

atomic ranch

MIDCENTURY MARVELS

342



SPRING 2009



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- teardown transformed
- style on a budget
- pennsylvania ranch
- george nelson rocks

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cover

The Elenga family's home on Seattle's Queen Anne Hill was designed in 1953 by architect Ira Cummings. On a double-wide lot with expansive views to the northeast, Cummings incorporated special touches like exterior mahogany siding, a built-in credenza and one of a kind sandstone fireplace. Story page 14.



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Treadway Gallery



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Ran across a mention of [magazinedeathpool.com](#) on Apartment Therapy the other day. It's a cheery little blog wherein the Grim Reaper keeps us abreast of magazine closures and predicts those that will or should rightfully fail. Atomic Ranch doesn't seem to be in the site's crosshairs as of yet.

Linked to the dump in the housing market and dire economic news at year's end, shelter magazine titles are being green needled right and left. *Cottage Living*, *Quick & Simple* and *Home* are gone, and even American goddesses Martha Stewart and Oprah have been hit: *Blueprint*, an MS title, closed in December 2007 and *O At Home* folded in late '08. In publication since 1901, *House & Garden* was shuttered in 2007. And it's not just those you might dismiss as dinosaurs or redundancies: *Cottage Living* had 141 ad pages in its debut issue, one million in circulation and was *AdWeek's* Startup of the Year in 2004. Gonzo.

Other categories are feeling the heat, too. *Cosmo Girl* (insert snarky comment), *Mary Engelbreit's Home Companion* (insert eye roll), *Alpinist* and *PC* magazine, once a bi-weekly, are gone and Magazine Death Pool is stalking *Discover* and *Coastal Living*. *Elle Décor* is being rumored to be in trouble on blogs—always a solid source of fact—and *Vogue Living* is “on hold.” *Cooking Light* fired its publisher and *Country Home's* staff goes home in March. That's just the random top of the heap and auto magazines are looking to be next for the bloodletting.

What's driving the freefall is a sharp dip in ad pages—between 5% and 21% depending on who, when and by what measure you use—which pay for magazine production costs, coupled with a nice uptick in paper, transportation and postage. The trickle-down economics theory applies to your favorite home mag as well.

Because we're a niche magazine, because we're not part of a larger conglomerate and because we operate very frugally, Atomic Ranch is still feeling optimistic about weathering this climate of gloom. (Enough with the weather metaphors.) Are advertisers even more cautious about ad dollars? Yes. Are we feeling the pinch? Yes. Do our readers need us more than ever? We think so.

If you're out of work and facing serious economic hardships you certainly have bigger concerns than whether Atomic Ranch will be here in 2011. And we know that if you have to choose between that modern dog bowl or buying a bag of groceries, Buster is drinking from the hose. But there are modest things you can do to help assure AR is on your coffee table 10 years from now.

Continue to renew your subscription, pick up a copy for your sister in Nebraska, or if you purchase something from an advertiser, let them know how devoted you are to AR. During a recession people still need sheets for their platform bed or an affordable lamp for the guest bedroom. And who among us won't have a wish list of pricier items for when the economy does turn around?

For our part, we'll continue to look for great stories to share with you this year and the next and the next. We'll work hard to keep the same high production values. And we won't lose sight of what makes Atomic Ranch different from other shelter mags. For seven bucks, we're an affordable treat during tough economic times.

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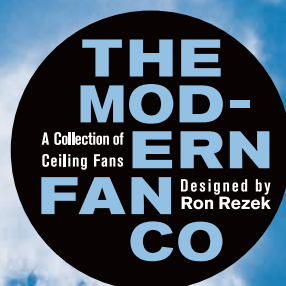
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Treadway Gallery

I always thought of this furniture as Danish modern. It is oiled walnut and beautifully made, and a bear to put up and take down, which we have done many times. I suspect it is worth a fair amount of money.

