonates for me.

We're so happy with the outcome that we can hardly believe this is our home. When the time is right, we hope to swap out some furnishings for true vintage pieces. Who knows, maybe we'll be the first on the block with an Adrian Pearsall sofa! ✨

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8070





Smells Like Team Spirit

text Michelle Gringeri-Brown

photography Jim Brown

This Eichler model has an atrium, a two-car garage and a carport, where a restored 1971 Mercedes 280SL resides.

Eight years ago,
the owner of a
Palm Springs
midcentury icon
bought an Eichler
tract house.
Then the fun began...

“I needed to live in Orange County, which tends to have a dearth of interesting modern-era buildings [dating] from the mid-1930s to the mid-'60s,” says Brent Harris, 54, a financial executive. His first foray into renovating midcentury architecture was working with Marmol Radziner on the four-year intervention to save Richard Neutra’s Kaufmann House. Much has been published on that extensive 1990s rehab, as well as the split with his former wife and rehab partner, and the subsequent \$19 million Christie’s auction of the home that fell through. Today, Harris still owns the weekend property, which he now shares with wife Lisa Meulbroek, a college professor.

Harris was interested in architects A. Quincy Jones and Frederick Emmons’ work for Joseph Eichler, specifically in Fairhills, the last Eichler tract built in Orange, Calif., where the lots are relatively large and back up to low hills with borrowed views. Wanting to avoid paying for someone else’s shoddy improvements, he saw potential in a



The Orange Eichler



The Kaufmann House

Brent R. Harris, 2011





The team built extensive outdoor storage into the backyard makeover, which includes a new pool and spa, concrete-block ramada and raised garden beds watered from a rain cistern. The Van Keppel-Green furniture above is a mix of vintage with a few newly manufactured pieces, and the black bench was designed by Marmol Radziner for the Kaufmann House.





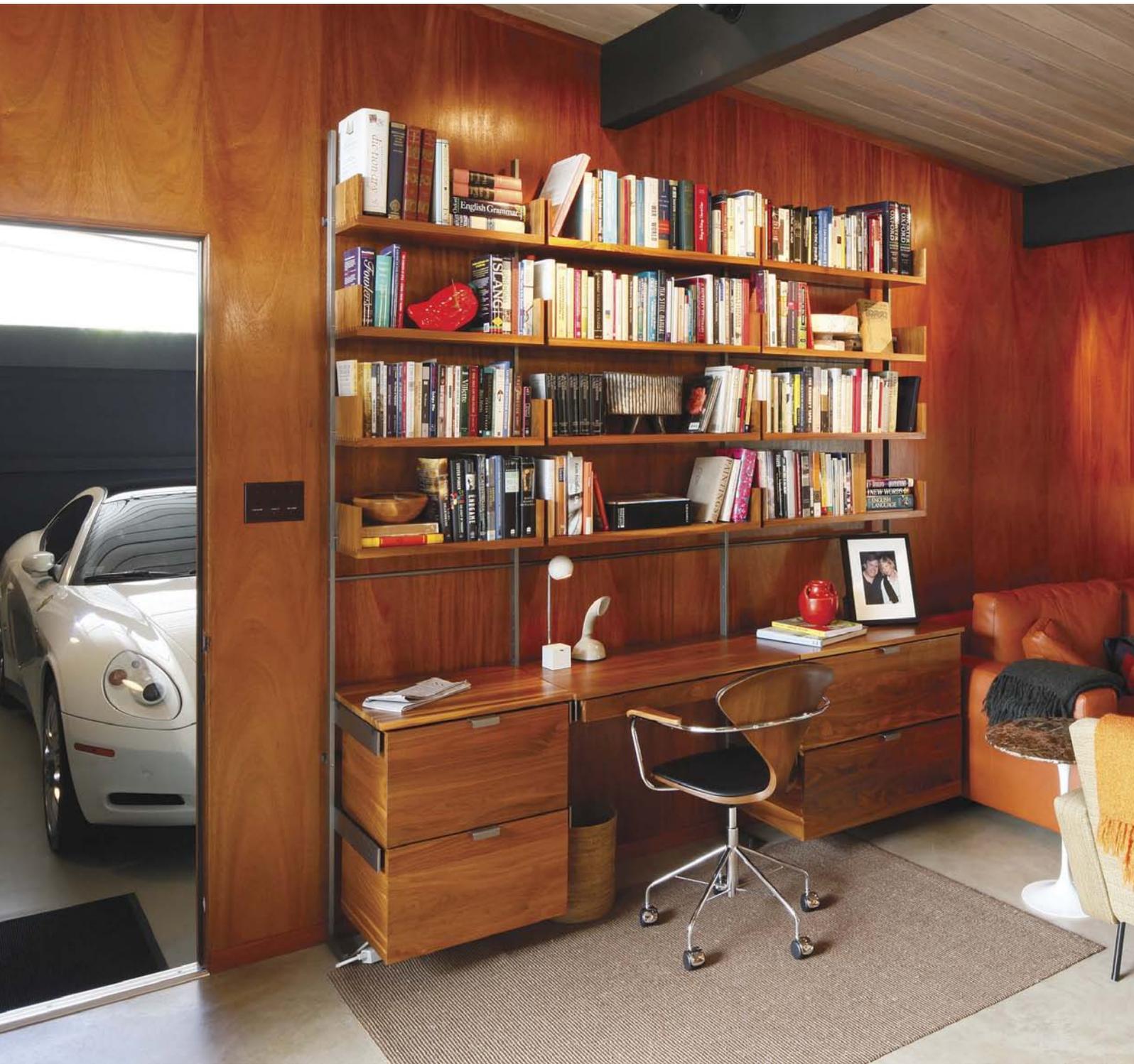
Two reupholstered Florence Knoll armchairs and a Mies van der Rohe coffee table sit between a period Saarinen side table and a Sergio Rodrigues floor lamp. The ottoman is period as well, and the painting above the audio shelves is by Helen Lundeberg. The audiophile collection includes Klipsch Heresy speakers, an early-'60s two-stage tube amp tuner by Scott and a vintage '60s Empire turntable, all of which run off glass-fuse wiring.

The team renovated the fireplace and pulled 1980s slate off the aggregate flooring that runs from the atrium entry to the living room, kitchen and bedroom wing. They were keen to get the exact same Knoll open-weave curtain fabric (opposite, top) as originally specced—"Grace Note"—and bought up the last yardage available. Next to the Knoll sofa is a floor lamp by Tommaso Cimino and near the doorway to the kitchen hangs 'Political Thinking' by photographer Paul Outerbridge.



A bespoke pendant by Brad Dunning hangs over the vintage Saarinen Tulip table and chairs. A George Nelson 'Thin Edge' credenza holds 'Intro' by Frederick Hammersley and other pieces that date from around the 1964 built date of the house.





In Eichler's 'multipurpose' room, the luan paneled walls house a built-in flat-screen, with custom media storage below and an Atlas Industries wall unit. The desk chair is a Cherner, and a Poltrona Frau sofa and Pierre Guariche armchair surround a coffee table by Jens Risom; the corner table lamp is by David Cressey. On the floor are a rya-style area rug and an abaca woven mat; in the garage is their Ferrari 612 Scaglietti.



largely original, four-bedroom, two-bath model, despite substantial dry rot, termite-damaged beams, painted luan paneling, a cracked slab, half-usable plumbing and no A/C.

