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# spring 2015

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### cover

A 1960 West Seattle ranch required extensive foundation work to remediate its settling issues and build a new deck. The view from the kitchen includes the dining area with its marble Tulip table, plastic Eames chairs and Nelson bubble lamp, along with hilltop vistas of Magnolia and Bainbridge and Vashon islands. A laminated glass stairwell surround brings needed light to the daylight basement, part of a three-year remodel; story page 44.



# my 2cents

# N

## Talismans

ostalgia is a big part of midcentury design's appeal, whether that's actual memories from our childhood years or more *Mad Men*/Rat Pack fantasies of the awesome olden days. For me, it's remembered objects that can trigger the most powerful trips in the Wayback Machine: The butterfly chair in my parent's stucco warbox in Southern California. The modern sofa they bought in surely the longest and most boring visit to a furniture showroom ever. The hideous brown and orange striped carpeting that refused to wear out.

As I've written before (*My 2 Cents*, Spring 2013), the two-bedroom, one-bath home I grew up in was the first and only house my parents would own. They moved from Irolo Street in Los Angeles out to the distant 'burbs of Sierra Madre (yes, the location for *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*), where the G.I. Bill allowed them to buy a lot and a basic house. I'm sure the purchase was a real stretch for my dad as the sole breadwinner. But they, like so many other families, were just grateful for the opportunity to have a place of their own.

While Jim and I enjoy seeing the homes furnished today with iconic midcentury furniture, my parents' environment was more eclectic. A gable-leg mahogany table and Windsor chairs, a red painted Chinese chest, a Naugahyde club chair—mixed with a few modernish pieces like teak buffets and that sofa, which got at least one DIY reupholstery job. The visit to Fedde's Furniture was long, in part, because such an acquisition was rare on a housepainter's income.

Two childhood talismans popped in my brain recently. One was triggered by a tiny plastic baby doll hung from the cash register of a local teashop. I commented to Jim that I'd had probably a dozen of those as a girl, prompting his question of "What did you do with them?" meaning, What's fun about that? So not a cap gun or Schuco racer.

My flashback was lolling in the butterfly chair, using its sling seat as a giant slide for both the plastic babies and a series of pipe cleaner dolls I'd make with paper baking-cup skirts. Someone showed me how to assemble those and I bet I could still do so in a heartbeat—though the last time I was looking for pipe cleaners in a drugstore, the clerk delivered me to the Drano aisle. But I digress.

My other reliable time transporter is my mom's hammered aluminum Kinney Flavor Seal pot. My dad tended to give my mom such romantic gifts as skillets, vacuums and other household necessities, for which she tried to show enthusiasm. I inherited this 1950s workhorse pot from her and, in our own daughter's youth, it was the go-to popcorn and chocolate pudding maker. It's obviously durable (hello, nonstick), the right size for so many recipes and the thought that my mom touched it—well, there's something about that. Although the Bakelite handle is cracked and it has its share of dings, I'm pretty sure it's among the few things that our daughter looks forward to inheriting.

A takeaway for parents laboring to give their children 'keepsake' memories—you never know what they'll remember and find precious. Instead of the faux-adorable wagon ride through the Christmas tree lot, it might just be the plain pot that spells love 30 years later.



Jim Brown

*Michelle Gringeri-Brown*  
Editor

# atomic ranch®

MIDCENTURY MARVELS

Publisher

**Jim Brown**

Editor

**Michelle Gringeri-Brown**

Art Director

**Nancy Anderson**

Advertising Design

**Carol Flores**

Logo Design

**John Skelton**

Editorial Assistant

**Cheyenne Tackitt**

Web Design

**Josh Tackitt**

Copy Editor

**Marcelle Heath**

Advertising Manager

**Christina Walker**

503.297.5605

atomicranchadvertising@comcast.net

**Publishing Office**

3125 SE Rex St.

Portland, OR 97202-8573

503.771.4171 p 503.771.4172 f

editor@atomic-ranch.com

atomic-ranch.com



facebook.com/groups/friendsfarmag

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# modernwisdom

I am a new subscriber, so I am not sure if you do stories about non-owner-occupied homes. I recently toured the Laurent House in Rockford, Ill. I believe it was the last home Frank Lloyd Wright designed and the only one that was ADA-accessible.



Their link is [laurenthouse.com](http://laurenthouse.com); the residence has been newly restored and would be a lovely home to do a piece on.

Always enjoy your magazine!

**Laura Pittman**

*Thanks for the suggestion, Laura. The Laurent House Foundation kindly shared these photos, and Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent's thoughtful story is explained on the site.*

*We have featured a Usonian or two in past issues, including the Palmer House in Ann Arbor (and some similar designs from other area modernist architects) in No. 36, available at [atomic-ranch.com](http://atomic-ranch.com). The sold-out*

*Summer 2008 issue had a feature on The Gordon House museum in Silverton, Ore., and three other Usonians in Wisconsin that were part of that year's 'Wright and Like' home tour.*

*We also have been pitched on a couple of privately owned Wright homes that were under renovation; we hope to bring one or more to fruition in the coming year.*  
—ar editor

✳ Thank you for creating a magazine that showcases the charm and elegance of midcentury. As I read *My 2 Cents* [Fall 2014], I was reminded that you are located in Portland. I have lived here for six years and am saddened by the emergence of so many McMansions. I applaud the efforts of communities to restore rather than demolish quality period homes. We live in and love the charm of Multnomah Village, but these so-called 'heritage homes' are becoming too common.

And as Georg Sajer in Australia noted in his fall letter, I, too, am overwhelmed with an avalanche of creative thoughts! Our house is a 1971 split-level that had some remodeling done before we moved in. With your magazine to encourage us, we are excited to make some changes. The transformation will be gradual, but we will embrace each step and learn much along the way.

Where does a 1971 home fit in with the midcentury time period? Would it be a post-midcentury?

Thanks again for the first magazine in many years that I have read cover to cover.

**Shawna Hickey**

*Portland, Ore.*

*We consider at least the early '70s as within the mid-century umbrella, and from time to time you'll see an example in our pages. For both Shawna and other readers, send 'late-lovelies' candidates to [editor@atomic-ranch.com](mailto:editor@atomic-ranch.com) for possible inclusion on the refrigerator page.*

—ar editor

✳ My wife and I recently purchased and are in the process of renovating a MCM residence in Ann Arbor,



Mich. While researching midcentury resources, we came across Atomic Ranch and are now subscribers, thanks to a Christmas gift from our daughter, a fellow MCM-lover and architect in Denver.

Another resource we discovered is a2modern.org; the website has been a great source of information for us. Moreover, through a2 we have learned there are many wonderful examples of midcentury residences and other buildings in Ann Arbor, have been able to tour several of them and have become acquainted with other enthusiasts in the area.

If you haven't already done so, you should run an article—why not an entire edition!—about a2, the University of Michigan and how they are all connected through the creation and preservation of great MCM architecture.

Keep up the good work!

**John Mirsky**

*Grace Shackman and Nancy Deromedi, two active members of a2modern, authored the Ann Arbor article in the Winter 2012 issue mentioned on page six. The work of George Brigham, Robert Metcalf, David Osler, Alden Dow and others is featured, while a visit to the group's site is a nice virtual architecture tour.*

—ar editor



\* I wanted to let you know of a great midcentury home tour that we have here in Wheat Ridge, Co. I toured the homes last year and they were all fantastic, as were a lot of the houses in the surrounding neigh-

borhoods. Next time you're in the Denver area, try to find some time to drive around Wheat Ridge; maybe you might find a candidate for future issues.

Love the magazine; keep up the good work!

**Lance Potts**

\* I thought you might find this home interesting; it's currently for sale here in Louisville, Ky. The Realtor's link is: [goo.gl/B7RL4F](http://goo.gl/B7RL4F).

Some amazing features are still in almost-original condition. And what makes the slide show even more fun is that they were able to include professionally shot photos from nearly 50 years ago.

Thought you might enjoy seeing this one!

**Marty Messex**

\* I saw the letter from Bruce Hegna [Summer 2014] mentioning architect Art Troutner. I've included two pictures of a Troutner house my husband and I own in southern Nevada. The first is the exterior taken after a rare snow storm in the Mojave Desert; the second is the great room with a large fireplace that is suspended from the beamed ceiling.



We purchased the house from Mr. Troutner's estate in 2002; he had passed away the year before. In addition to being an architect who designed many unique houses, he was the co-inventor of Trus Joist and held several other patents.

We were told that this was the last house he designed and built for himself, and the only one in Nevada. It is totally off the grid and has many unique

# morewisdom



features, including six patios and floor-to-ceiling windows in each room. The home is powered by solar panels, small wind turbines and a propane generator.

If your publication is interested in learning more about Mr. Troutner, I have contact information for several people who have researched and written about him, plus information on the location of many of the Troutner houses in Idaho. We have visited seven of those, and all are midcentury modern. Our house was built in 1988, but is also MCM.

**Judy Bundorf**

\* I live in a fabulous midcentury modern apartment building. Some of the wonderful things found in my building that you don't see in MC ranches include a built-in phone booth in the lobby, an amazing pool house, floating stairs/entry, a sculptured teak lobby ceiling and, my all time favorite—hatch doors that appear like dog doors in the hallway, one for each apartment for milk/bread delivery that open to a cabinet under the stove top in the kitchen. I can go on and on in praise of the building and additional design elements before I even begin to tell you about the apartments!

**Gail Kramer**

*Brookline, Mass.*

\* I am writing in response to the Spring 2014 letter from David Routh. We, too, have the same GE refrigerator/freezer from 1955. It still runs, and we use it! A GE

appliance expert once told us to never to shut it off; apparently, the shut down and start up is wearing. So some advice when defrosting—keep it running.

Our home was built in 1955 and all of the original appliances still work. We purchased some extra parts for the stove when they were available, just in case.

Parts for the refrigerator are no longer available,

but there is someone in Arizona that refurbishes them.

That means the whole unit has to be freighted to them; let's hope we never have to deal with that!

**Kathy Massonne**

*Fort Wayne, Ind.*



*Speaking of refrigerators, Don Emmite, who wrote about MC small appliances in the Summer 2013 issue, will be showcasing his collection of vintage ads and manuals for major appliances in an upcoming edition. It's sure to be a fun read!*

—ar editor

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## A FIRST HAND ACCOUNT FROM A CLIENT

**Mastery requires absolute perfection.** May I introduce myself as an older fellow that has endured at least 50 realtors in my life, most not hitting a 3 or 4 on a scale of 10.

Keven Stirdivant is a 10. Keven cold called me many years ago. He was kind and direct. There was something in his voice that caused me to re-think selling our home. Keven encouraged me to give him a one time "week end" listing, which began a relationship that has brought immense satisfaction to me, and I hope, to Keven.

Keven sold our home...twice. This is embarrassing for me, but this story will show you the caliber of Keven's character. The first sale I cancelled less than a week prior to close, as personal problems erupted. Keven was unbelievably sincere in taking my call and getting the word to the very disappointed buyer.

The second time Keven sold our home, I cancelled escrow the day before closing, due to a new personal reason. Keven had every right to become "UN-glued" and be furious with me. He was neither. In fact he was so genuinely concerned for my plight that I felt terrible for him. He treated me with more gracious civility than I deserved. He dealt with a genuinely irate commercial professional buyer that really knew how to apply the pressure to Keven, and Keven handled it with dignity. I really appreciated that a man of Keven's substance was on my side...especially, when I did not deserve a person's of Keven's character to be kind to me.

Years went by, but we remained "in touch". Keven's business really took off, but you never knew it by his demeanor. My friend listed and sold his home with Keven in Newport Beach and despite some awkward moments with the buyer that Keven handled beautifully, my friend glows about Keven's capability to find buyers and close the sale.

Awhile back Keven was again on our street, this time handing out flyers to our neighborhood. With him were several determined, elegant, nice young men. They were learning the business from Keven and ate up his every word. They told me when Keven was not around that Keven was the best thing that had happened to them...in their life, as his knowledge was vast and his ability to communicate so clear. They were thrilled to be working and learning from him.