Bob & Marcy Flinn

Online

Our newest contributor, Sam Floyd, who's authoring a book on Scandinavian design, thirded the attribution: "The wall unit certainly does look like a Nelson Omni unit. The pulls are not the standard embedded ovals one ordinarily sees on earlier examples, but the cabinetry, metal supports under the shelves and other structural details are a dead-on match. It is definitely of American manufacture (note the door hinges), and the magazine shelf is also a Nelson Omni match, as opposed to any similar design from overseas. Certainly the pulls are consistent with Nelson's designs, so I would say that it is almost undoubtedly an Omni unit."

* In your Summer 2008 edition, the owner of the Rochester, Minn., home mentions a 1950s wall storage system purchased for \$50; yes, they did get a deal—a steal in fact!

From the limited view [page 66], I am suggesting that the system was manufactured by Nucraft in Grand Rapids, Mich. I believe that they took over the manufacturing of this product from a company originally selling the units as Omni Systems. It seems that the famous George Nelson was involved with the design of this system for Omni before he designed the wonderful Comprehensive Storage System (CCS) for Herman Miller. Nucraft Furniture (nucraft.com) is still in business making very fine commercial contract furniture; contacting them could be fruitful.

E. Siems

Idyllwild, Calif.

* The "1950s wall storage unit" appears to be an Omni Pole Structure. We purchased a similar item new from a modern furniture store in suburban Chicago in 1967. I think we paid about \$700.



* I picked up the Fall issue and have been repeatedly poring over it since. Thanks for the great work; the magazine is really a breath of fresh air in the genre.

Hands down, my favorite story is "Working Class Heroes," followed by "Before & After: Houston."

Unlike so many of the stories in so many shelter magazines, these featured people with great homes who could actually be my neighbors.

I love that they profiled folks with moderate incomes who have made great homes for themselves through a bit of resourcefulness and ingenuity. For the same reason, I wasn't particularly enamored of "Charmed Life." If I were a successful venture capitalist, I'd have a rockin' house, too.

Thanks also for featuring the Nashville, Tenn., house on "Home Page." I checked out Robb's website, and it's a terrific blog of the planning and process involved in bringing out the best in his modest ranch. Since he's a musician on a limited budget, it was right up my alley.

As a result of this issue, I bought your book and sub-

scribed to the magazine. I'm looking forward to the next issue.

Crystal Marra

Fort Worth

✱ I never miss an issue and I particularly enjoyed Fall '08. The opening spread for "Charmed Life" was fantastic; the Halletts have a dream home. I also enjoyed the Houston before and after article. You should include more of these types of articles.

I was wondering if I might have permission to start an Atomic Ranch group on Facebook. I have not seen one yet.

Mark Henderson

Fort Belvoir, Va.

Get face time with fellow Ranchers at facebook.com.

—ar editor

✱ In your summer issue, you asked if readers could suggest a few good movies for period-correct home decorating tips. Three came to mind: "North by Northwest," "The Satan Bug" and "Arabesque"; all show authentic modern interiors. "Satan Bug" is especially good for desert homes, having been filmed almost entirely in the Coachella Valley. The remake of "Little Miss Marker" shows authentic Vegas and Disneyland, but may be difficult to translate into home use. Of course, any of those old Doris Day and Rock Hudson movies offer lots of ideas.

Sitting in my Palm Springs midcentury home with its original furnishings (my grandmother's house), I feel obligated to point out that "midcentury" and "modern" are not synonymous. I sit among modern couches, '50s Colonial Revival tables and a few antiques under textured cathedral ceilings. Many of her midcentury lamps feature Victorian-style studded milk glass because they looked western. "I Love Lucy" or similar programs show that modern was only one of many choices made in period interiors. Maybe we can send in some pictures of my grandmother's midcentury, but not entirely atomic, ranch home.