"I spent the first year studying what I had, interviewing contractors and other construction people about how they would approach such a project and whether they were interested," he says. "I found neither satisfactory. I didn't like how they would approach it and didn't think that they cared or got it."

Harris had worked with designer Brad Dunning on the Kaufmann pool house and another Palm Springs property, and he felt Dunning had a unique understanding of the period and how to bring that forward to today. The two discussed adding on to the Eichler.

"We considered an extension, but it was a smart move not to do that; the house is pretty perfect as it is," Dunning says. "I have been lucky enough to work on restorations of Irving Gill, Wallace Neff, Cliff May and John Lautner homes, and a few by Richard Neutra, but this Eichler/Jones-Emmons of Brent's might be my most detailed restoration/renovation ever."

Conference calls between Harris, Dunning and technical design consultant Michael Johnston would typically start at 5:00 or 6:00 pm and often stretch past 10:00, as they focused on how to best achieve highly detailed originality. "For instance, on the sliding doors, the aluminum is almost impossible to restore, the rollers fail and they





**Eichlers were not built
with the highest-quality materials—beautifully done,
but commonly available materials.**

aren't energy efficient, but the original Arcadia [models] are really tough," explains Dunning. "Windows and doors make this house, and Brent and Lisa understand that. So we found someone to restore the doors and tracked down the correct handles and locking mechanisms. They get that, yes, the house would be more energy efficient and, yes, it would be easier if you pulled out all of the doors and windows. There are no better stewards for a house."

"Brent wanted to bring the house back to what it was," says Lisa Meulbroek, who grew up in a Mies van der Rohe–designed apartment building in Chicago. "Photos of [redone] Eichlers show that people have made different types of decisions about originality. Brent took the original kitchen cabinets and got several carpenters working on them so we could use and not replace them. Or the

mahogany paneling that needed to be replaced: You can't get the lowest or highest grade, it has to be the mid grade—things that I never would have thought about."

Harris is happy to expand on that paneling issue: "I reopened a sandstone quarry from the 1945 period to finish a piece of the Kaufmann [House] where the stone had been thrown away," he recounts, adding that he also rejected said stone initially, but that's another story. "In this case, I had to find luan mahogany of a mid grade. Today you can get low-grade mahogany that they use as shipping containers that has lots of knots—unacceptable. The higher grade is all perfect and bookmatched, all *Arch Digest*, and that's wrong, so you have to find mid grade. Even then, you want to select the pieces.

"We didn't want perfection for sure, but I didn't want



The slab floors were finished with a decorative concrete coating, while the kitchen cabinets were repaired and refinished inside and out. Other details include new white laminate counters, a modest-size Frigidaire refrigerator, original ball lamps and a vintage wall phone to the right of the door to the walk-in pantry. The bar stools are vintage Paul Tuttle.

A hall between the dining room and kitchen offers additional storage for dinnerware and modern appliances like a microwave. Here, too, all elements and surfaces were either refinished or recreated to original Eichler specs.

A Magic Chef electric cooktop and Thermador wall oven were added, while a dishwasher was hidden behind a custom front panel. The rehabbed swiveling table (below and opposite) gives more prep space, and the built-in spice rack is handy for the cook. "It's interesting when people choose to use laminate again; it's an aesthetic decision that's different than it was in 1960," says designer Brad Dunning. "It's a historically-correct decision, and that's why this project was interesting. We made some choices that are low-cost but important to the house."





Kohler sinks and Chicago Faucet fixtures replaced any originals that were beyond redemption, and the medicine cabinet and chrome sink rims were rehabbed, as was the vanity. White laminate counters match those in the kitchen, while the wall sconce is new. The print is by Yaacov Agam. "It costs twice as much to fix something that's half broken, instead of just replacing it," admits Brent Harris.

Office space meets guestroom in the fourth bedroom. The bunk beds and trundle can be conformed to accommodate various combinations of overnight visitors, including Harris' daughters. In the wall above the custom built-in desk is an A/C outlet; Brad Dunning and Mike Johnston tweaked the grill design when the first iteration didn't let enough air through.

Opposite: Custom storage along the wall, a bed designed by Dunning, and Paul McCobb Planner Group nightstands with vintage Martz lamps in the master bedroom. "The bedroom is a sleeping chamber—no more, no less," says Harris. "One great redeeming feature: You can open up the blinds to a wonderful, private view in the morning; this is not your modern-day master suite."



dereliction either, so it was interesting. The original luan is not super smooth, yet it's not rough to your hand. So I specified that they not sand it down too much. Then, each panel took the stain differently—one would be yellow and one would be red."

"From the restored burlap on the closet doors to the vintage phone from oldphones.com for the kitchen wall with the long cord in exactly the right color," Meulbroek continues, "you go down the list and every single thing has been thought about, mulled over, discussed."

"Burlap is the most low-cost material in the world, but we could not find the exact stuff [we wanted]," Dunning adds. "We ended up importing it from India from a place that makes potato sacks. I'm sure when Eichler and A. Quincy Jones were doing it, they just bought a million yards for a penny. That's the thing about restoration—what was available at the time vs. what you can get at this moment."

The renovation took five years, three of them involving heavy construction or extensive woodworking to restore or recreate damaged beams, exterior siding, cabinetry, paneling and millwork. Matching the original blue-gray color wash on the ceilings, selecting a paint palette, making 1964 fixtures and finishes functional again, and landscaping all took thousands of hours.

Air conditioning the house and adding storage and outdoor functionality were other priorities. "Brent and I were more involved with the restoration and the historical details; we look a little more at surfaces," says Dunning. "Lisa was heavily involved with the hobby room, the kitchen and the



bedrooms—she is way better at organizing these compact spaces. They're almost like a yacht without one negative area of space not utilized."

"I'm not sure [Eichlers] were easy to live in at the time," Meulbroek comments. "The architects gave these houses a great look, but even for the day, I think the closets were probably small and probably had to be with so much glass and not that much wall space. They maximized the look, not the practicality."

"We thought hard about how we were going to make a house with four bedrooms work for a couple today," she says. "We ended up keeping the master bedroom the same, while another is Brent's office and [a third] given over to exercise equipment. Then we created a guest room with office space for me, too. We came up with a compromise that involves bunk beds, which took an incredible amount of time to design."

While the radiant heat system just needed minor repairs, the absence of air conditioning was original but unacceptable. To avoid unsightly AC ducts on the roof, several split system units were installed with custom interior grills inset into the walls. Furnishings, artwork and accessories include midcentury and vintage pieces from Harris' previous condo, items purchased expressly for this house under Dunning's tutelage, and lots of books courtesy of Professor Meulbroek.

"I don't like when you look at period houses and it looks like a complete time machine and re-creation of a Schulman photograph," says designer Dunning. "There

should be a basis of the correct style and period of the furniture, but you have to sprinkle in some contemporary and personal pieces. Brent is a real audiophile and he has some beautiful equipment; I just don't like when it's too precious. It's a dance of looking at archival photos and the client's personal needs."

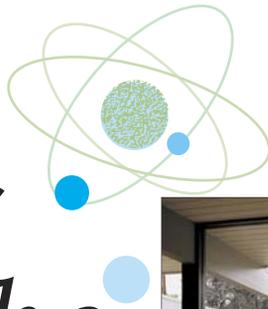
Asked to compare his two highly personal homes, Harris had this to say. "They're both outstanding designs—both from the perspective of how history has judged them and as an occupant—and extremely dynamic in their looks. For modern structures, it's a fine line, because they can be uncomfortable and cold, and that is simply not the case in either one of them."