What surprised me about these young men was their ability to relate to me in a genuine, realistic sense, which they said they learned from Keven. It was a shock to feel their sincerity and I kept them around to inquire about how they learned to become engaging. As I have learned from my many years, it is not so much what you know, it is what you do with what you know that matters.

Keven, and his team which at last count seemed to be around 20 real estate experts, leads by example...from his heart. He gets

results because he listens and he cares. And he seems to hire people that want to learn to listen and care.

**" My endorsement of Keven Stirdivant is this: Keven is one of the most ambitious, capable, fair, generous, hard working people you will ever meet. His heart and his talents line up to best serve his clients. While he may look boyish, don't be fooled by his youthful good looks. He has been learning and teaching college level real estate courses for years. He does not sit back and direct; he personally makes 50 phone calls a day and visits many...he trains by example...and he gets results. "**

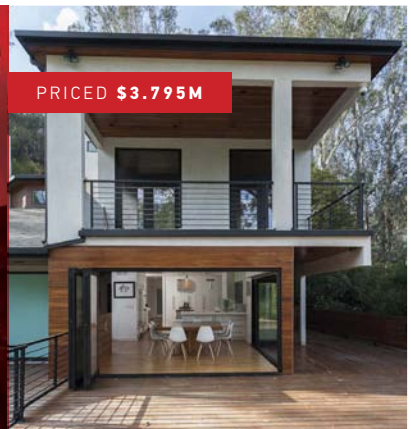
And the best thing about Keven is that he is humble..and has an amazing wife and family.

For my real estate needs the only number I call is Keven's. It should be yours too !

**Dave Thorpe**  
Laguna Beach



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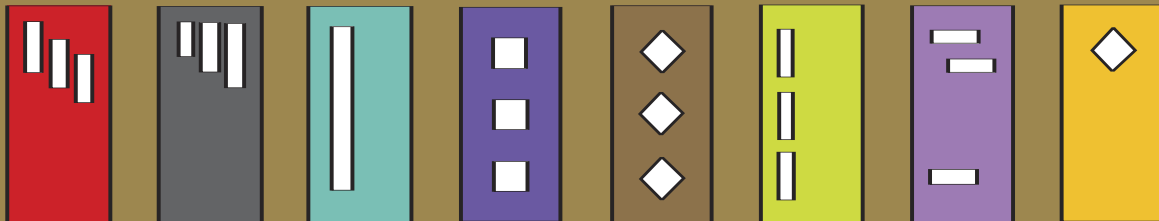


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# Notes from a Remodel Gone Right



It was a rainy Super Bowl Sunday in 1996 when, having searched for a year for the right midcentury modern home, we reached the last house on the list our Realtor had given us. It was a bank-owned property whose price had been lowered recently and hadn't been lived in for 18 months.

A ratty-looking juniper hedge and an oozing sprinkler that looked as if it had been running for months greeted us as we crept around the back of the house. Someone had inadvertently left one of the sliding glass doors unlocked, so we sneaked in and

*text* Brian Van Lenten

*photography* PJ McMullan



made our way through each room. What we faced was dirty, orange shag carpet; glossy, flowered wallpaper; cheap lights dangling from ceiling hooks; and bathrooms that looked like they hadn't been cleaned since Nixon was in office. But after a year of Sundays searching for any MCM home for sale, we knew what to look for and what to ignore.

## Rife with potential

This home had a flow and bones like none we had seen—forget the stale cigarette smell and linoleum-from-hell. As we stood in the entryway, the setting sun managing to work its way through the ribbon-glass windows like some kind of sign—we knew we had finally found it.

'The Darby House' was how it was known in the neighborhood, named for Academy Award-winning composer Ken Darby and his wife, who bought the home in 1961. It was the cheapest house for sale in an upscale neighborhood, so we made a lowball offer (figuring that the bank wasn't sentimental) and it was soon ours.

To make it livable, we needed to replace the carpet, lose the wallpaper and decaying light fixtures, and paint everything. I had been collecting midcentury furnishings since the early 1980s, so items like my Franciscan Starburst dinnerware from 1954 would finally have a proper home. We were now spending Sundays at the Rose Bowl swap meet and retro shops, and managed to score some wonderful signed and dated California artwork, as well as a beautiful Heywood-Wakefield dining room set. To add to the vintage furniture, our friend Jay Novak, who owns Modernica, built us some wonderful repro pieces—a pair of Pierre Paulin Orange Slice Chairs, a Vladimir Kagan 'Cloud' couch and a Isamu Noguchi table.

The focus of the home is on the back yard, with large windows and sliding glass doors, so it was soon obvious that the less-than-pristine landscaping was next on the list. Should we do it ourselves? That could save some bucks! But we had seen Mark Rios' work in a magazine article, and since he was one of the top landscape architects in the city, in 2000 we decided to call him to see about designing our yard.

Mark literally walked around the property for about 15 minutes, then we sat down and he started to go over what he thought would work. We told him that nothing was sacred and that the hodgepodge of messy eucalyptus, redwoods, innocuous shrubs and overgrown junipers



**This home had a flow and bones like none we had seen**





Previous spread: Modernica's Cloud sofa, Slice chair and Noguchi-style coffee table in the living room; over the vintage credenza hangs 'Blue Haze' by William Saltzman from 1959, found at a flea market for \$100. Contractor David Stumfall suggested aluminum cladding on the bottoms of the all the windows and sliding glass doors for a finished look that would mask any unevenness where they meet the concrete patio. Outside, the powder-coated-steel and glass fence was fashioned after one at Craig Ellwood's Case Study House #16 in Bel Air.

Updated frosted-glass louver windows were retained since they were functional and offered privacy for the guest bath. The lap pool has a fishpond outside the living room near the original pierced-concrete block wall.

Opposite, top: The rechromed wall sconce and rock fireplace surround in the den are original to the house, while the new bar cabinet hides the flat screen. "Susan always hated the TV just sitting there when it wasn't being watched, so her idea was to have it slide into the bar. Kasey Mangum, our subcontractor, talked with his cabinet guy, and they came up with a glide rack used on city buses to swap batteries in and out," explains Van Lenten.

Opposite, bottom: The Eames Storage Unit is new, as is the pony-skin butterfly chair, while the coffee table is Heywood-Wakefield. The project painter suggested using aluminum paint on the perforated metal screen between the den and the hallway to tie in with the doors and windows.

In the den, an Eames lounge chair and ottoman teams with a repainted vintage pole lamp and a Cyclone end table from Modernica. The homeowners replaced almost all of the glass to meet California energy requirements; the awning and fixed windows are from Metal Window Corp, while the sliders are Fleetwood. "Having lived with the awning windows now for two years, I have been amazed by their insulation properties and the fact that you can't hear a sound outside when they are closed," says Van Lenten.

could all go—the blank slate approach. We threw some ideas back and forth—Susan suggested we make a section of the lap pool a koi pond separated by pavers, and I moved the placement of French drains from the patio to underneath the Mexican black stones so they couldn't be seen—and within a week the design was in our hands.

## Lesson one: Get a total plan

An architect, whether for the landscape or your home, knows a lot more than you do and can save you a lot of pain and money—like when you find out that your pool would be too close to your neighbor's property line, or that the new drainage now leaves your driveway a swamp after a big rain. Good architects also have a tried-and-true work force, in contrast to hiring an independent pool guy, a hardscape guy and plant-material guy.

Another realization was that the original 1959 electrical panel we nostalgically left in place might be a bit outdated. When we tried to use both a toaster and a new deep-fat fryer at the same time, it blew out all the fuses in the front of the house. The Magic Chef appliances from the 1980s





**We came up with a design to have the television slide into the bar**





were also dying, and the cheap maple veneer cabinets were peeling badly. So we started interviewing—interior designers at first. They clearly did not get it.

One designer wanted to get rid of all the original artwork we had collected and replace it with rococo prints! Another, pointing to the iconic petrified rock fireplace in the den, asked, “You’re not going to keep that, right?” A change of program was in order.

I knew about architect Cory Buckner and her prominent role in the preservation of the Crestwood Hills neighborhood in Brentwood from my membership in the Los Angeles Conservancy. And my partner, Susan Cushing, actually lived in Crestwood Hills in the 1980s. In 2011, we had Cory come over to the house to see if she would be a good fit. She got it. And yes, she had a team already in place.

We realized that this was an opportunity to do things that should have been done in 1959—insulation!—and to improve upon existing things—like expanding the master bath to take advantage of the now-beautiful

yard. Basically, a sensitive remodel to complement our MCM lifestyle was the goal.

## **Lesson two: Do everything at the same time**

We realized if we were going to do this right, it should be done top-to-bottom. Replacing load-bearing walls with glass to let the outside in required additional beams and concrete pylons for reinforcement. Since we were planning to tear apart the ceilings to put in spotlights, we decided to spray foam insulation into all the walls. We also took the opportunity to add a Sonos sound system with speakers in the ceilings and amplifiers in a closet for an uncluttered look. And of course, we installed a new electrical panel to allow us to not only use a toaster and deep-fat fryer at the same time, but anything else we might want to add in.

The original plan was to live in the house while the nine-month remodel was going on. But after talking with Cory and contractor David Stumfall of Palisades Construction, and thinking about living in a nomadic, dust-covered,

A craftsman who'd worked on the Beverly Hills Hotel and other famous eateries in the '50s fabricated the turquoise banquette in 1996, Van Lenten notes. "He said ours was to be his last job." The wall color in the dining room is 'Pink Flamingo,' from Sherwin-William's Suburban Modern historical palette.

## **a sensitive remodel to complement our MCM lifestyle was the goal**

Custom cabinets, concrete-look sheet linoleum on the floor and Compac technological quartz counters in apple green were selected for the new kitchen. The couple chose Thermador appliances for their retro look, and the company threw in the range hood and dishwasher for good measure. The backsplash is London Nacar from Porcelanosa, and a Jackson Pollock-esque Plexiglas door slides open to reveal the ironing board; display shelves under the cooktop hold Franciscan Starburst dinnerware.





plastic sheet-wrapped enclosure with a microwave for the duration, we realized that there was no way we were staying there. We found a vacation rental in the Hollywood Hills, which was not only fully furnished, but included all utilities. It was a month-to-month rental, which is ideal if work takes longer than planned (it did). We highly recommend a vacation rental for any extensive remodel.

As readers of *Atomic Ranch* we embrace the MCM ideal, but we live in 2015 and must deal with the codes and regulations of modern-day construction. For instance, I was hoping for Case Study-like louvers, but that was not to be here in California—insufficient insulation properties! So we opted for awning windows from Metal Window Corp., a practical and attractive compromise. Placement of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, a certain percentage of fluorescent lighting and where to situate the air conditioning and laundry vents are examples of things that need to be factored into an overall design. We repeat, having a complete plan is operative here.