Matthew Johnson

Palm Springs

Sean Huberty's request triggered a flood of suggestions,

including the reimagined interiors of "Mad Men" and "Far From Heaven," and Brian Keith's cool California house in Hayley Mills' 1961 version of "The Parent Trap," a suggestion courtesy of Sara Arbogast.

"'Strangers When We Meet' [1960] has a beautiful ranch that I may incorporate into my own home," Frank Mills emailed in, and Martin Doa nominated "Blast From The Past," the 1999 Brendan Fraser comedy—particularly great if you're decorating a bomb shelter. Michele in Fort Worth suggested a cartoonish approach: "Sometimes Tom and Jerry chase each other in modern homes, and it is great fun to watch which piece of iconic furniture will show up next. The only downside is that it is mostly from cat and mouse eye levels!"

—ar editor



✱ While perusing the pages of the Fall issue, two items came together for me: The house in Madison, Wisc., with the fiberglass window wall [page 30] and the two Citroens [page 20]. My father had a 1963 Citroen outfitted with a fiberglass roof; the downside was a bit of leaking and wrongly thinking you could scrub fiberglass. Sealing materials were just not what they are now. However, you felt like you were driving down the road in your living room with that car.

Oak Ridge is a town with many ranches with interesting carports and a lot of midcentury furniture coming out of them. Now if I could just find replacements for those translucent laminated plastic windows with the butterflies and flora sandwiched in it for my atomic ranch. It was built by my father as a remodel of a Manhattan Project "Cemesto" modular home. They really built well and fast back then, just like Victory ships.

Roger Johnson

Oak Ridge, Tenn.

continued on page 85



Cascadian **View**

Ira Cummings' **Vision**

text Bromley Davenport
photography Jim Brown

The front yard landscape was designed by 2.Ink Studio in Portland. They're also drawing up plans for a retaining wall to extend the usable backyard six feet and add an ipe patio, fire pit and bamboo plantings to screen out the next-door neighbors.





The main stars of the living area are the sandstone fireplace and the suspended credenza, an unusual original feature. From the living room landing, the view past the built-in planter and stairwell to the basement becomes a what's inside, what's a window puzzle.

“It was nighttime when we first saw it so we didn’t even realize it had a view,” says Maureen Elenga about the house she and husband Robin bought on Seattle’s Queen Anne Hill. The couple had been looking for nearly two years, and when her realtor called to give her a heads up on a home coming on the market, Maureen thought, yeah, we’ll check it out after the wedding. But the realtor meant Come Right Now.

“We loved the welcoming smaller entry—it’s the antithesis of a soaring McMansion entry—and the house just fit our personalities,” she says. The home in question was a 1953 modernist ranch designed by architect Ira Cummings, with, as it turns out, 190° views of Freemont, Lake Union and the distant Cascade Mountains.

“We put in an offer and had to leave the next day for our wedding,” Robin Elenga, an angel investor, recalls. “Then we were on our two-week honeymoon, which we ended up cutting a week short because we were so excited to see the house. We’d only spent like an hour in here, so we couldn’t quite remember what it looked like.”

They soon discovered gems like a built-in planter and magazine rack in the bathroom, in addition to the memorable sandstone fireplace, built-in birch credenza and the rough-sawn mahogany used for the exterior and the walls of the entry. The home had last been sold in 1965 and was in remarkably original condition, save for a 1981 kitchen and a master bedroom/bath addition and carport-to-garage conversion in 1989. This bumped up the square footage to a hair over 3,000.

Seattle’s Queen Anne neighborhood is better known for Arts and Crafts cottages and the namesake 1880s Victorians. But in addition to small later waves of building, 74 acres of lower Queen Anne were reshaped into the “Century 21 Exposition” for the 1962 World’s Fair. Its futuristic Space Needle is now the city’s most well known icon.

The Elengas’ street and those nearby have bungalows, cottages, some 1980s and ’90s infill, and a few rundown





details

A Design Within Reach George Nelson bench next to the fireplace holds stereo gear and a vintage sign for the home's architect (previous spread). Seen from the side, the fireplace and its rich detailing looks more sober than the straight-on view of angled columns and beams played against the verticals of the credenza.