"Kaufmann, while not a large house, is a bigger house, particularly for 1946, and a much bigger property—close to 2.5 acres," he continues. "Kaufmann is a pretty spectacular masterpiece. But this [Eichler] is tremendous for what it was; I don't know of a tract that is even close to this inspiration and realization. Fairhills was seen as a neighborhood with great design, while Kaufmann was conceived on a very high budget for an extremely important client."

"Our Eichler is a more functional, day-to-day house that forces some compromises on you—some of which are good. Get your act together and keep reasonable amounts of stuff."

Harris and Dunning are confirmed serial renovators, but what about Meulbroek? I asked her if she never lived through another restoration, would that be more than OK? A pause, a laugh, then, "You have no idea..." 

Blasts from the Past



text Michelle Gringeri-Brown
photography Jim Brown, et al

In August 2003, Jim and I thought up the concept for Atomic Ranch, and by March 2004, the premiere issue was bound and on newsstands. Among our early featurees were relatives—Jim’s brother and his wife, who allowed us to shoot their ranch without knowing what we were up to—and all manner of contacts made through a network of enthusiasts and advertisers.

As we checked in recently, some of our past profiled homeowners had moved on, but many others are still tweaking and enjoying their houses. Here’s a second look at some of our favorites. ...



BEACHY, FUNKY

Ranch (No. 1)

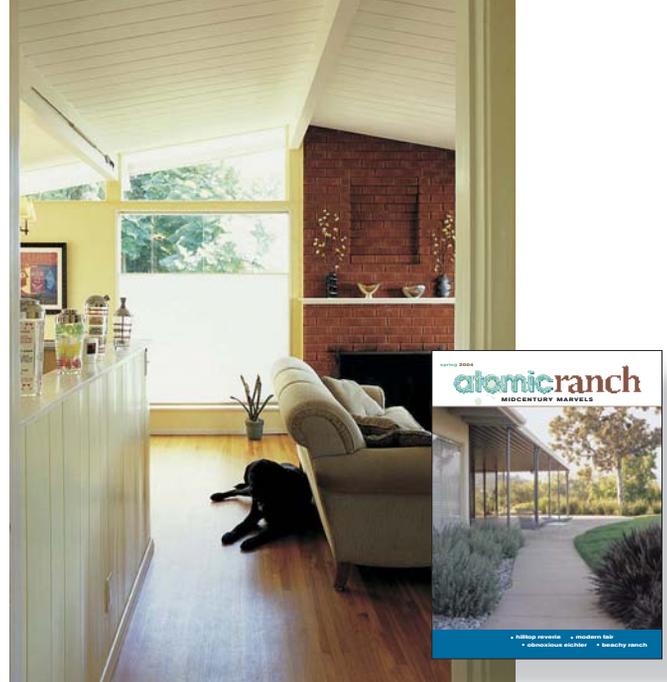
The Hermosa Beach locale and open floor plan were what drove Jeff Brown and Susan Savela Brown to buy their 1954 three-bedroom California ranch. In our Spring 2004 premiere issue, their article addressed some hoped-for changes to the brick fireplace surround and the down-at-the-heels kitchen. Today they've moved toward a more traditional contemporary look and made some major changes.

"We did a seven-month remodel that included all utilities, the roof, floors, windows, lighting and a new kitchen," writes Savela Brown. "The old house had no insulation and it got very chilly in the winter and hot in the summer. We put insulation in the attic, the crawl space and most of the walls. The original windows were very drafty and those, too, were replaced. We converted a closet with a large water heater into storage and installed a tankless model in the garage.

"In the kitchen, we re-engineered a beam, which eliminated a post; this allowed more flexibility with the kitchen design and opened up the room. The original layout had a side access door that was removed to allow for more counter space, and we moved the island for better access from the hallway. The vinyl flooring was replaced with hardwood to match the rest of the house and not chop up the space.

"Over the years we discussed fireplace options with our designer but didn't move on anything until after the remodel was completed. Painting the fireplace white or covering it with slate would have looked like what everyone else was doing. To honor the original design, we just dressed it up with a new mantel for about \$400. It was an inexpensive facelift and the brick still suited the style of the house after the remodel.

"We still greatly respect and appreciate the atomic ranch feel and look of our house. When we started the project, we were ready to go really retro in the kitchen but ended up with a style that was more classic beach bungalow."



Susan Savela Brown (2)



Current views framed in blue.

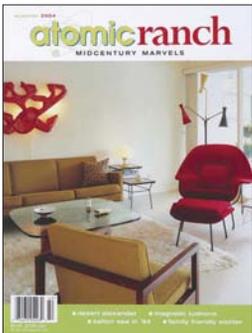


in a Family Way (No. 2)

Cindy and Clay Morrow had done some updates to their 1964 A. Quincy Jones Eichler in Thousand Oaks, Calif., when we published their feature in Summer 2004. They'd poured a self-leveling concrete floor on the damaged slab, put on a new roof and painted and such, but the baths and kitchen were original and the dining room housed a bumper-pool table and music paraphernalia. They now have two 'tweens and slightly shifted priorities.

"Our biggest single change was the removal of the wall separating the dining room from the family room/kitchen," Cindy writes. "Having the wall was great when the children were very young, as it helped us to contain them and their mess in the family room while keeping the dining and living rooms free from clutter. However, with the wall gone, the house has a very open feel and gives it the sense of being much larger than it actually is.

"Once we opened the wall, our Danish modern dining set looked pathetically small for the space. We both

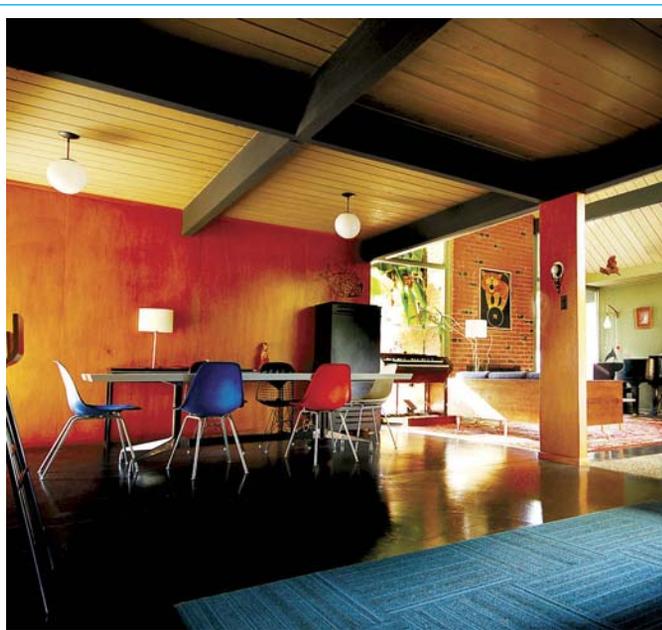


loved the Herman Miller conference tables, but they were way out of our price range. One day we came across the base legs on eBay for a fraction of the cost, and had a powder-coated top manufactured by a local metal fabricator. A few vintage Eames chairs (if you are patient on eBay they can be snatched for a good price), and the space is complete.