Likewise, a good working relationship with both architect and contractor is essential to meeting one's goals. With Cory, David and subcontractor Kasey Mangum always accessible, we were able to make the project go



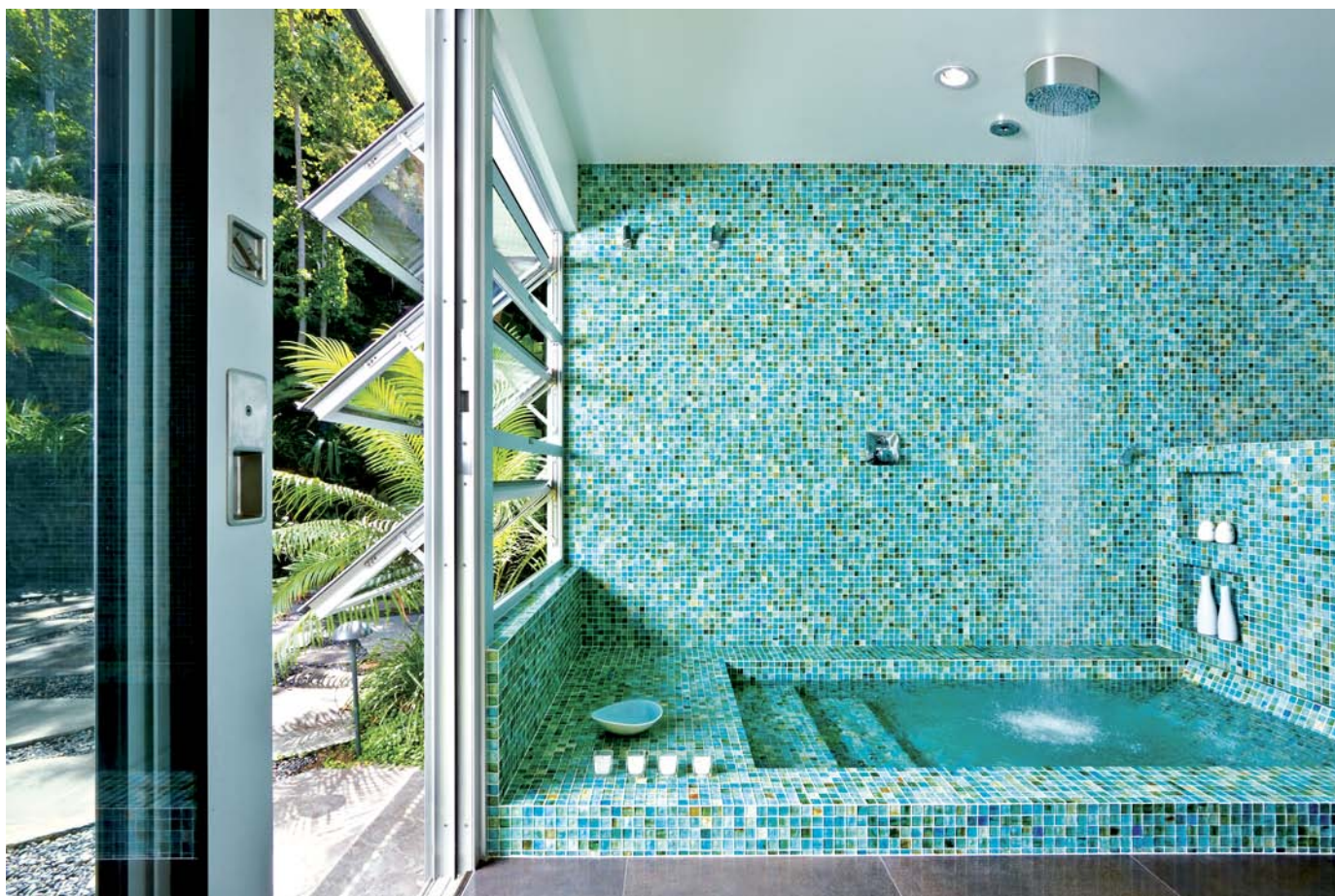


'Holiday Turquoise' paint focuses your eye on the display wall in the living room, with the pond in the foreground.

Behind the clerestory windows of the carport is Van Lenten's workshop, a must-have he put on architect Cory Buckner's program.



## We expanded the master bath to take advantage of the now-beautiful yard.



smoothly, downtime was minimized and it allowed for constructive discussion and timely alterations if we thought a new approach was better than an earlier one.

For instance, coming up with a design to have the television slide into the bar when it wasn't being used was a great collaboration. In addition, the time we spent doing our homework before the project began, lining up all the appliances, tile, flooring, etc., was integral to keeping things on schedule. We now have the perfect home in which to enjoy our midcentury lifestyle. ✨

Resources page 73

For more on Crestwood Hills and Cory Buckner's work, we recommend 'Mutual Admiration Society' in issue No. 39, available at [atomic-ranch.com](http://atomic-ranch.com).

The new master bath has swathes of glass mosaic tile, with porcelain tile on the floor over radiant heating. Cory Buckner's solution for divergent opinions on the need for a bathtub—Van Lenten has no use for them, while Cushing thought it would be good for resale—was a Roman tub with a filler spout near the ceiling rain head.

*Susan Cushing is director of scientific affairs at a global healthcare company, while Brian Van Lenten is on the cardiology faculty at UCLA. He grew up in a 1955 New Jersey split-level and collects vintage watches and fountain pens, first editions of modern American literature and anything MCM that will add further charm to their home. See more of PJ McMullan's photography at [pjmcmullan.com](http://pjmcmullan.com).*





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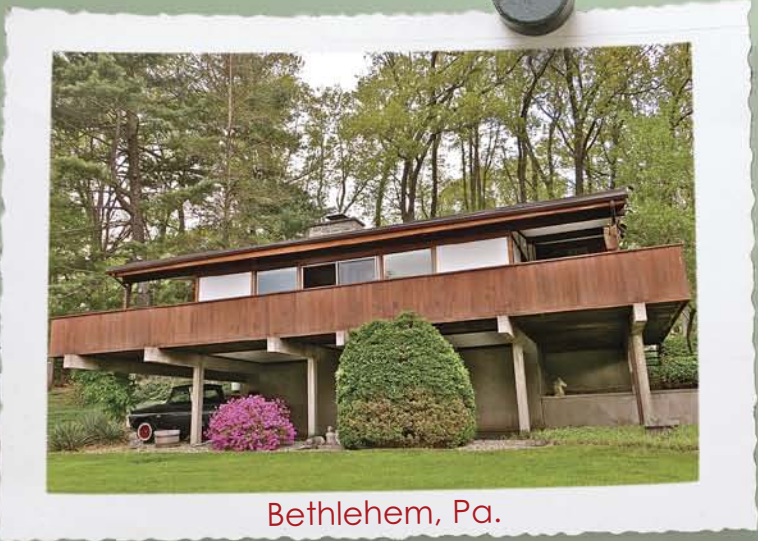


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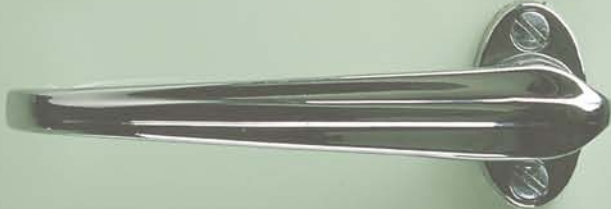
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Bethlehem, Pa.



Montgomery, Ala.



New Westminster, B.C.

# home page

## Bethlehem, Pa.

My wife & I have been admiring this home since the mid-'70s, which is just around the corner from our old farmhouse. When the 95-year-old owner decided to move to one-level living, we jumped at it. The home was designed by the original owner's nephew in 1964 and built on a hillside the following year. It has four levels, the first two being poured concrete. The second two levels feature original white oak floors, a floor-to-ceiling double-sided granite fireplace and an amazingly open floor plan for the time. We're having a ball decorating with period MCM furniture, etc. The funny part is the original owners had it decked out very traditionally—go figure. Did I mention that the woodpeckers love the redwood siding?

**Gregory & Rory Maruschak**

## Montgomery, Ala.

We have owned our 1967 tri-level since 2005. Originally, there was a carport where the bay window of our den is now. Our neighbor, who has lived across the street since it was built, told us that a previous owner enclosed it. The front entry takes you into a living room/dining room combination and the kitchen; eight steps up from the entrance hall are three bedrooms and two baths. Eight steps down from the kitchen lead to the den and a laundry room with French doors out to the replacement carport and back yard. There are original hardwood floors on the top two levels and laminate wood flooring in the den. I love Atomic Ranch; it's the only magazine I read from front to back!

**Sandra & John Rooks**

## New Westminster, B.C.

Our home is a cute, little two-bedroom, post-and-beam rancher in the Massey Heights area 10 minutes from Vancouver. Built in '58, it has tongue-and-groove walls and ceilings, a big stone wall and lots of windows all around. The thing we love the most is that it is still all original. The walls and ceiling have never been drywalled over, the kitchen still has a handy pass-through window and the cabinets their original sliding doors. There are lots of original '60s ball lights throughout, and the house has a slate entryway.

**Clay & Heather Welters**

We're running low on great homes; 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.

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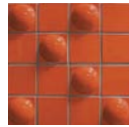
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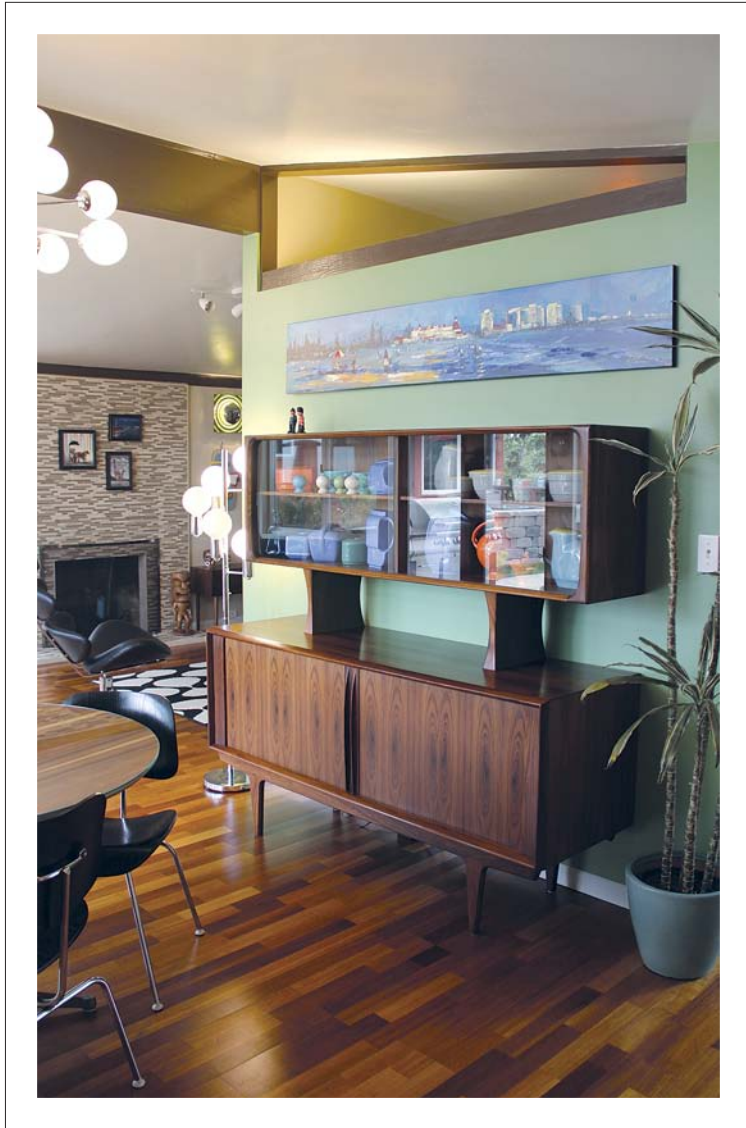
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# my favorite space:

## Vista, Calif.



**W**hen we were looking for a home, one of our must-haves was that it could not be a cookie-cutter house. We lucked out and found a less-well-known Cliff May tract called Vista Del Loma, made up of about 100 houses built between 1954 and 1955. Located on top of a rolling hill, some homes, like ours, have slight ocean views on a clear day.

We originally were drawn to the interior's open, airy feeling. Even though it isn't the biggest, it lives much larger than its 1,125 square feet. At first we furnished with hand-me-downs—what I like to call our parents' style of 1970s to '90s furniture. It wasn't until 2011, when we discovered that the original plumbing had given way to a slab leak, that we decided to embark on a major renovation and sell off almost all of our furnishings, starting from scratch and adhering more to the period of the house.

The thrill of the hunt was on! One of the first pieces we purchased was a round Eames rosewood dining room table with an aluminum base from Klassik, a MCM store in downtown San Diego. The dining room space is small, and when we saw this table we just knew it would work perfectly; now we just had to find some chairs. We headed down the street to Boomerang for Modern, another midcentury store. Owner David Skelley had four black vintage Eames bent-plywood chairs that were his personally that he needed to part with. While in the store, a vintage Danish rosewood credenza and hutch caught our eye; we wasted no time and picked this piece up also.

We started browsing online sites for vintage items to fill the hutch. A grey and yellow Hall china refrigerator dish on Etsy would be our first piece. A few weeks later, my husband saw a listing for a complete Hall set, so we packed in the car and drove 225 miles round-trip. My husband always jokes that he is the only man he knows who would



drive over 200 miles for a china set. Since then we have found some amazing Westinghouse water pitchers and more refrigerator dishes in many different styles and colors.