Sofia at the double front door, which opens into a small entry landing; to the left, stairs wind down to the lower level, or straight ahead you ascend to the living/dining space.

Opposite, clockwise: Maureen and Otto looking out the double-pane wall of windows. The birch credenza, like an upside down "flying coffin" kitchen cabinet in Eichler homes, appears to cantilever from the brown wall. The surface of the entry hall wall is rough-sawn mahogany, the same material as the exterior siding.





rental houses ripe for teardown. Somewhat surprisingly for an architectural historian, Maureen doesn't mind the handful of new homes that are popping up in place of original structures, like the butterfly roof one across the street being marketed by Seattle realtor 360° Modern.

"I think it's a good thing as long as they stay within the scale of the other houses," she says. "I like variety and I think the mix makes the street more interesting. There are other people who see a modern house going up and say, 'It just doesn't fit in.' I think, With what? There's no architectural continuity on this street."

The author of *Seattle Architecture: A Walking Guide to Downtown* and mom to preschoolers Sofia and Otto, Maureen finds the house to be particularly suited to their current lifestyle. "We had in mind we'd be raising a family here. The scale of the rooms is more conducive to family life—it's more intimate. And the layout makes it so we're not all crammed together; it flows well."

"I grew up in a 4,500-square-foot house my dad designed," she notes. "It was a great '70s contemporary but I don't think I'd want to clean 4,500 square feet."

Robin and Maureen refinished all of the wood in the house, including the floors on the main level. They painted inside and out and installed cork floors in one bath-



the PNW modernists took a lot of keys from Japanese architecture

room and the kitchen. Of the two styles of similarly priced cork flooring, the natural tiles that are glued in place and finished with a wax coating have held up very well. The pre-finished, floating, thin-cork-layer-on-top-of-two-substrates version has not, Robin reports.

They also took down a wall that created an awkward, hard to use space off the kitchen and swapped a window for a glass door that leads to a new deck. By adding a Nelson CSS unit to the opened up hallway-cum-kitchen-office, it's now a family computer station and one of the most utilized areas of the house.

Robin, who'd renovated two bungalows previously, crafted a long, low media storage unit for the downstairs family room that he's proud to show off. Built of plywood with a walnut veneer, he recessed the electronics into the space between the wall studs so the unit has a slim profile and all of the wiring is hidden.

Then there was the fabulous replumbing project. "I thought it would take me two days, but it ended up taking eight," he recalls. "All of the pipes seemed to come together in the small bathroom in the basement—there were about 50 solder joints in just that room.

"Surprisingly, there were no leaks when I was finished and we got it done just in time for some visitors. *Then* I learned about PEX tubing (flexible plastic tubing with

The Lovig Danish dining set is from Robin's family, and the carpet tiles are FLOR. In the living room, the couch and two cube chairs are Neo, designed by Niels Bendtsen for Bensen; they surround a Noguchi table from Design Within Reach. The deck seen out the windows is off the kitchen and master bedroom; it was designed by John O'Toole, Maureen's brother and an architect at BOORA in Portland.





Cummings' attention to detail shows: the original upstairs bath has wooden rods over the tub similar to those piercing the dining room credenza and beautiful vintage tile and cabinetry, which the Elengas refinished.

Opposite, top: Otto's nursery is small but stylish, with an Eames Hang-It-All on the wall and an armchair rocker. The kids have a large family room downstairs to play in and take the pressure off the upstairs furnishings.

Opposite, bottom: The downstairs bath has an original harlequin tile floor and pink fixtures.





joints that you slip on); I could have done it all in two days with that stuff."