“In our kitchen, the changes started when our 1964 Thermador oven’s door hinge broke and we exhausted every effort to find a replacement. When it became evident that we were going to have to update the oven, along came the snowball effect, and we replaced the original electric cooktop with an induction model. Of course that led to new countertops; we chose Blizzard Caesarstone to replace what was once white Formica. We swapped out the old drawers for smooth gliding ones with identical new fronts, and finished it up with a large stainless steel sink and fixtures.

“Originality is one area where Clay and I disagree about the house. He was very reluctant to give up the Formica in the kitchen because he didn’t want to lose the midcentury modest feel to a potentially over-the-top modern look, which is becoming a lot more prevalent in remodeled Eichlers here. I can agree and respect that sentiment, however, I believe that some new products function more efficiently, and if they look great, it’s a plus.

“Over the years we learned that a washer and dryer in the hallway is one of the stupidest ideas in the history of house building, while having a lot of small bedrooms is much better than fewer, larger rooms. The kids are so happy to have their own spaces. Two regrets we both have are not adding electrical boxes when we were redoing the roof before we moved in—the house is quite dark and I would have loved to have added more skylights, too—and pouring the thin layer of concrete. Every summer we talk about grinding off that floor layer, and every summer the thought of having to move everything out of our house to do it puts us right back in denial for 12 more months!”

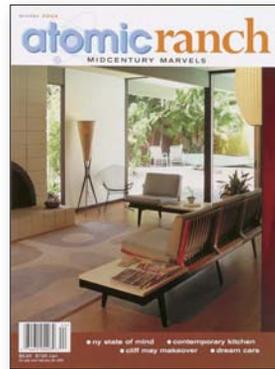


Cindy Morrow (2)



Laser Vision

(No. 4)



As our Winter 2004 article explained, when Jon and Gayle Jarrett bought their Anshen & Allen Eichler in Orange, Calif., there were waiting lists and bidding wars for the homes. Their white-elephant tract house had aluminum siding and a big-box kitchen, but they re-sided, scraped off textured paint and crafted a modernized Eichler kitchen from scratch. In his meticulous bid for authenticity, Jon even started a cottage business of making entry-door escutcheons for other modern-house owners.

"Most of the bigger changes to our house have been on the exterior," Jon writes. "We designed a wooden outdoor lanai based on '60s-era *Sunset* books, and had a local contractor build it for us. Besides being a neat place to relax/read/party, it provided much-needed shade from the late afternoon sun—a real benefit in the summer.

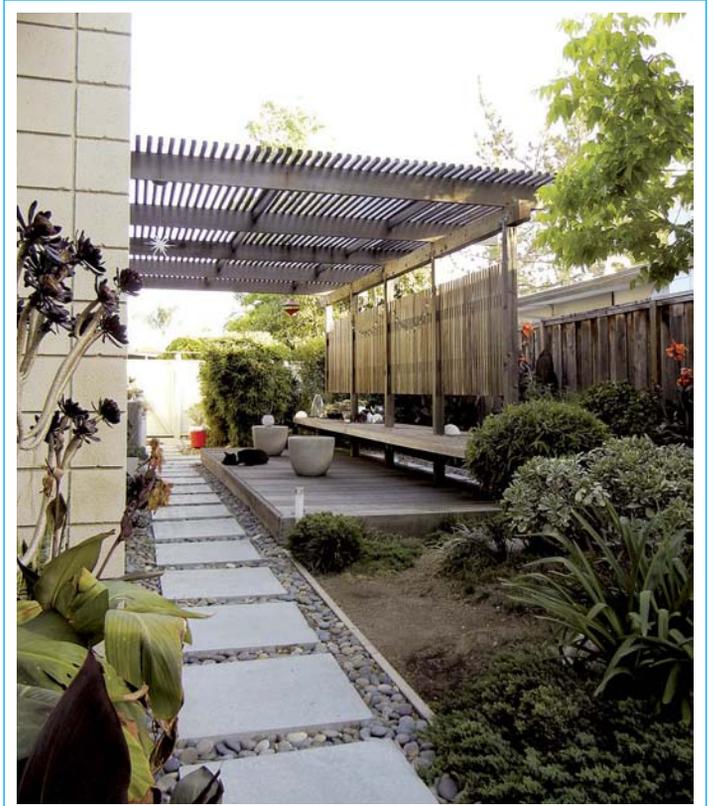
"We also built a modern cast-in-place concrete fire pit and simple rectangular block seating near the pool. The previous cracked patio was replaced with large precast concrete pads arranged in a grid pattern, with river pebbles filling the spaces between.

"The last big project was the front yard. I've always been inspired by Japanese gardens and landscaping. But how could we pull off the seemingly impossible in the heat of our summers on a south-facing lot? Our best decision was planting in the late winter/early spring when every species of plant stands a better chance at survival. All of the hardscape/irrigation came first, then decent topsoil was mounded into elevations that appeared natural, not forced. Juniper, hawthorn, black pine, Japanese maple and nandina are all maturing beautifully, and we're stoked!

"My escutcheons sell mostly to Eichler, Streng and Rummer homeowners, and we still love the house and love our neighborhood!"



Jon Jarrett

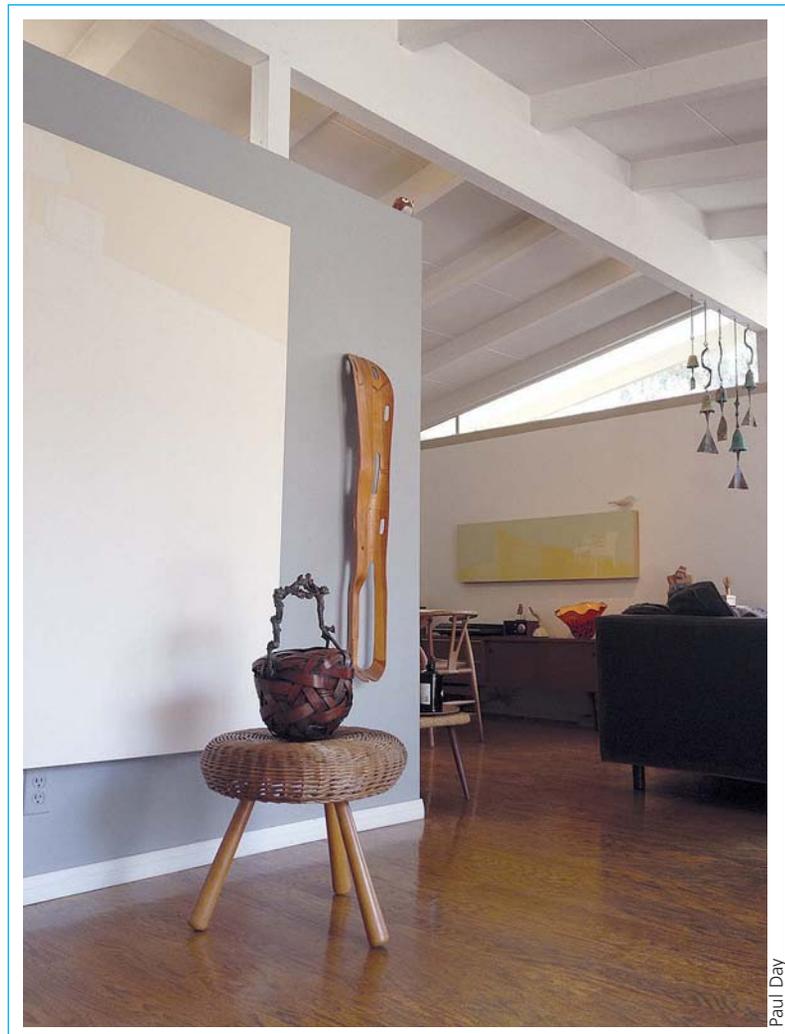


Jon Jarrett (2)

It's a DOG'S LIFE: Lucky Lucy (No. 6)

Several articles on homes in the Cliff May tract of Long Beach, Calif., appeared in our pages, including Paul and Kathy Day's 1954 ranch in Summer 2005. The couple are collectors—from Hawaiian koa wood souvenirs to fly rods and pre-Columbian art. The feature's title referred to my fascination with their English bull terrier puppy, Lucy, who was an adorable accessory during our shoot.