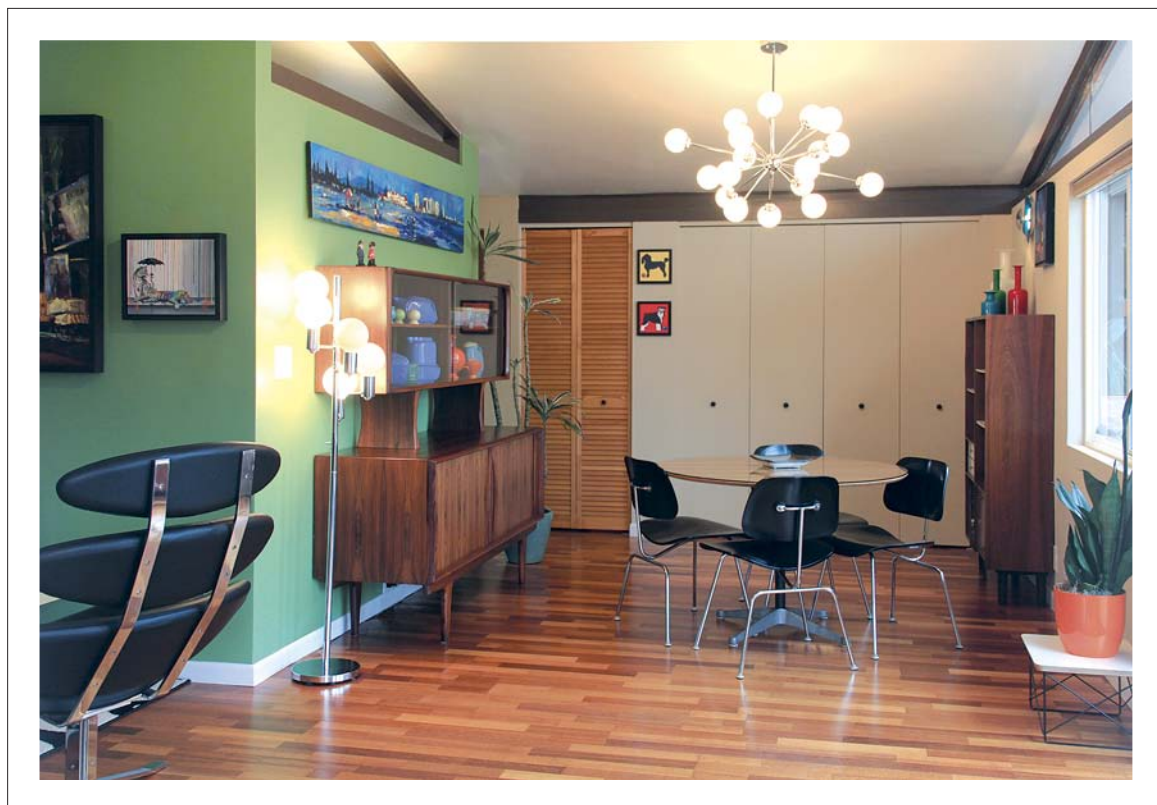
All that was left now was a small space on the opposite wall that at first we weren't quite sure what to do with. After a few laps through Klassik, a Danish-style shelving unit caught our interest. We were drawn to the contrasting white shelves and the very narrow silhouette. This now gave us a chance to look for more vintage display pieces! We decided to head out to the Palm Springs Modernism show that year and start our hunt there. An emerald green Holmegaard Kastrup vase was the perfect piece to begin a new collection.

The only thing that remained was to find a piece of art for the narrow space over the hutch. At EC Gallery we discovered the perfect contemporary piece: a painting of Coronado Beach in San Diego by Michael Flohr. And for the very final touch in the room, we painted the wall behind the hutch green to add a pop of color.

We always joke that it might be a good thing that the house isn't any bigger than it is, which keeps the collecting under control as much as possible... ☯

**Kristin Jankel & David Sawyer**

Resources page 73



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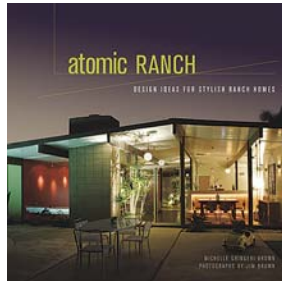
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# atomicbooks

From the team that brings you AR magazine



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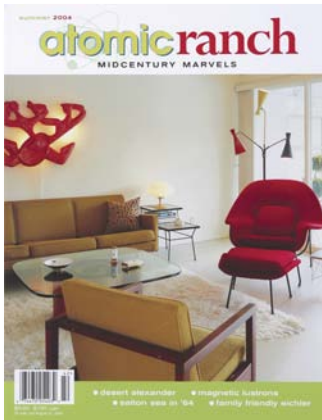
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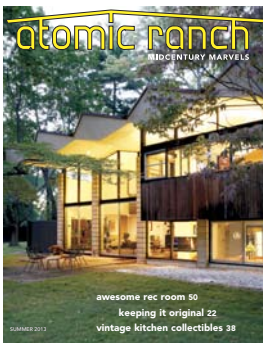
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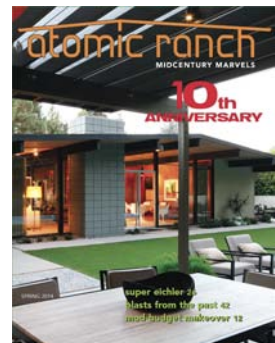
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*text* Melissa Riche  
*photography* Jim Riche

In early 2012, I was sitting in our rented Hollywood apartment reading about the opening of Sunnylands estate in Rancho Mirage, a magical, modernist place designed by A. Quincy Jones in the '60s for Walter Annenberg (founder of *TV Guide* and ambassador to the UK) and his wife, Leonore. I suddenly realized that I'd never thought of Rancho Mirage as a destination for midcentury modern architecture. But if it was good enough for the Annenbergs, maybe it was good enough for us?

# Ranch-O Mirage







Previous spread: Tamarisk Ranchos' acreage includes date palms backed by the San Jacinto mountains.

Above: The authors' home has exterior lighting and a doorknob from Rejuvenation, while the front door is a Crestview. Opposite: Neighbors Debra and John Bissell have owned their elongated-gable home for 11 years. Their living room epitomizes the walls of windows, rock fireplaces and views enjoyed by residents. The lighting and fans originated from John's work with Ron Rezek Lighting.

Our search for an affordable midcentury home had previously been in nearby Palm Springs. We'd seen lots of houses, but those in our budget were all too close to the growing Palm Springs airport and therefore ruled out by my aversion to noise.

I ran to my computer to look up homes for sale in Rancho Mirage. Not many popped up, but two caught my eye, both in Tamarisk Ranchos, built in 1958. One was furnished with great style: ivory shag carpet, comfortable sofas, brightly colored artwork and stylish chrome floor lamps.

I found a blog by midcentury modern Realtor Ralph Haverkate with a short video about Tamarisk Ranchos. It explained that the community was originally designed by architect William Krisel and built by Lou Halper's Devon Construction Company, which developed the nearby Tamarisk Country Club. Groucho Marx was one of the original residents, followed by Barbara Sinatra. (The story goes that Frank bought Groucho's house for Barbara before they were married so that she could have a bolt-hole from his home on Tamarisk Country Club when his mother, Dolly, was in town.) Other famous residents at Tamarisk Ranchos were film producer Lawrence Weingarten (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*) and Hy Raskin, who ran John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign.

Besides its affordability, a big appeal for us was the fact that it was a community of

## The Tamarisk Ranchos community was originally designed by architect William Krisel

only 16 homes built around a swimming pool. Two days later, we met up with Ralph, who took us to see other properties, but saved the best for last.

An unusual feature of Tamarisk Ranchos is that all homes face inward toward the community gardens; from the street, all you see are hedges and garages. Each house has its own unique look, with different roof styles, fireplaces and color schemes—a









Clockwise from left: All three Tamarisk Ranchos roof lines are seen in these examples: An elongated-gable with decorative lattice; a side-gable house sequentially owned by Groucho Marx and Barbara Sinatra; and a butterfly roof model that boasts new double-pane aluminum windows and an exterior-wall chimney.

pleasant change from the homogeneous colors of most MCM desert developments.

Built in a date palm grove that was thinned out for the development, the tract still has 88 mature palms, as well as grapefruit, lemon, kumquat, tangerine and orange trees. As we walked around, birds flew in and out of the bougainvillea, lantana and hibiscus; we knew this was the place.

The floor plans are all similar, most around 2,000 square feet with three bedrooms and baths—quite a luxury back in 1958, as was the redwood construction. When the homes were owned by Hollywood's finest, many built a maid's room in the garage, which gave the help direct access to the kitchen and the third bath. Kitchens originally had sliding doors and pass-throughs so that cooks could do their work without interfering with the partying going on in the rest of the house.

In most of the residences, living space was later expanded by annexing part of the front terrace, and every home except one has a river rock or brick fireplace. (Legend has it that the

different roof designs and material combinations are because the developer was experimenting with looks for later Tamarisk Country Club residences, which continued to be built in the '60s and '70s.) Best of all, the original look and style of each Rancho home has remained intact without changes to the rooflines or inappropriate additions ever since.

Our home search took us to the cheaper of the two Tamarisk Ranchos homes on the market. First impressions weren't good. It was a bit of an eyesore from the front, with an ugly, dark-stained wood pergola covering the front terrace and obscuring half the house. Gold carriage lamps and pink stained-glass and gold curlicues on the front door defined the entry. The interior was an homage to builder-boring finishes: cheap floor tiles, 'Swiss Coffee' paint everywhere, plastic vertical blinds, a fireplace painted baby-poop-brown, along with cheap white lacquer cabinets and granite tile counters in the kitchen. Neither 'charming' nor 'authentic' sprang to mind.



## Local Treasures

**T**amarisk Ranchos is surrounded by million dollar homes lining Palm View Road, also known as the third fairway of the Tamarisk Country Club. Walks and bike rides are always a pleasure for architecture fans; in addition to the Krisel homes in the area, the landmark 1960 Leo Maranz (the creator of Tastee Freez) House, with its dramatic gull-wing roof is only half a block away. Its sister home—both designed by Val Powelson—the 1957 Gummo Marx House, is just around the corner.