The Elengas also removed pickled knotty pine paneling from the daylight basement and dry walled and skim coated the surfaces. The downstairs bath had a pink sink and tub, so they replaced the later white toilet with a pink one and went all out with a retro pink and black theme. In addition to the large family room/office, there's also a guest room down below, while upstairs are two baths and three other bedrooms. One last surprise was discovering that two weeks in the summer the kids' bedrooms were uninhabitable, so they had a Puron A/C system put in.

"When we bought the house, we were happy so many of the built-ins and the woodwork were left original but we still have to remodel the master bath and the kitchen—those will be big projects," Maureen notes. The plan for the kitchen, which she's working on with her interior designer sister, will keep some elements—the Sub-Zero fridge and the pocket door that closes the room off from the dining room—and improve on others.

"I'd like cabinets that match the credenza and a six-burner cooktop, but otherwise would like to make it look more original," Maureen says. "Some midcentury modern homeowners are strict about wanting appliances that are or look vintage. That's fine, but I think if you have cabinets, counters and backsplashes that are true to the era, it's OK to switch in new stuff."

It seems only fitting that the Elengas ended up with this somewhat edgy midcentury home, what with Maureen's father and brother being architects and her own training as an architectural historian. Since buying it, she and Robin helped organize a DOCOMOMO tour of Cummings homes and have met his son, Gary.

"Ira Cummings' other residences tend to do the sort of head and tail formula, with public spaces at one end and private at the other separated by the kitchen, which I think functions really well," she says. "He emphasized the hearth as the center of the home and his fireplaces are large and very interesting.

"Like many Pacific Northwest architects, he used a lot of natural materials like the stone and mahogany; that's what differentiates the PNW modernists. They took a lot of keys from Japanese architecture as well. Being in the living room with all of the windows and that view, it's like being in a tree house. I loved these houses long before they came into fashion."

Architect IRA E. CUMMINGS

With the growing appreciation of midcentury modern architecture, Ira Cummings has been rediscovered in recent years as a significant Seattle architect. His contribution to the city's built environment includes hundreds of developer houses and apartments as well as



custom homes, many of which survive today. Most of his 500 known projects were built in the Seattle area and on the nearby islands of Puget Sound.

Cummings moved to Seattle as a child in 1917. His family built a summer home on Bainbridge Island in the 1920s and it was here that he designed and built his first house at age 14, a one-room guest cottage. Affectionately named "the doll house" by his two older sisters, it had no water or electricity but did have a fireplace, an element that would feature prominently in his later work.

Cummings took his first architectural job in 1937, when the newlywed moved to Lewiston, Idaho, and started his family. There he worked for a lumber company designing farm buildings for locals. By 1942 the family moved back to Seattle, where he worked at two major firms while taking night classes at the

University of Washington School of Architecture. He obtained his license in 1946 and opened his own practice the following year.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Cummings' work focused primarily on single-family residential design.

He holds the distinction of designing the first "Home of the Month," a long-running feature started by the *Seattle Times* and the Washington State chapter of the AIA. That Blue Ridge neighborhood house was designed for builder N.J. Zorich, a commission that marked the beginning of a lasting professional relationship with Zorich and several other prominent Seattle builders.

Cummings moved to Los Angeles in 1966 where he worked as project director for the architecture and engineering firm of Daniel Mann Johnson & Mendenhall, a large international firm that specialized in medical facilities. In December



Maureen Elenga (2)

1975, at just 61 years of age, Ira Cummings died suddenly of a heart attack in London while returning to the United States from a visit to a medical facility he was working on in Tehran. He was laid to rest in north Seattle. —Maureen Elenga 🏠



Joyce's dream house



Tustin Broadmoor captured that elusive midcentury dream— bringing modern homes to the mainstream market.

In the spring of 1968, Orange County, California was a fragrant patchwork of strawberry fields, fruit orchards and new housing tracts. Gasoline was 34 cents a gallon and a hamburger cost 49 cents. Young America was pushing social and political limits with the Summer of Love and Woodstock. At the same time, architects and interior decorators were experimenting with bold new ideas in housing design for ordinary folks.