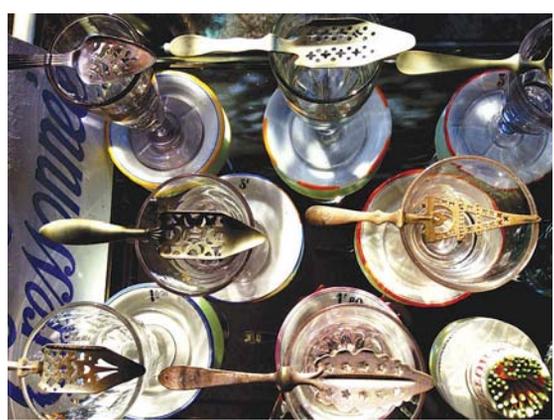
"When we first moved in, our main focus was on classic midcentury modern, but as we have lived here and embraced all the mature trees and nature, we began to focus on a more organic modern feel—BoMo, short for 'Bohemian Modern,' " Paul wrote us. "The concept is structured on a slightly more rustic feel, like our wicker-seat stool by Tony Paul or the elegant vintage Japanese basket that sits on it. The intent of BoMo is to keep a modern look, but make things less



sterile and more inviting. That said, we continue to ride, buy and collect vintage Vespas, because, let's face it, once a Mod always a Mod.

"We have pushed out and redone both bathrooms and the guest bedroom; that made a massive difference as far as livability when having houseguests. We have learned that these homes require a decent amount of yearly upkeep, which is really no problem as long as you stay on things.

"But we would buy this house all over again in a heartbeat. They truly lend themselves to great summertime entertaining with the indoor/outdoor design that Cliff May encouraged when he created this floor plan. The housing market did dip a bit, but is picking up steam again. And ours never really dropped like most homes in the area; the May name attached to these beautiful little masterpieces kept their value up quite well."



Paul Day (3)



StrengTheory

(No. 6)

A Streng Bros. 1963 modernist ranch in Sacramento was also featured in Summer 2005. Owned by artists Tony and Donna Natsoulas, the home is a studio and gallery for Tony's large-scale ceramic sculptures, as well as the extensive artwork the couple collect and gladly live amongst.

"We added frosted glass doors to Tony's garage studio space, installed lots of cabinetry and upgraded the interior lighting so it's like being in bright daylight year-round," Donna writes. "This allows him to work all hours of the day and evening in total privacy. We customized the front door surround using the same frosted white glass, and added blue and yellow panes to make the entrance look like a Mondrian painting. We painted the door red and one exterior entry wall bright yellow and the other bright blue, really bringing home the theme.

"The house is perfect the way it was designed by architect Carter Sparks, though we did put in a glass door in the kitchen where a small window used to be. The kitchen cabinets have all been refaced with maple, making the kitchen bright and cheery. Tony designed and installed a glass tile floor in one of the bathrooms, and we will soon be remodeling the other '80s bath.

"In the bedrooms, we switched to double-pane windows that use the same aluminum casings, keeping the integrity of the original window design. They look like the old windows but are much more energy efficient.

We had a white PVC membrane roof put on, which actually led to some second-thoughts: We should have put more insulation in the roof when we had it redone, and removed all of the plywood underlayment so the ceilings could have been wired for lighting. A fan in the bathroom and a skylight in the studio would have been nice. New carpet would have been good, before we moved all of our art in, too.

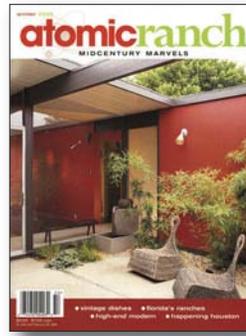
"Tours are given of our home and studio all of the time, and we have added many new art pieces inside and out, which continue to enrich our lives and inspire us. We are secure in our tastes and the decisions we have made. Everything reflects who we are, what we enjoy, what we collect and the colors we wear and choose to surround ourselves with. The house suits us, and people seem to think it is special, which always amazes us."





Patty's pink palace

(No. 8)



Chicagoans Patty Carroll and Tony Jones' time capsule ranch on the shoreline of Lake Michigan was featured in Winter 2005. The limestone-clad home had virtually been unchanged by its original owner, and the couple bought it with relaxing weekends and preservation in mind. Now they have flipped their residential focus and live in the ranch house pretty much full time.

"The house is a permanent work-in-progress, which is really all part of the fun," Jones wrote us. "We change things around constantly. It's been our Indiana home for 12 years and we don't try to make it a museum facsimile of 1951; instead there's a sense of warm, fond recollections of that period.

"We added a three-season porch with period rattan, a tiki bar and a Malm fireplace—all very cozy-toasty; our inquisitive local deer come to warm their hooves alongside us. The dining room now has a Heywood-Wakefield table and 'dog-bone' chairs, the living room received new artwork ('Hank Williams: Honky Tonk Man' is by Roger Brown, and the 'dashing' painting by Doug Kemp) and sectionals from DWR. A Saarinen Tulip table replaced the dinette set in the pink kitchen, and we hung three more Kemp prints there as well.

"We have lots of pieces by Nelson, Eames and Gray, some spectacular MCM swoopy lamps and all-pink Russel Wright dishware. And we are still 'pink-ifying' the kitchen with a pink blender, juicer, coffeemaker, cutlery and napery, all complementing the original pink Maytag washer and dryer, the pink walls, cabinets, countertops and sink. Our '50s pink car collection is still breeding, now moved to display shelving in the bedroom, while a collection of pink '50s radios is about to debut on a wall of their own.

"There's no end to all this; the entertainment value of restoring and enhancing this ranch is just wonderful. We honor the house and cherish it, we flatter it and dress it up and make it feel great—in return for the pure pleasure of being allowed to live in it."

continued on page 54





Patty's
pink
palace



Resources page 75
Select back issues (some in very short supply)
featuring four of these homes are available at
atomic-ranch.com. 



kicking up *the* *Curb Appeal*

text Arthur Purcell

photography Miranda & Arthur Purcell



The purchase of our split-level ranch 11 years ago easily satisfied the prime directive of real estate: location first. As for its curb appeal and architectural interest—let’s just say we compromised.

My wife, Camille, and I were first drawn to the Long Island, N.Y., village of Sea Cliff by its ornate Victorian homes, but found that small cottage living suited us better. When we later began to explore mid-20th-century architecture, we saw parallels to our cottage in terms of the low maintenance, straightforward and functional layouts, and exteriors that don’t try to dominate their surroundings.