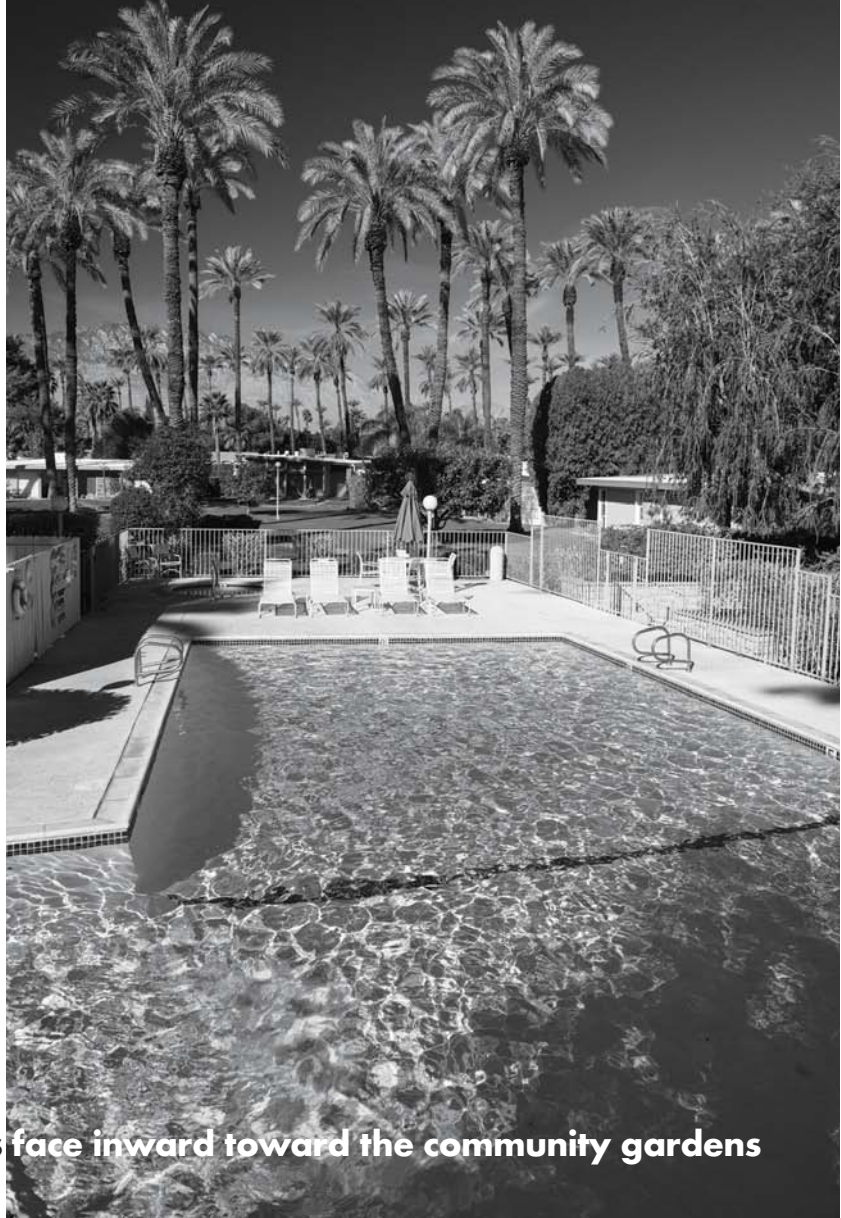
Strolling down Palm View, you walk past several William Cody homes, instantly recognizable from their stacked brick and square, flat lines; at the end you come to Cody Court, where a group of residences designed by the architect sit adjacent to the Tamarisk Country Club. Across the way is Marx Road, and looking over the fairway you can see the top of Frank Sinatra's house. A short bike ride away is Harpo Marx's Wallace Neff house, one of the few midcentury-style homes Neff designed near the end of his career. •

Clockwise from below:

The 1960 Maranz residence, designed by Val Powelson and built by Robert Marx, Gummo's son, has a hyperbolic paraboloid roofline hovering over its 3,150 square feet. Cody Court from architect William Cody circa 1970. The 1957 Gummo Marx House, also designed by Powelson and built by Robert Marx.



The 16 Tamarisk Ranchos homes share the pool and gardens on the 3.5-acre site.



## All Tamarisk Ranchos homes face inward toward the community gardens

The two main bathrooms continued the theme: standard thermofoil white cabinetry topped with creamy-colored, molded fake-marble sinks. There was one original bathroom in all its '50s pink glory, but it was forlorn, unloved. The 12" white floor tiles in the bathrooms continued into the two larger bedrooms, so that they felt like operating theaters. The rest of the house had 18" ceramic floor tiles in the finest shade of neutral.

Given the proximity to the San Andreas Fault and the age of the plumbing, many MCM slab houses in the desert suffer the dreaded pipe burst, as had ours. When this happens, the owners are often away and as the water gushes in the slab, a big hole appears. This had happened when our property was first on the market, with the result that the owners decided to do the cheapest refurb job possible—hence the finishes.

In spite of these shortcomings, the home did have some character and even a few original features. The other house for sale was exactly the same style, but beautifully furnished, complete with a built-in bar behind the entry. We made offers on both, ending up with the cheaper, contractor-boring home but have delighted in making it more midcentury.

We moved the front door and replaced it with a Crestview model painted deep orange, took out the straggly hedge and put in desert landscaping, and repainted in subtle, contemporary grays and taupes. With our ugly pergola gone and the carriage lamps and white floor tiles now a thing of the past, and the brown fireplace painted a crisp white, it didn't take a lot to bring the character back to our home.

We think we now have the perfect house and the best view. We look out on to Groucho's old home, and our friends across the way have Lawrence Weingarten's former place, complete with Elizabeth Taylor's bar cart, an original kitchen and vintage baths. Our neighbors are delighted that we have removed the one eyesore from the community and restored the look that it should have had all along. ✿

*The Riches moved to Rancho Mirage full time in 2013. Melissa is a freelance writer and PR consultant specializing in interiors, architecture and home decor; her website is [greatplacela.com](http://greatplacela.com). Jim graduated with a BFA from Rochester Institute of Technology and has worked at Broadcast Arts and Digital Domain; see more of his work at [jimriche.com](http://jimriche.com).*

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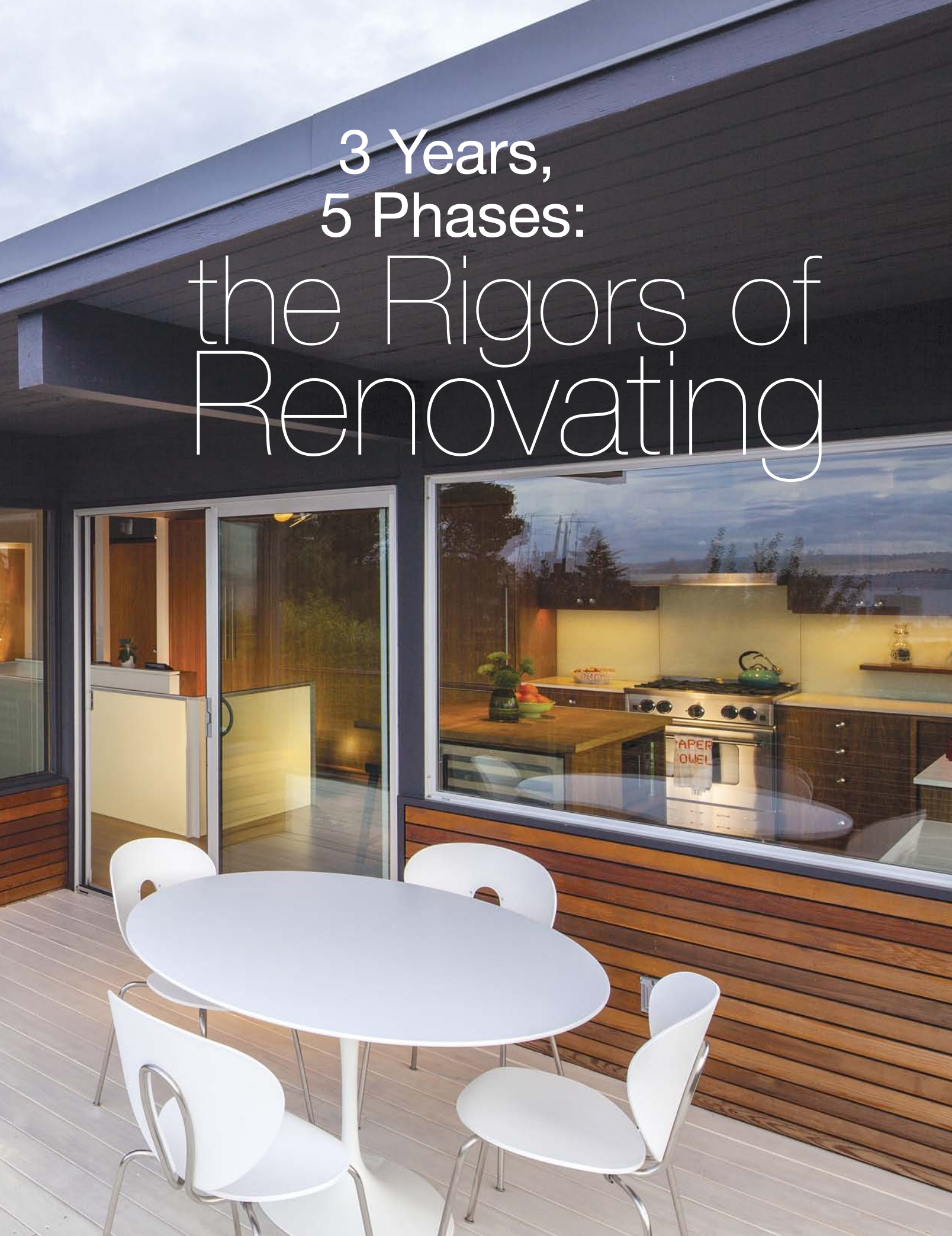
# The Hideaway

a classic palm springs modern oasis



*text* Michelle Gringeri-Brown  
*photography* Jim Brown

3 Years,  
5 Phases:  
the Rigors of  
Renovating



**W**hen Ben Farrow and Amy Trulson moved from their condo into a ranch in West Seattle in 2009, they knew they were looking at a boatload of work. That 40 percent of their budget would be spent on unseen infrastructure must have come as a bit of an unwelcome surprise, though. But as Trulson explains, “My dad and uncle were contractors, my brothers are contractors, my cousin is a contractor; we had as many people as we could come over to ask, ‘OK, what is the reality of this thing?’ My dad said plan on spending a couple of hundred thousand dollars between now and five years from now.”

Ow. With a price tag like that, they definitely needed to spread out the cost over multiple years.

The couple hunted for just a month before buying the 1,800-square-foot 1960 home. “Anything midcentury would have sufficed; I grew up in that type of house,” Trulson says. “This home had everything in terms of the bones: the flat roof, the big windows overlooking a slope—that bumped it up a notch for us. Ben was shocked I liked this house so much because you could tell it was going to take a lot of time, love and energy to fix it up. It was the best house for us but not in the best of condition.”

With the help of friends, Trulson—who works for Microsoft—and Farrow, an engineer, spent eight weeks cleaning, removing brass fireplace inserts and numerous fluorescent light shelves, ripping out dingy carpeting and painting the interior. They also took down a wall separating the kitchen from the living/dining area. Where carpet removal exposed a plywood subfloor, they installed carpet tiles and moved in, knowing there was a lot of tumult ahead.

## Slippery Slope: the Exterior

The cantilevered deck that they inherited off the kitchen was rotting and, combined with the weight of a lower patio, was exacerbating settling issues in the northwest corner of the house. The solution was to embed 2" tripod pin piles into the foundation, patio and the footings of new posts that would support a larger, rectilinear deck—that was Phase One.

“The engineer came out to determine how far down they needed to go to keep the house from settling further,” Trulson says. “The contractor drove in 30 pins 15' deep, then covering each with an exposed steel brace bolted to the foundation and existing patio.”

Later in the project, the couple would need to address leveling the floors and whether the sagging corner should be jacked up to make it square—which could lead to other issues like cracked windows and doors that bind.

Phase Two focused on the garage: “The previous owner enclosed the original carport with T1-11 siding but without a sill, so it was completely rotted,” she explains. “We rebuilt the garage with proper siding and sill plates, and new clerestory windows.”

When the overgrown plants flanking the front walkway were removed, Farrow and Trulson realized the yellow exterior paint job didn't extend behind the shrubs. But windows—Phase Three—were next, so they lived with a funky exterior for the time being.

## I Can See Clearly, Now

“Our large, fixed windows were single-pane, with storms on the outside. They were cloudy and the rest were failing,” Trulson says. The couple chose to replace all of the glass on the main floor with double-pane, frameless units secured by dark-brown painted wood trim.

For the sliding glass door from the kitchen to the deck, and some operable units in



Previous spread: An expanded fir deck with ipe handrails and stainless steel cabling, along with cedar siding under the windows, update the exterior of this daylight ranch. The outdoor furnishings include a Saarinen table and Globus chairs, with a red Emu Ivy Pouf designed by Paola Navone between the Adirondack chairs.





The newly rebuilt garage and the bedroom wing dominate the street view of the Alki/Admiral neighborhood home. A standard paneled aluminum garage door was upgraded with a black rain screen and 1" x 4" cedar planks.







Previously, there was a wall where the white beam is, with kitchen doorways on both sides of the stairwell. Now one can dine at the Saarinen marble table and Eames chairs, hang with the chef or relax near the hearth, all in the same room. New ceiling outlets allowed for both recessed can lights (page 51) and various styles of Nelson bubble lamps in multiple rooms.

The Magna Design couch reupholstered in Maharam Pebble wool has artwork by Michael A. Knutson hanging above it. Beyond the two Sapient bookshelves is a Geneva sound system, and beyond that is the front door. The space was unified with a mixture of rift-sawn and quartersawn white oak hardwood.