It was in this environment that the community of Broadmoor was created in the city of Tustin on what was once a walnut orchard. Model homes opened the weekend of May 5, 1968, and that was the lead story of the *Los Angeles Times* real estate section. The article described how merchant builder Richard B. Smith had hired the firm of Robert G. Jones and Associates to design affordable single family detached homes with distinctive horizontal lines, recessed entries and glass enclosed atriums.

The four models ranged in size from 1,300 to 1,800 square feet. Exteriors were rendered in earth tones using Mediterranean touches of wrought iron and bold wood beams. Kitchens sported sleek Formica counters and pass-through windows to outdoor snack bars. Buyers could choose their new appliances in the latest colors of the day: avocado or harvest gold. The ribbon on the whole package was a private community pool with a neighborhood park. The development was an instant hit and two phases of 127 homes under construction quickly sold out.

My mother, Joyce Smith, was one of those original buyers. The two of us had been living in a four-room rented house in the Eagle Rock area of

text and photographs Kathy Hall



Previous spread: Joyce Smith's grandson, Mike Hall, with Widget in the entry courtyard of the Tustin house. This page: Views of the near-mint kitchen, the long view from the living room to the back yard and atrium, and the casual tropical decor in the dining and family rooms. Hall's father was a fighter pilot in World War II and the hand-stitched kimono and oil paintings on the dining room walls, as well as the dishes and chrome ice bucket, were her parents' and date from that era.

Opposite: Top, Rey and Sarah Halili's renovated "Decorator" model. Other models here and on page 33 were called Custom, Elegante and Exclusive, and ranged in size from 1,300 to 1,800 square feet. Corona del Mar, Irvine, Placentia and Chino were the sites of other Richard B. Smith midcentury developments.

We are clearly not alone in our



enthusiasm for the community.

Los Angeles. Working in the personnel department at Max Factor in Hollywood, my mother was thrilled to find she had saved enough to afford the down payment on a three-bedroom, two-bath home of her own.

I can still recall how spacious and new everything seemed when we moved in. We had gone from tiny quarters to a real house complete with a family room, dining room and even an extra bedroom that would serve as my mother's office. The gas fireplace of pristine white painted brick stretched all the way to the 10' ceiling. The living room and two of the bedrooms opened into an atrium. Outdoors, the intoxicating smell of orange blossoms perfumed the air. It was possible to get to Newport Bay on a bike, and that summer I swam at the community pool all day and roasted marshmallows after sundown at an outdoor fire pit. At 16 I felt like a rich kid.

I got my first job as a tour guide at Disneyland and continued to live in Broadmoor until graduating from college. For the rest of her life, the house remained my mother's dream home. After she died in 2006, I discovered she had carefully preserved all of the original sales materials, brochures, tract maps and newspaper articles and ads. The red and white "Sold" sign was still hanging in the garage.

She had always liked the house exactly as it came from the builder and therefore had never made any changes to the original structure. She lived alone and always used her belongings gently and carefully. When it was time to repaint, she stuck with the original colors. The cabinetry, flooring and counters were still in original, near-mint condition. Walls were immaculate and the 1968 Hotpoint Hallmark model avocado range still looked brand new.

One of the first things I did was get in touch with Alan Hess, author of *Forgotten Modern*. He accepted an invitation to come over and after a look around, urged me to keep the home and work toward preserving the neighborhood as an example of "good architecture created for average folks."

My two young-adult sons fully agreed, begging me not to sell or rent their grandmother's place. With my husband an avid cyclist and diver who wanted access to Orange County's year-round climate for his hobbies, the decision to keep the house was unanimous.

In reworking the place for our family, the goals were simple and straightforward: We would use the existing furnishings, stick to affordable stock materials, leave the structure original and create a casual, low-maintenance environment. With those priorities, I realized that trying to pull off museum quality period decorating was out of the question. Instead, we settled on a retro-tropical theme—easier to achieve with our eclectic, inherited furnishings dating from the 1940s through the early '70s.