Set on a quiet block among 19th-century homes, our ho-hum ranch lay just a few blocks from the cottage we lived in with our daughter, Miranda. The arrival of son Henry in 2002 compelled us to seek a larger abode, but real estate prices were quickly rising and local housing stock was limited. Although we were underwhelmed when we first viewed the 1965 split-foyer ranch, we convinced ourselves that this oddly proportioned box (known locally as a ‘Hi Ranch’ and elsewhere as a ‘split-entry’ or ‘bi-level’) on a nice lot and priced right could amount to something.

Underdog Status

Split foyers are generally scorned by buyers, and for good reason. Visitors must navigate a set of stairs just to reach the unsheltered front door. Across the threshold lies a cramped, closetless entry area, which doubles as a stair landing halfway between the home’s two levels. Open the door too quickly, and you risk knocking an inhabitant down, and even two can be a crowd here. It doesn’t help that the country is littered with

We painted the post and the new flush entry door and sidelight Benjamin Moore Lime Green, while the body stain is water-based BM Arborcoat tinted black.





The 10'x10' kitchen has tons of light, thanks to larger windows, a new sliding glass door that replaced a French door, the skylight put in by previous owners and two Aeros pendants over the island. The American black walnut Viola Park cabinetry has accent leaf doors on the dining side of the island. We went with Arctic White Corian countertops—we think the thin 1/2" countertop gives the kitchen a lighter, sharper feel than, say, thick granite, and balances the darker wood.



An Anson sofa frames the view of the dining area and open kitchen, and a Nelson bubble lamp hangs over the stairs. Previously, there was a short wall forming a doorway to the kitchen roughly where the end of the island stands.



poorly remodeled split foyers, confirming the subjectivity of the phrase 'home improvement.'

We chose to see the potential. The rooms were somewhat small, but the house had an open floor plan, making it live larger. The upper level provides views from the living/dining/kitchen, and the finished lower level is mostly above-grade. This brightens the space and permits walkout access to the yard. Yes, living on two levels can be tiring, but with the obligatory sleepovers and long video game sessions that come with kids, there are real advantages to having a playroom and den separated from the rest of the house by a set of floor joists.

Undeterred by the low success rate of others, I began a

decade-long obsession with remodeling our split foyer. I began researching midcentury modern homes, poring over shelter magazines and interviewing architects. I discovered that this style—with its centralized staircase plan and partially submerged lower level—seemed to thwart radical remodeling efforts, disappointing those who attempt to transform them into colonials, Tudors and other traditional houses. Accepting the fact that relocating the staircase and enlarging the entry foyer would absorb half of our \$70K remodeling budget (kitchen excluded), and not wanting to move, we decided to focus our energy and wallet on imparting unique, period-consistent features to the facade, adding new and larger windows, and a bit more interior space.



Our expanded living room is furnished with a Frame coffee table (with a custom glass top), a walnut media console and a mirror, all from Crate & Barrel. Other elements are a red Eames LCW, a Nelson cigar wall sconce, Gigi side chair and what we think is a model 132 Sigvard Bernadotte tilt-back chair produced by France and Daverkosen found at a yard sale.



Tall Order

We challenged our local architect, James Carballal, to put on his '50s-modern thinking cap and produce a bold, eye-catching makeover. To add some badly needed living space upstairs, Jim suggested a cost-effective 4'x12' bump-out addition on piers. While this interior space gain was modest, it served other important architectural aims. First, it helped balance the facade's proportions. Second, the added facade length supported a new almost-flat roofline with a projecting eave. Complementing the new roofline and continuing the

removing a small wall to completely open the space, adding new walnut cabinetry from Viola Park with simple aluminum pulls, and selecting efficient stainless steel appliances. We dispensed with upper cabinetry along the back wall, opting for a picture window to frame the view of the yard and beyond. The large island, fitted with drawers and shelves for storage, is great for entertaining and family baking nights. Heat-resistant anodized aluminum backsplash panels on the range wall are also from Viola Park, which works directly with the customer to design modular, mid-budget, green kitchen systems. The entire kitchen remodel, with all materials and installation by our contractor, ran about \$30K,

not including six weeks of takeout food receipts.

By coming to terms with our split-foyer ranch, rather than imposing our terms on it, we managed to create something new while respecting the original design. That's not to say we didn't surprise (if not shock) our neighbors by introducing the village's first Darth Vader-hued home, but feedback has been very positive. One day, while sitting in our living room observing one of the many cars that slow down to catch a look, Camille and I noted with irony that this once invisible house, long in the shadows of its grand Victorian neighbors, began to shine only after it was cloaked in black! 

Resources page 75

Camille Purcell is the assistant library director in Sea Cliff and Arthur practices customs and international trade law in New York City. For more details on this project, visit purcellart.wordpress.com.

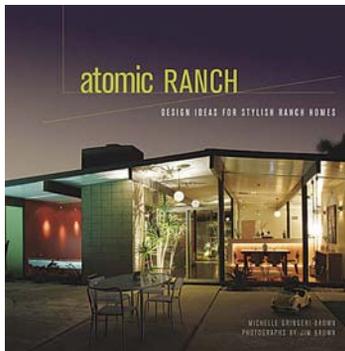
I began a decade-long obsession with remodeling our split foyer.

atomic-era theme, Jim designed a dramatic front entry overhang, trapezoidal in shape and supported by a steel V-shaped post.

The decision to clad the house in natural cedar and stain it black was surprisingly easy, having been inspired by examples of Japanese 'shou-sugi-ban' burnt wood siding and dark-colored Scandinavian homes. The use of a solid-color stain saved thousands of dollars by eliminating the need for costly clear-grade tongue-and-groove cedar. Carefully primed to prevent unsightly tannin bleed, the cheaper knotty-grade wood worked just fine. Even with those savings, the cladding absorbed almost 20% of our budget. Another 15% went to replacing most of the home's dated double-hung windows with large casements mated to lower awning windows. Standard sizes from Marvin's Integrity line, the fiberglass windows are as durable as they are energy efficient—an important green feature to us.

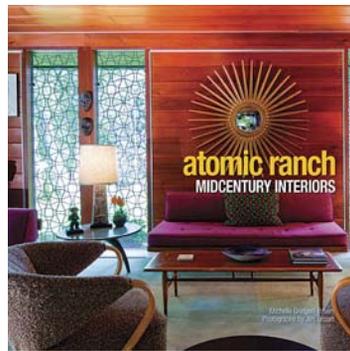
The kitchen remodel was a complete gut, and included

atomicbooks



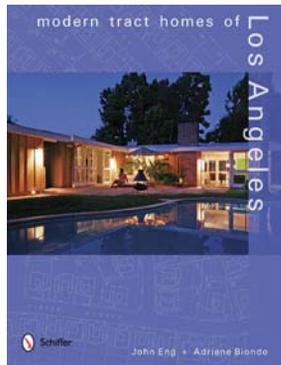
Atomic Ranch: Design Ideas for Stylish Ranch Homes

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, autographed hardcover, color and b&w photos, 192 pp., \$40