The appliance placement is similar to the old kitchen, but the homeowners lost some storage when the room was opened up to the living area. Custom walnut cabinetry, butcher block and 3/4"-thick PentalQuartz honed counters, along with back-painted glass backsplashes, were the surfaces the homeowners chose for their new version. The dishwasher is a Bosch, while the wine fridge is a U-Line and the faucet a Blanco Culina. To the left of the BlueStar range and the Vent-A-Hood is a walnut-clad Liebherr fridge. The Tibetan barstools were recently painted orange to match other accents in the room, like the trim around the glassware storage drawers.

A sandstone fireplace surround (similar to one in an Ira Cummings home featured in no. 21) is accented by furnishings that include a 1969 couch and armchairs handed down in the family, an unmarked ottoman and a Sapien bookstand. Pop art and an Eames leg splint bookend the hearth, while the pendants are Nelson ball lamps.

the kitchen, living room and bedrooms, aluminum frame Milgards were the choice. "We couldn't imagine anything but aluminum sliders aesthetically," she says.

"Due to the settling, we had to determine what to make square and what to just leave as [typical] of an old house," Trulson continues. "One new window had to be made in a parabolic shape because of the slope in that corner. When we finally got to leveling the floor, we had the option to jack

up that corner to make it 'perfect.' We determined our money would be better spent elsewhere, and that was a good decision—no one can even tell today."

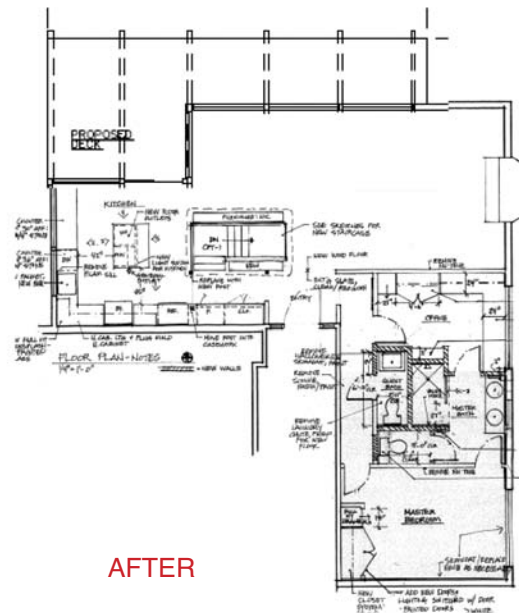
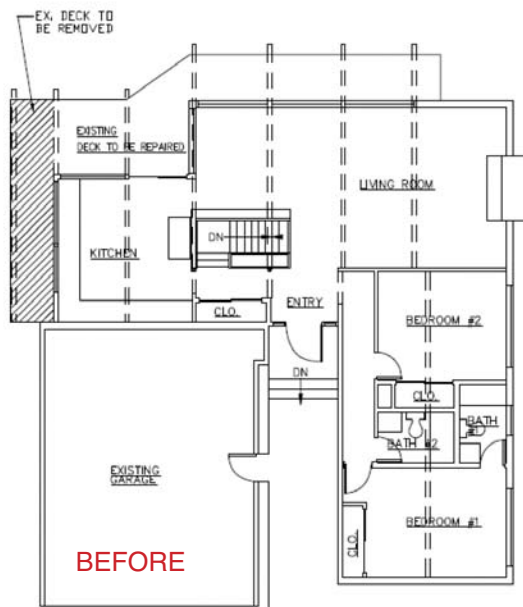
After the windows were in, the exterior was painted charcoal and welcoming touches like an Eichler doorknob escutcheon on the front door, new house numbers, lighting and a modern mailbox were installed. Phase Four also included a garage door facelift fabricated by Forest Park Builders.

## Phase Five—Big Gulp

The couple had a list of quirks and issues that they wanted to address on the main floor. One was the dark, paneled staircase to the daylight basement, where they were keen to bring additional light. "There were no ceiling lights anywhere, the bathrooms were tiny and, while everything was technically functional, we wanted to clean up the look and make it modern," Trulson recalls. They contemplated keeping the original kitchen cabinets, but instead decided on modern closing mechanisms and adding an island.

The scope of the remodel—kitchen, baths, bedrooms—caused the couple to move back to their condo for the three-month duration. And there was a bit of budget creep: "We started to do the thing that happens on most renovations where you like what you like and are willing to spend just a little bit more to get that. All of a sudden that becomes five





The guest bath is clad floor to ceiling with 1" Daltile Keystone mosaics in a random pattern of gray, red, white and 'waterfall blue.' The Kohler vessel sink and Axor faucet sit on a custom maple-veneer vanity made by Bellan Shopworks, like the rest of the new case goods in the home.

In the enlarged master bath, the cabinetry and counters are repeats from the choices in the kitchen, while the floor is Pental Brazilian black slate, similar to the entry hallway. An Artemide Basic Strip light is mounted on the wall mirror.

A new birch solid-core door harmonizes with the clear-maple cabinetry and the oak floors. Orange and white (off camera) Pure Design nightstands and the white Eames Eiffel-base chair are the only furniture beyond the Modernica Case Study bed; these Nelson lamps are the 'cigar' shape.

The second bedroom has both new custom storage units and sleek work surfaces, making it capable of reverting to a bedroom or accommodating a home office. A Tech Lighting Cirque LED fixture is on the ceiling.

things," she admits. Today, the master bedroom has a wall of custom storage, and both of the baths were gutted and redone. A second bedroom is now slightly smaller and functions as an office.

Trulson and Farrow had about 60 percent of the details and resources pre-chosen, while general contractor Michael Bellan of Bellan Construction, supplied other ideas and a cadre of talented subs. Light-transmitting laminated glass now wraps the stairwell and forms the kitchen backsplash,

and Bellan Shopworks built all of the cabinetry in the baths, kitchen and bedrooms. "We really liked that they had their own cabinetry shop so we could do some details that riff off [elements] we'd seen from custom cabinetmakers; that was enticing," says Trulson.

Keeping the unpainted tongue-and-groove ceilings was a top priority. "We had to figure out a way to get recessed lighting into the original car decking. When we replaced the roof, this was our chance—except that the depth of the wood ceiling, with new insulation and roofing, offered no space for standard can lights," she explains. "We had to source the lowest-profile cans we could find and build boxes around each light in order to have enough depth. The contractor was able to insulate and lay the new roofing over the boxes."

The household experienced little in the way of construction drama—except for one incident that's still fresh in Trulson's memory. "The thing I wasn't prepared for was how nasty your house looks. It's your home and it just seems trashed when they're in there," she says. "I came over one day to look, and they had ripped the roof off and put tarps up, but there was rain coming in at 10 different places, leaking through the vents into the walls downstairs where our stuff was stored. I walked downstairs and there was 2" of water. I almost lost it. But things dry out and we moved on."

The length and cost of their experience didn't deter the couple from going forward on a whole new level. A chipper email filled us in on the year since their home was photographed: "We do have some new things [to report]! We remodeled our downstairs bedroom, bathroom and laundry room and are waiting for one wall covering to get done in a couple of weeks; I can send photos..."

Resources page 73

# FIAT Keeps the Spirit of MCM Alive

text BJ Killeen

photography Scott Killeen/Team Killeen

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Dalla **"500"** alla **"nuova 500"**.



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While many automotive manufacturers offer special-edition models commemorating their 25th or 50th year in production, leave it to Fiat to celebrate a 57th milestone. Actually, for Fiat it makes the most sense: In 1957, the company brought to market the Fiat Nuova 500, a vehicle designed to provide Italians an affordable means of transportation right after World War II. Economical and practical, the Nuova 500 was under 10' long and less than 4.5' wide. The model had a good, long run, with almost four million sold during 18 years of production.

To tip its hat to the 500 that started it all, Fiat USA has introduced the 2014 Fiat 500 1957 Edition. It features a lot of styling cues reminiscent of the original, such as unique retro colors (it's available in white, light blue or light green Verde Chiaro), painted wheels, a white roof for a two-tone look and even a retro key fob.

Inside, the 1957 Edition sports a classic brown/white leather interior with white plastic on the dash and a hand-wrapped leather steering wheel. Other features include automatic air conditioning, Bluetooth hands-free connectivity for your phone, a USB port, AM/FM/SiriusXM satellite radio, steering wheel audio controls, dual cup holders and 50/50 split-fold seats that provide extra room if the 9.5-cubic-foot cargo area isn't enough to hold all your thrift-shop treasures. Gotta love a car that looks retro but has all the modern conveniences.

The best news is that Fiat's engine for the 1957 Edition is considerably more powerful than the 13-horsepower, two-cylinder engine from the original model. The 101-horsepower mated to a five-speed manual transmission gets 31 mpg in the city and an impressive 40 mpg on the highway. During our test drive, we saw 28 mpg, but we'll admit to having an extremely heavy right foot.

The suspension features sport tuning to make it a bit more fun to drive than the stock 500 Lounge trim, which is the basis for this special-edition Fiat. We also loved the fact that you can park this little guy anywhere, thanks to its diminutive—albeit bigger than the original—size.

The Fiat is fun to drive, looks great and doesn't have a sticker price that will make you cry. A tricked-out version will run \$21,900, which may not match the \$303 equivalent price tag from 1957, but with all the safety features, the extra performance and the envious looks you're going to get, this Fiat 1957 Edition will make a nice addition to any MCM driveway or carport. ☼

*BJ and Scott Killeen (Team Killeen) have been writing about and photographing cars for more than three decades. BJ is a former editor at Motor Trend, and Scott worked with publisher Jim Brown and AR art director Nancy Anderson in another life. Their favorite number is 57; both were born in 1957, just like the Fiat.*



Safety features and options include multiple airbags, traction control, electronic stability control, heated front seats, rear park assist and auto-dimming rearview mirror.

Vintage image courtesy FCA

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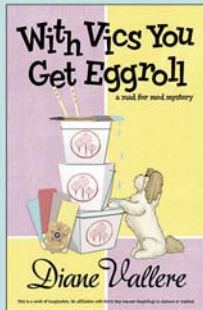
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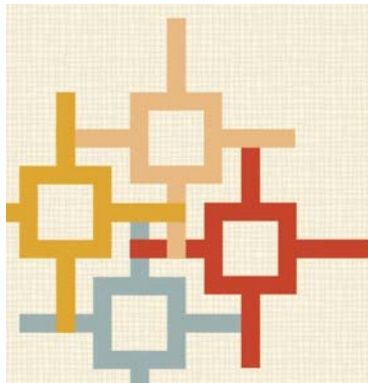
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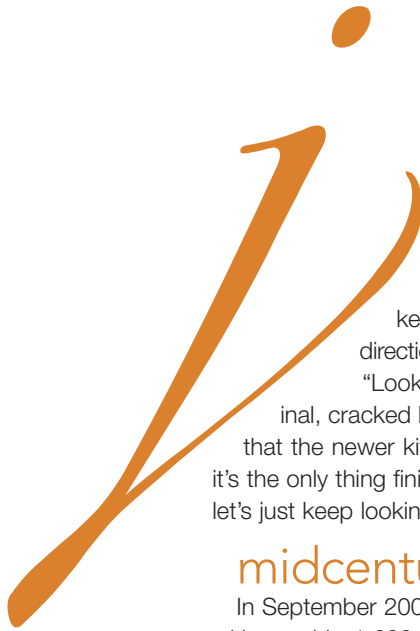


# Dazed but not confused

Making  
like a  
tortoise guides  
an Eichler  
renovation

*text & photography* Blaine Siler

Living room furnishings include a lounge chair, ottoman and red LCW, all designed by the Eameses, while a collection of Abaca Grainware fiberglass bowls sits on the Noguchi coffee table. Two Jonero popcorn wall hangings are in hall, and the Tulip table is a reissue. The refinished teak credenza houses an early-'70s Marantz stereo and the homeowner's LP collection, while other elements include a Tizio lamp, Bose speakers on tulip stands and tile art by Maurice Chalignac.



umping out of my Realtor's Cadillac before it had come to a complete stop, I exclaimed, "Look—it's a midcentury modern *Grey Gardens!*" Peeling off the stack of city ordinance violations taped to the home's lockbox to get at the key, I fell instantly, madly in love while my Realtor stared off in the direction of the decaying green pool, seeming lost and confused.