Two of the three bedrooms in the Smith-Hall house, both with sliding glass doors to the compact atrium. The affordable matchstick blinds hung on the walls behind the beds lend an organic touch in the orange-spread room, and a retro tiki feel in the flamingo bedroom. The set of Brown Jordan atrium furniture is still in great shape some 40 years after it was made. Detail of the pocket planting near the front door.

I called up Judith Rand, a Tustin interior designer with a talent for redecorating with existing pieces. She instantly understood what we were trying to accomplish and got right to work moving things around. She had great ideas for using color and texture to pull together pieces from different decades. She was adamant that I keep a set of large wrought iron etageres I had never particularly cared for. Her recommendation was to repaint them and replace the solid wood shelves with glass inserts, so I did just that. Today I love these pieces, which serve as a virtual aquarium for carved



wood tropical fish and illuminated IKEA glass bubbles.


With the exception of contractor help with reroofing, popcorn ceiling removal and paver installation, we have done most of the renovation tasks ourselves. We painted, installed engineered plank flooring and I made slipcovers and bedspreads.

Outside, we reworked the yard by salvaging my mother's best plants, removing overgrown bulky shrubs and adding Mediterranean plants watered by drip irrigation. The front entry of the house was opened up into a useable courtyard. We built a simple bench and added pots of my mother's favorite plants next to the front door and now have a great place to sit and watch the sun go down.

After about 18 months of part-time work, a fresh new version of my mother's house has emerged. Camaraderie is building among neighbors on a similar mission to restore their own homes. Rey and Sarah Halili have finished up the restoration of their Decorator Model, doing most of the work themselves. Rey grew up in Broadmoor and now owns his childhood home. He is a middle-school teacher and vice president of the homeowners' association; Sarah is a high school counselor. The couple has returned their home to the original concept of clean lines, organic materials and earth tones. Down the street, professional artist Victor Fischer has renovated his Custom Model to showcase his paintings, drawings and bronze sculptures.

Fans of Broadmoor Tustin are optimistic that interest in their midcentury modern neighborhood will continue to grow. The neighborhood is convenient to public transportation and within walking distance of several markets and basic stores. Front yards are compact and don't demand excessive quantities of water. Atriums capture natural light. The mild climate is comfortable most of the time, perfect for growing citrus, herbs and tomatoes in the backyard. Walking and bike trails are abundant and beaches are minutes away.

We are clearly not alone in our enthusiasm for the community. A grassroots effort to revitalize Broadmoor is evident through surprising turnouts at neighborhood association meetings and informal discussions of ways to improve the area. The community newspaper has been resurrected and there is talk of bringing back events from the early years such as potlucks and holiday open houses.

Now that most of the work has been done, we couldn't be happier with our decision to keep my mother's house in the family. It serves as a getaway and hub for family gatherings. We think the original owner would be very pleased with her legacy. 

Kathy Hall is an avid do-it-yourself home remodeler. Alan Hess' *Forgotten Modern* is available at atomic-ranch.com; see page 67.



homepage

Camp Hill, Penn.

I was downsized from my job in Indianapolis, which ultimately was a great turn of events. I relocated to the Harrisburg, Penn., area where I found this 1959 split-level ranch. Still in wonderful, unspoiled condition, the three-bedroom, one-and-half-bath home has the original pink and brown tile and hardwoods throughout. One of the few in the neighborhood with a two-car garage, it's deep enough to park the largest Cadillac or Imperial of the era. Future projects include a new kitchen floor and a patio out back, but the rest will live on in vintage style!

Chris Zbinden

Aurora, Ill.

We purchased our midcentury modern home two years ago. The house was designed by Samuel Marx for the original owners and completed in 1954. It is not your usual midcentury modern: the rooms are anything but small, the floor plan is open, and it has four bedrooms, four-and-a-half baths and a soda fountain in the basement. The back of the house has floor to ceiling windows with large overhangs; there are many, many other architectural features as well. We are proud to only be the third owners of one of Marx's homes.