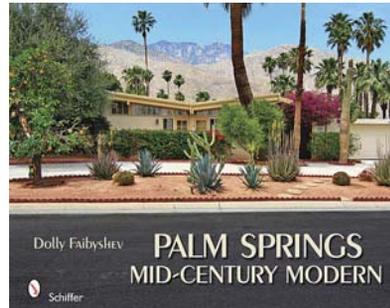
Atomic Ranch: Midcentury Interiors

Explore eight ranch interiors in depth—from warm moderns and split-levels to tract homes and retro traditionals—in our 2012 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, autographed hardcover, 200 color photos, 192 pp., \$40



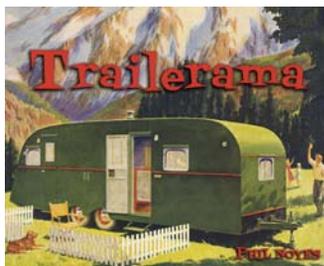
Modern Tract Homes of Los Angeles

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 & Adriane Biondo, hardcover, 144 pp., \$40



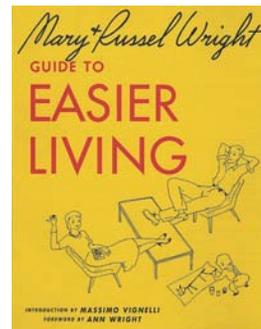
Palm Springs Mid-Century Modern

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



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



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

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Recent back issues, \$6.95



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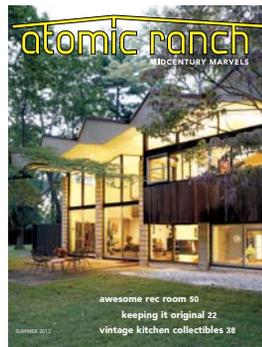
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no. 38 Summer 2013



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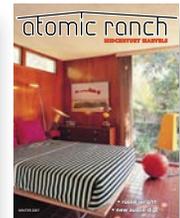


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nickoftime

Inspiring Community



After “Building Community—One House (and Party) at a Time” ran in the Summer 2011 issue [No. 30], I can report that things continue to improve for our Donald Wexler–designed neighborhood, El Rancho Vista Estates, in Palm Springs.

El Rancho became a sponsor of Modernism Week in 2012, hosting a tour of 12 home interiors. Mr. Wexler signed autographs at a reception at the last home on the tour, and since

the event sold out, we produced new tours for Modernism Week 2013 and 2014.

Bonding together, the residents successfully petitioned Palm Springs City Hall to fund a beautification project—painting the tract’s exterior wall that runs a quarter mile or so along the adjacent highway. Once a bunch of mismatched colors, the neighborhood now seems more unified than ever.

Most importantly, out of the 70 or so Wexler homes in



our neighborhood, at least seven more have been completely renovated after the Atomic Ranch article ran, including three at the end of my own cul-de-sac. Another is owned and being renovated by Wexler's family, and two more have just been purchased with the intent of renovating.

Realtor Paul Kaplan, who lives in the neighborhood, says the market has gone up about 25% in the last two years. "A

fixer-type midcentury home in El Rancho Vista will be listed in the low \$400,000s. At the top of the market, pricing is in the high \$600,000s. It's still one of my favorite places to live in Palm Springs."

I am happy to brag that El Rancho Vista Estates is probably the most cohesive neighborhood in all of Palm Springs when it comes to beautifully renovated midcentury homes. ✨

ranchdressing

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

Q:

I fell in love with this dining table and chairs the moment I saw them at my local thrift store with a price tag of \$99.99 for the set.

I'm hoping you can help me identify the designer or maker. It looks as if the cane-back slipper chairs have been reupholstered and the unusual

dining table is only 23" tall. I cannot find any identifying marks except for numbers underneath. If nothing more, this dining set has become a fun conversation piece!

**Nancy
Werlinger**



A: "This is a game table," writes dealer Judy Engel of modernonthehudson.com. "The construction strongly suggests it to be American made. We like to call this type of furniture 'American Danish.' In the '50s and '60s, as Danish Modern furniture gained mainstream popularity here, many companies such as Broyhill, Drexel, American of Martinsville and Lane created fabulously constructed lines to mimic the popular Danish designs. One nifty thing about this table is that you don't really see game tables any longer. At \$99, you got a good deal. Fabulous!"

Q: I've researched online and can't seem to figure out if this is a real Blenko vase. I found it at Goodwill for \$1.99. I know that there are fakes that are being embellished with Blenko logos, especially the paper/silver logo that my piece has. If it is real, I'm also wondering what era it's from. Any input is appreciated!

Margaret Rogers

A: Steve Cohen, a collector whose home was featured in *Fall 2013*, replies: "I'm not a Blenko expert, but I do buy it whenever I can if the price is right. If you look closely on the bottom, sometimes 'BLENKO' is etched; otherwise, your 'silver hand' sticker was used from the 1930s to 1982. Further research identifies the shape as a '64-E' vase designed by Joel Myers in 1964.

"Here's a link to the Blenko catalogs: blenkoarchive.org/blenko_catalogs.htm. The years 1962-1971 are not on the website but are in a Schiffer book. For \$1.99, I would have bought it in a second. Looks like the genuine deal to me; nice score!"

Cohen also sent a link to a matching vase that sold for \$22 on eBay in July 2013. That listing turned out to be from one of our advertisers, Debbie of atomicmobiles.com, who confirmed Steve's info. "I'm pretty sure Margaret's vase is Blenko, made sometime from 1964 to 1982, and designed



by Myers, who worked for Blenko from 1964 to 1970.

"I've never been too worried about those stickers being applied to non-Blenko; it's not that easy to find unused stickers. I definitely would have snapped it up for \$1.99 at Goodwill, that's for sure!"

Q: I have an interesting looking couch/sofa bed we inherited when we purchased our midcentury home. We are not sure if it is anything special that is worth keeping and having reupholstered. The design and functionality are very unique—the sitting area opens to become a sheepskin-covered bed—so we are curious about it.

IOS

A: Now, we would have said, No this isn't anything, but Hudson, N.Y., dealer Judy Engel knew better: "I love this piece! This is classic 1970s Italian Design at



its best—perfect for the '70s playboy as in, 'How about coming over to my apartment to sit on the couch/bed—wink, wink?' In any event, this is called the Anfibio sofa, designed by Alessandro Becchi and manufactured by Giovannetti. It has a steel frame, the exterior is leather and, as you mentioned, when the sofa is unfolded, the center reveals a funky bed that is covered in synthetic sheepskin. Very, very cool."



Q: This bowl has been in my family since the '50s or '60s, and I am happy to say it is now mine. It is incredibly heavy and measures a little over 14" square by 4 1/2" high. The bowl is a beautiful shade of blue and has vibrant gold specks scattered in the middle out to the sides. My mother says someone had told her that the glass is made from old telephone glass connectors. Could this be possible? It would be nice to know more about this bowl, including the value.

Rosemary LaBorde

ranchdressing



A: Bobbie Ann Tilkens-Fisher of athomemodern.com replies: "Your lovely blue glass bowl appears to have aventurine inclusions. These occur when flakes of copper or copper salts are mixed with molten glass, a process that results in the appearance of golden flakes, while also turning the glass a shade of blue or brown. This technique was developed in the 17th century in

Murano, Italy, and one glassworks in particular, Fratelli Toso, made lovely forms similar to yours in the 1950s and '60s.