"Look at this wall of glass! Look at these beams! Look—an original, cracked ball light! I am home!" She literally winced when I explained that the newer kitchen would be the first thing I would rip out. "But Blaine, it's the only thing finished in this entire house. I think this home is too far gone; let's just keep looking."

## midcentury goggles

In September 2009, I took possession of the four-bedroom, two-bath ranch with roughly 1,600 square feet—a Jones & Emmons model #1184 Eichler. Foreclosed, neglected and unappreciated, I felt this house simply needed my dedication, love and attention. I work in furniture manufacturing for Berkeley Mills and manage their finish shop, so I'm pretty handy.

Nearly all of my savings went to the down payment and impulsive midcentury furniture purchases while in escrow, so I knew after that I'd have to prioritize. I decided I would restore this home within a strict budget, avoid using credit and do it the right way, in the right order. It only took a few weeks to know what most needed my attention.

In the Bay Area of California, it rains mostly in late fall and winter. The inspector passed the roof off as 'water tight' in his report, but from both the dank smell that filled the home and the stains between the boards of the ceiling, I figured that might not be the case. During the first rain, I started with just a vintage Pyrex bowl catching the water from a leak in the kitchen, and ended up using every bowl and bucket I owned to get through that storm. The next day I started shopping for tarps and a new mop.

Researching options with the help of a neighbor, I decided on a foam roof. I had no idea that would mean living with the tarps and eating ramen noodles for three full years before I could save enough to have it installed. Between a window installed as a skylight near the kitchen sink, replacing many of the original ceiling planks and installing roof vents, the estimate was \$22,000.

In the meantime, my first project was removing rotted siding. I found Jeff Nichols of Eichler Siding, who mills 5/8" Breckenridge plywood panels into the Thinline-pattern panels my model needed. [Breckenridge has a mahogany face, no 'football' patches and is stainable. AR editor] With the help of a coworker, we removed the old wood and put in insulation before reinstalling the new siding and

A Milo Baughman for Thayer Coggin sofa (due to be reupholstered) is flanked by custom walnut end tables made by a Berkeley Mills coworker. A Nelson bubble lamp hangs near the atrium, and another perches on the table. In the dining room is a Berkeley Mills Mesa table and Slatback chairs in cherry. The vintage pendant lamps are from another Eichler undergoing a remodel.









Opposite, top: Vintage Witco wall art hangs above a bed purchased from ModPop, while custom walnut night tables hold Tolomeo lamps.

The reverse view in the master bedroom shows a Gerald Thurston Lightolier table lamp atop a \$20 Goodwill dresser, Masketeer circus seals twirling their balls, a vintage Knoll table and an armchair—both designed by Eero Saarinen. The metal ships are likely by Masketeer, too.



Berkeley Mills cabinetry and Corian counters repeat the kitchen materials and aesthetic in the master bath. An IKEA hourglass vase and 'Primordial Pulse' by Jovi Schnell are the sole decorative elements beyond the Toto faucet.

trim. I found evidence of the original exterior gray color and decided to stick with that.

## down and dirty

The radiant floor heating system had been converted; new copper waterlines ran from the boiler up onto the roof, through the walls and down to baseboard heaters. Glen Wagner of Anderson Radiant Heating inspected it to see if it would be possible to bring the radiant back, as I felt it was important to restore this feature of the home. He was optimistic and willing to do the job in phases so that I could afford the repair.

Glen first tested the copper grid by blowing compressed air through the system; you could hear the air whistle wherever there was a leak. He jackhammered a small hole in the slab next to the first leak he found, made the repair to the copper tubing, patched the concrete and moved on to the next one. Twenty-one holes in the slab later, after pumping in helium and using a machine to detect the smallest leaks, the grid held pressure. I nearly froze without heat that winter until I saved enough money to have the original 1963 A.O.

Smith boiler connected to the repaired grid. But the first morning my feet touched the warm concrete, I knew it was completely worth the effort.

The grungy enclosed atrium needed to be liberated before I could have the roof installed. I removed tar paper and plywood from the roof, then the drywall from inside. With a hacksaw, I cut out the framed ceiling and insulation, along with can lighting and electrical conduit. When sunlight came pouring into my living room and kitchen I was elated. It was almost as if the house took a deep breath of fresh air!

The slab of the atrium had been topped with terra-cotta Mexican tile, which came off easily. The concrete underneath, however, was in some areas 14" thick. Once I was able to make a large enough hole in the slab, a rented jackhammer did a good job of breaking off manageable chunks. Next, I built a wood and Mislite glass partition like the originals that separate Eichler atriums from their carports. I sourced a used solid-core panel door, prepped it and brought it into my shop, where I sprayed it orange with industrial polyurethane. I liked the finish and color so much that I decided to use it on various other doors around the home.





The new VCT floors are on display in the kitchen, where walnut barstools from Berkeley Mills pull up to the large Corian island. A plastic Cathrineholm Lotus bowl and a Crumpled Paper Cup porcelain vase by artist Andrew DeWitt are among the collectibles; appliances include a Bosch dishwasher and cook-top, with ovens and refrigerator from Jenn-Air.

Looking toward the dining room, the wall between the two rooms was ceiling-height when Siler bought the house; he returned it to a pony wall and reopened the doorway.

## more fun to come

The best part of living in an Eichler tract with fun, enthusiastic and helpful neighbors is that you can share experiences and see exactly what your model originally looked like in other restorations. The newer kitchen in my home was a '90s Tuscan theme, with cherry cabinetry, a tumbled-stone backsplash and golden travertine tile on the floor. While it might be nice in a recently built home, it repulsed me in mine.

The previous owners had eliminated the Eichler multi-purpose area and annexed the space for a full-size kitchen, which I did like. They also sealed off the door and the pony wall between the kitchen and the dining room in order to have cabinets that went to the ceiling. And the kitchen ceiling appeared to have been drywalled for no other reason than to install recessed lighting and insulation, from what I could tell.

In my third year with the leaking roof, early one Sunday morning the ceiling gave way and a large section of drywall came crashing down onto the sink. Water poured in as if it were a Rainforest Cafe. The best part of this nightmare was the height of the original ceiling was exposed; the worst part was the ceiling boards were almost completely covered with mold and rot. I spent a day removing the drywall, insulation, framing and can lighting, then bleaching to kill the mold.

Summer of 2012, the roof was finally installed. The original ceilings had at some point been painted, and the cracks between the boards bugged me, as grit from the roof fell from them and spiders hid inside. Using painter's caulk, it took 130 tubes and several trips to a massage therapist to complete the entire house. I invested in an airless sprayer and began priming and painting the ceiling and beams high-gloss white.

## now we're cooking

While I appreciate an untouched Eichler and had hastily bought an entire original kitchen from another tract with the intention of reclaiming it, I found the damage and quality to not be worth the effort to save it. Berkeley Mills builds high-end furniture cabinetry and custom kitchens, and we had installed several in Eichlers around the Bay Area. I knew that modern kitchens in these homes look amazing and would be far better quality and much more ergonomic than the originals.

I gutted the space and rented an industrial floor grinder to smooth the surface of the slab because I wanted to have Armstrong VCT flooring installed before a new kitchen went in. Connecting the refrigerator's water line to a temporary dump sink gave me the luxury of ice and filtered water. I enjoyed unhealthy, prefabricated meals warmed in the



microwave, along with takeout and fast food for an entire year—gaining 20 lbs. With the help of my neighbors, my company’s engineer and his designer wife, we scribbled ideas and measured the space. A week later, I was presented with drawings that helped visualize what was to come.

To me, the cleanest, simplest designs look best in these homes, whether that be furniture or cabinetry. I hand selected the plainest, straight-grained mahogany veneer for the fronts, cabinet boxes and drawer interiors. I originally wanted white laminate countertops, since that was what was originally used in Eichler homes, but found the estimate for solid surface Corian to surprisingly be less expensive.

While the kitchen was being built, and after the new floors were laid, I decided to remove the drywall that was installed over the original luan mahogany walls. I was gifted with nine 4’x8’ sheets of mahogany—a nice donation from my boss—and with the help of my company’s installer, used it in the dining room. The kitchen was done just in time for Thanksgiving, when I enjoyed cooking with my friends and socializing around the island.

For me, a home is a relationship and a labor of love. There is still much to do—painting, a more efficient boiler and finishing up the atrium, which currently has pavers and mulch as an inexpensive and temporary solution. The concrete patio around the pool is shot and my fence gets mended with every windstorm. There are cheap five-panel MDF doors with brass hardware in the back of the house that all need to be replaced with flush mahogany doors. But I feel a true love for this Eichler and what it gives back to me. It really feels like home, and that’s reason enough to keep going forward—slowly but surely. ✨

The Eichler was taken back to its original gray color, while the front door is a classic midcentury orange; the homeowner re-created the glass privacy fence between the carport and the newly reopened atrium.



Resources page 73



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**MODERN ILLINOIS**



# ranchdressing

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**Q:** When my in-laws downsized, we inherited their Nelson lamp, which was hanging in a screened-in patio. They bought it new in 1957, and I suspect that it had been hanging outside since the early '60s. It's got layers of grunge, but otherwise is in great shape. I plan on replacing the electrical cord with updated, cloth-wrapped cord as well, but I'm



running out of ideas to get the gunk off.

I first tried a very mild solution of Ivory soap and water [as suggested by [modernica.net](http://modernica.net) under 'Customer Service/Assembly' at the bottom of the landing page]. When that didn't work, I tried white vinegar and then baking soda. Frustrated that nothing was working, I moved on to harsher cleaners like Bon Ami cleanser, Pine-Sol and then, because I thought I had nothing to lose, a Magic Eraser. But all of that has only made a small

dent. I'm cautious about trying anything harsher, but I'm hoping you might have other ideas.

**Christopher Welte**

**A:** Our own Bubble lamps are decades younger, but effectively cleaning the horizontal surfaces, specifically the grime that collects in the dimpled texture, has been a challenge for us, too. On Modernica's website the manufacturer of the Nelson reissues cautioned against using solutions containing ammonia, and co-owner Jay Novak shared more details by phone: "If you vacuum your shades, be sure to use a soft-bristle brush attachment. The reason we suggest Ivory soap is that with colored soaps and cleaners—Simple Green, Dawn, etc.—the tint can remain as a shadow in the texture after you rinse."

Old lamps can become brittle or get gooey, Novak says, with the shade material decomposing; there's not much to be done for those. If it's dirty but in good condition like Christopher's, try soaking a clean towel or rag with undiluted bleach and laying it on the lamp a section at a time. He cautions that one needs to keep the bleach away from the steel wire frame and presumably that also applies to the nickel-plated rings on the top and bottom openings.

"Built-up nicotine and grease on old lamps forms a plastic-like coating, and I've used Sterling's Magic—a pink, gooey, Jell-O-like cleaner—on those [[sterlingsmagicmfg.com](http://sterlingsmagicmfg.com)]. It emulsifies the hardened coating. In general, cleaning these lamps requires time and patience," Novak said. He also noted that Modernica sells the proper electrical cord for the lamps, which is a larger gauge than standard. Call the showroom, 323.933.0383 or email them at [lashowroom@modernica.net](mailto:lashowroom@modernica.net) for help.

**Q:** I purchased a dining set on Craigslist last summer. The chairs are unmarked other than a tag from the Richbilt Manufacturing Co. of Cincinnati, while the table is by the Watertown Sliding Table Co. An antiques dealer suggested the chairs are Adrian Pearsall, though I couldn't find anything confirming that. Any info or guidance you can offer is greatly appreciated.

**Anne Hersch**

**A:** Shades of Charles Rennie Mackintosh! An online catalog of Adrian Pearsall designs maintained by his family ([adrianpearsall.com](http://adrianpearsall.com)) was taken down due to unauthorized reproductions being sold as authentic. However, Jed Pearsall will research an item for \$50; email [jpearsall1482@comcast.net](mailto:jpearsall1482@comcast.net).

We saw a set of six high-back Richbilt chairs attributed to Niels Kofoed for sale on eBay (\$1,800, [goo.gl/J83JT5](http://goo.gl/J83JT5)) that had stylistic similarities. About the

closest we got was a set of 'high-back walnut chairs after Pearsall' ([goo.gl/O8mfE9](http://goo.gl/O8mfE9)) on Peter and Scarlett Magnotta's **advertsvintage.com**. Those chairs share the surfboard-shaped back, but the frame and seat are different, and it looks as if the Magnottas didn't have a provenance for theirs, either.

Scarlett filled us in:



"Considering that Richbilt produced furniture similar to that of many period designers, such as Henry P. Glass, Johannes Andersen and Kofoed, it is unlikely that the chairs are by Adrian Pearsall. Jed Pearsall should be able to confirm, but I think if his father had worked with Richbilt, the company would be better known today. Like the chairs we have for sale, odds are Anne's were simply inspired by Pearsall and other designers of the era—thus 'in the style of.'

"It's common practice for dealers to attach a name/style to an item if the origin is unknown. This helps to narrow your market and attract specific buyers; '1960s dining chairs' lends itself to a wide range of styles—both the cool ones we're discussing and others that are more traditional and unremarkable.

"The maker can be important for the resale value of an item and for purists collectors, but if you love the design and it works well in your home, try not to fret about who may or may not have designed the chairs. There are plenty of amazing pieces in the world that are unmarked or made by generic manufacturers. If your curiosity cannot be contained, try doing more research on the Richbilt Manufacturing Co. by searching historical archives (1960s newspapers, trade publications and interior design magazines); perhaps locating an old Richbilt catalog (if one exists) will give more information about your specific chairs.

"Recently we got in another set of Pearsall-style chairs, which immediately sold. They were unmarked, too, but very similar to the chairs Anne has."



# ranchdressing

**Q:** My in-laws bought this chair in the late '50s in Portland, Ore. They've always called it a Toki chair and are pretty sure it's Japanese. Can you or any of your readers tell us anything about these chairs?



**Clint Opine**

**A:** We got lucky and found a match with a combo of keywords including 'Japanese' and 'rope chair'; for us, the Toki (or any spelling variations) was a red herring, though perhaps that was a model name back when your in-laws purchased it. You have a Maruni rope chair, probably dating from circa 1950. The White Warehouse sold a pair in black on 1stdibs and The Chinese Porcelain Company in New York had a single example of a light wood model like yours. Last October another black pair on 1stdibs was offered at \$7,600.

Alexandra Shalhoup from The White Warehouse ([the whitewarehouse.com](http://www.thewhitewarehouse.com)) had these details to add: "We



sold the pair of Maruni chairs for \$3,500, I believe. They each had a metal tag that reads 'Maruni' on the back. I was only able to locate a few of them online at the time we found them, so they appear to

be rare. Ours had very flat, large, square cushions on the seats, but I'm not sure if they were original since they seemed a little too wide."

A Japanese furniture company founded in 1928 named Maruni Wood Industry is a likely manufacturer, but they did not reply to our query about the chair. The oval metal tag on the frame that Alexandra refers to depicts a stylized figure with a crown and intertwined rings in an arc, with the company name below. At either price point, your in-laws have passed along a gem. Do you use the chair and is it comfortable?

## croutons

✦ Looking for a colored toilet to take your bath back to its original look? An article in the *New York Times* offered several resources: [plumbingsupply.com](http://plumbingsupply.com) has tons of tank lids as well as new seats in vintage colors (avocado, cerulean blue, pink champagne; order their color-matching kit if you're unsure of the make and color) and shapes. [Thisoldtoilet.com](http://thisoldtoilet.com) can help with color-matched seats, salvaged lids and tanks, plus referrals for replacement internal parts; the [toilet tanklids.com/search.html](http://toilet-tanklids.com/search.html) link will help you determine the brand, number and color of your vintage throne. For advice on replacement parts and fixes, [the answerline.com](http://theanswerline.com) offers preservation-oriented assistance for toilets and faucets; the paywall starts at \$15 for 72-hour access.



Courtesy Fendershirts Vintage

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



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# atomic events

## Through February 22 Palm Springs An Eloquent Modernist: E. Stewart Williams, Architect

The Palm Springs Art Museum's new Architecture + Design Center, housed in a 1961 former bank building designed by Williams, opened with an exhibition of models, photos and renderings covering the architect's 50-year career; [psmuseum.org](http://psmuseum.org).



Courtesy the Estate of Larry Sultan

Larry Sultan, 'My Mother Posing for Me,' chromogenic print

## Through March 22 Los Angeles Larry Sultan: Here and Home

Photographer Larry Sultan's images explored themes of family, home and facade throughout his career; [lacma.org](http://lacma.org).

## April 10–19 Phoenix/Scottsdale Modern Phoenix Week

A home tour of SoSco (South Scottsdale), the Modern Marketplace, lectures and parties—plus the chance to stay in a hotel with midcentury flair; get the details at [modernphoenix.net](http://modernphoenix.net).

## April 24–26 Culver City Los Angeles Modernism Show

This year's event is at 3Labs Studio with vintage dealers from far and wide; [lamodernism.com](http://lamodernism.com).

## April 25–26 Dallas White Rock Home Tour

Midcentury and contemporary homes, including one



built from 12 shipping containers, around White Rock Lake open their doors to tour goers; [goo.gl/aJFrN](http://goo.gl/aJFrN).

## Through April 26 Philadelphia Vitra—Design, Architecture, Communication

Some 120 works tell the story of the Swiss furniture company, from an Eames plywood elephant and Alexander Girard's wooden dolls to classic licensed MC furniture; [philamuseum.org](http://philamuseum.org).



Marc Eggmann, lent by Rolf Fehlbaum ©Vitra

Eames Elephant designed by Charles & Ray Eames

## May 8–9 Portland, Ore. Mid-Century Modern Home Tour

The Oregon preservation group focuses on Van Evera Bailey this year, one of those responsible for developing the Northwest Regional style and the supervising architect on Richard Neutra's Jan de Graaff House. Driving tour on Saturday, with a lecture on Friday night; [restoreoregon.org](http://restoreoregon.org).

## June 4–7 Minneapolis Modernism on the Prairie: Rural to Metro Regional Interpretations of the Modern Movement

A symposium that includes tours featuring modern furniture makers and restorers, Ralph Rapson's residential designs, and Eero Saarinen's 'Big Blue' IBM facility in Rochester; [docomomo-us-symposium.com](http://docomomo-us-symposium.com).



**June 25–28 Lake George, N.Y.**

### Ohana Luau at the Lake

This annual three-day event at the time-warp Tiki Resort features live music, cocktails, vendors, a traditional luau and a Polynesian show with hula and fire dancers; [luauatthelake.com](http://luauatthelake.com).

**Ongoing Bremerton, Wash.**

### Pyrex Museum

Located in the Amy Burnett Gallery in the city's art district, the Pyrex Museum has some 1,000-plus pieces of functional cooking art. Find the casserole your mom had, enjoy the vintage ads and see what pattern you can't live without; [goo.gl/McORhI](http://goo.gl/McORhI).

# resources

## Notes From a Remodel Gone Right, pp. 12-22

**Architect:** [corybuckner.com](http://corybuckner.com) ✖ **General contractor:** David Stumfall, [palisadesconstruction.com](http://palisadesconstruction.com) ✖ **Landscape architect:** Mark Rios, Rios Clementi Hale Studios, [rchstudios.com](http://rchstudios.com) ✖ **Reproduction furniture:** [modernica.net](http://modernica.net) ✖ **Awning & fixed windows:** [metalwindowcorp.com](http://metalwindowcorp.com) ✖ **Sliding glass doors:** [fleetwoodusa.net](http://fleetwoodusa.net) ✖ **Kitchen:** Appliances, [thermador.com](http://thermador.com) ✖ Counters, [compac.es/US/home.aspx](http://compac.es/US/home.aspx) ✖ Backsplash, [porcelanosa-usa.com](http://porcelanosa-usa.com) ✖ Flooring, [valleycarpetonevannuys.com](http://valleycarpetonevannuys.com) ✖ **Tile source,** [westsidetile.com](http://westsidetile.com) ✖ **Paint palette:** [goo.gl/dH0dHG](http://goo.gl/dH0dHG) ✖ **Sound system:** [sonos.com](http://sonos.com)

## My Favorite Space, pp. 28–29

**Vintage furniture:** [klassikdesign.com/](http://klassikdesign.com/) ✖ [boomerangformodern.com](http://boomerangformodern.com) ✖ **Artwork:** [michaelflohr.net](http://michaelflohr.net)

## Three Years, Five Phases:

### The Rigors of Renovating, pp. 44–53

**Foundation contractor:** McDowell Pile King, [pileking.com](http://pileking.com) ✖ **Deck:** Dyna Contracting, [dynacontracting.com](http://dynacontracting.com) ✖ **Customized garage door:** Forest Park Builders, [FPBI@comcast.net](mailto:FPBI@comcast.net) ✖ **General contractor & custom cabinetry:** [bellan.com](http://bellan.com) ✖ **Windows:** [milgard.com](http://milgard.com) ✖ **Lighting:** [contrastlighting.com](http://contrastlighting.com) ✖

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## Dazed But Not Confused, pp. 58–66

**Siding:** [eichlersiding.com](http://eichlersiding.com) ✖ **Heating system repair:** Anderson Radiant Heating, [radiantheat.net](http://radiantheat.net) ✖ **Kitchen & bath cabinetry, dining table & chairs, barstools:** [berkeleymills.com](http://berkeleymills.com) ✖ **Counters:** [corian.com](http://corian.com) ✖ **VCT flooring:** [armstrong.com](http://armstrong.com) ✖ **Tizio & Tolomeo lamps:** [ylighting.com](http://ylighting.com) ✖ **Saarinen Tulip table:** [dwr.com](http://dwr.com) ✖ **Bed:** [modpop.bigcartel.com](http://modpop.bigcartel.com) ✖ **Nelson bubble lamps:** [modernica.net](http://modernica.net) ✖ **Vase:** [andrewdewitt.com](http://andrewdewitt.com) ✖ **Artwork:** [jovischnell.com](http://jovischnell.com)

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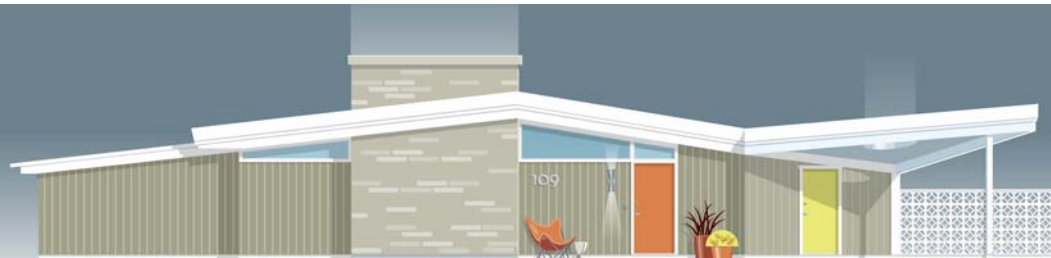


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## accommodations & lifestyle

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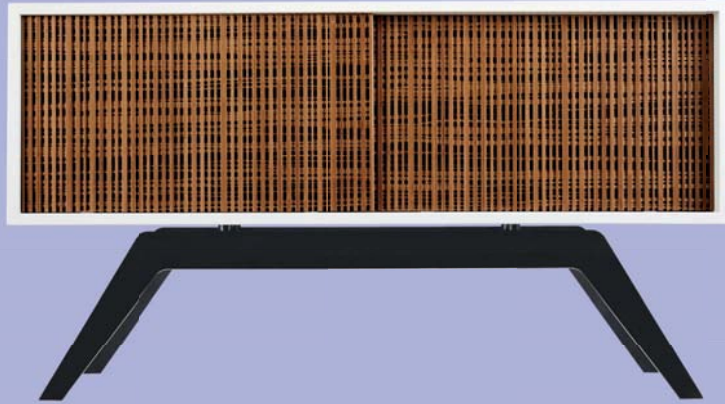


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