"Murano glass is very special and highly coveted by collectors. Your piece is gorgeous, but I cannot confirm for certain that it hails from Murano since it does not bear any marks or labels. I would suggest you contact an expert in Murano glass for an evaluation."

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.

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atomic events

February 22–23 Cincinnati 20th Century Cincinnati

Queen City Shows features 70 midcentury modern dealers at the Sharonville Convention Center; 20thcenturycincinnati.com.

March 29–July 6 Salem, Mass. California Design

Two hundred examples of California midcentury modern design from LACMA at The Peabody Essex Museum. Furniture, industrial and graphic design, ceramics, film and architecture are covered among the works by Charles and Ray Eames, Richard Neutra and Greta Grossman; pem.org.

April 6 Phoenix Modern Phoenix Home Tour

Part of Modern Phoenix Week, March 28 through April 6, the free Expo runs on Saturday, while Sunday is the home tour; tickets and details at modernphoenix.net.

April 25–27 Culver City Los Angeles Modernism Show & Sale

Dolphin Fairs annual midcentury show; lamodernism.com.

April 26–27 Dallas White Rock Home Tour

MCM and contemporary houses open to tour; whiterockhometour.org.

May 10th Portland, Ore. Mid-Century Modern Home Tour



Pietro Belluschi's restored Burkes House

Sally Painter

Six homes designed by Pacific Northwest architect Pietro Belluschi will be open for tours, including the Burkes House. Tickets on sale in March at RestoreOregon.org.

Through May 25 San Antonio Robert Indiana: Beyond LOVE

This Whitney Museum of American Art survey of the artist's work—best known for his 1966 typographic 'LOVE'—includes 90 paintings, sculptures and other works on paper at the McNay Art Museum; mcnayart.org.



©2013 Morgan Art Foundation (AIFS), New York

Robert Indiana EAT/DIE, 1962, oil on canvas

June 26–29 Lake George, N.Y. Ohana Luau at the Lake

Vendors, music, a live Polynesian show, retro cocktails and food at a historic Tiki Resort; lauuatthelake.com.

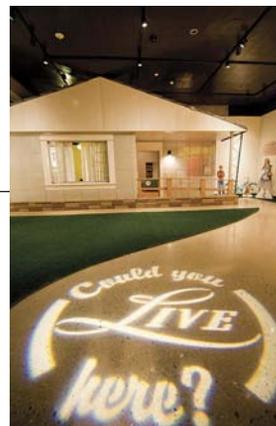
Through October 1 NYC Designing Modern Women, 1890s–1990s

MoMA's exhibition focuses on women's contributions to 20th-century modern design, including a 1952 kitchen by Charlotte Perriand and Le Corbusier, and furniture and other designs by Eileen Gray, Eva Zeisel, Ray Eames, Leila Vignelli and more; moma.org.

Ongoing Columbus, Ohio 1950s: Building the American Dream

Hands-on is encouraged at this exhibition, which

includes a porcelain-steel Lustron home erected inside the Ohio History Center. Visitors can sit on the vintage couch, play a vinyl record and open the kitchen drawers to get a feel for what it was like to live in the compact prefab house. A 1957 Chevy Bel Air, an Airstream trailer,



Courtesy Ohio Historical Society

'50s television programs and midcentury appliances up the ambiance, while other displays address postwar gender roles, housing segregation and popular culture. More at ohiohistory.org/1950s.

resources

Working Class Heroes, pp. 12–18

Hardwood flooring contractor: Minh Pham, Modern Hardwood Floors, Seattle, 206.324.4454 ✖ **Bullet sectional:** Lazar Industries, lazarind.com ✖ **Mies van der Rohe Pavilion chair:** moderncollections.com ✖ **Patio sectional:** ohanawickerfurniture.com ✖ **Artwork:** allpopart.com ✖ **Mobile:** Life & Thread, flensted-mobiles.com ✖ **Range fan:** broan.com

My Favorite Space, pp. 24–26

Credenza & coffee table: Radius Furniture, radiusstyle.com ✖ **Karlstad couch & armchair, Billy bookcases:** ikea.com ✖ **Safavieh Noho slipper chair:** overstock.com ✖ **Oriental Weavers Sphinx Zanzibar rug:** wayfair.com ✖ **Bullet pole lamp:** Lite Source LS-9406PS, amazon.com, et al ✖ **Artwork:** Jetset Retro, jetsetretrodesign.com ✖ El Gato Gomez Arts, elgatogomezarts.com ✖ Robert Atom, theatomicspaceman.com ✖ **Picture rails:** roomandboard.com

Smells Like Team Spirit, pp. 26–39

Designer: Brad Dunning, braddunning.com ✖ **Landscape Designer:** James Dockstader, Laguna Beach, Calif., 949.376.9589 ✖ **Landscape installation:** Eric Stodder, Biosphere, biosphere.biz ✖ **Technical design consultant:** Michael Johnston, 323.512.0239 ✖ **Appliances:** magicchefappliance.com ✖ thermador.com ✖ frigidaire.com ✖ **Wall unit:** Atlas Industries, atlaseast.com ✖ **Desk chair:** Cherner Chair, chernerchair.com ✖ **Leather sofa:** poltronafrua.com ✖ **Bath:** chicagofaucets.com ✖ us.kohler.com ✖ **Other furnishings and finishes vintage or to-the-trade**

Blasts From the Past: Beachy, Funky Ranch p. 43

Kitchen cabinet style: Insert face frame, antique white melamine ✖ **Knobs:** Amerock Mulholland satin nickel 1-1/2" rectangular knobs and 5" center pulls, myknobs.com ✖ **Kitchen backsplash:** Vihara Puka Silk, sonomatilemakers.com ✖ **Counters:** Caesarstone Lagos Blue, caesarstoneus.com ✖ **Appliances:** Stove, convection microwave and warming drawer, vikingrange.com ✖ **Paneled refrigerator,** geappliances.com ✖ **Vinotemp 32-bottle wine refrigerator,** beveragefactory.com ✖ **Sink:** Blanco 15"-deep double sink, blancoamerica.com ✖ **Kitchen lighting:** Mega Bulb Pendant, ylighting.com

Blasts From the Past: Laser Vision, pp. 46–47

Escutcheons and door kits: Jonathan Jarrett, thinkmat@aol.com

Kicking Up the Curb Appeal, pp. 58–62

Architect: James Carballal Architects, jamescarballalarchitects.com ✖ **Contractor:** Griffin Contracting, griffingc.com ✖ **Windows:** Marvin Integrity, marvin.com ✖ **Sliding glass door:** Andersen, andersenwindows.com ✖ **Paint:** Exterior stain, Benjamin Moore Arborcoat ✖ **Front door,** Benjamin Moore Lime Green (2026-10), benjaminmoore.com ✖ **Kitchen cabinets & aluminum backsplash:** violapark.com ✖ **Appliances:** subzerowolf.com ✖ bosch-home.com ✖ liebherr.us/com ✖ xoventilation.com ✖ **Aeros pendants:** rejuvenation.com ✖ **Pierson media console & Frame coffee table:** crateandbarrel.com ✖ **Anson sofa & Gigi chair:** roomandboard.com

coming up



- ◀ Case Study birthplace
- ▶ Restoration in Coral Gables
- ▼ Mainstream minimalism



Plus, an update in Austin, a pink bath worth saving and keeping up kitchen surfaces

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