Tom & Carolyn Steward

Perryville, Md.

We were lucky enough to purchase this 1964 home from the estate of the original owners in 1997. Designed by a local architect, the choice of materials—California redwood and Delaware limestone on the exterior and fireplace—show the attention to detail. The house has 1,560 square feet and features three bedrooms, two full baths, a living room, family room, dining room and kitchen. Numerous people have told us that our home is the one that they remember in our neighborhood, and I have to agree: I certainly remembered this house from my childhood, and now I am lucky enough to be caretaker and owner!

Mark McLoughlin & Gary Rader

Put your home on our fridge; send in a high-resolution photo or sharp snapshot and a couple of sentences about your cool pad for our next issues. See contacts page 7.



Camp Hill, Penn.

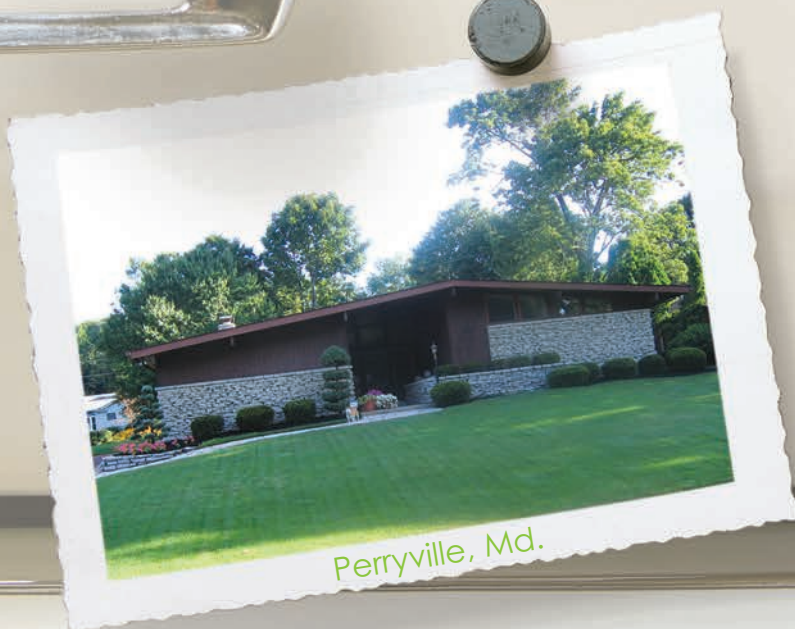


Aurora, Ill.



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Perryville, Md.

Texas Tear down

Midcentury Art & Architecture in the Lone Star State

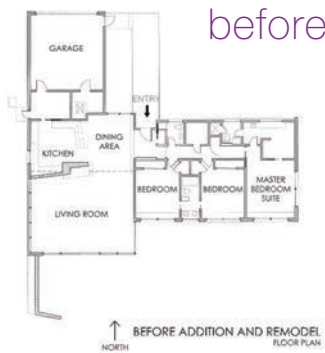
As one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country, Austin is facing the now too common conflict between preservationists and developers. Because of the soaring value of inner-city lots, ubiquitous “mini-mansions” are invading Austin’s older residential districts and midcentury homes are disappearing at an alarming rate. But due to the efforts of my wife, Hillary, and myself, one of the city’s finest period homes—an iconic example of postwar vernacular modernism—has been saved from the landfill.

text Robert Summers

photography Rebecca Fondren



Extending the horizontal roofline of the courtyard, a redwood trellis defines the outdoor space and casts ever-changing grid patterns.



The addition turned the L-shape footprint into a U, creating an enclosed entry courtyard that gives the Summers family another entertainment area and low-care landscaping. Yard art by Malcolm Leland for Architectural Pottery. Inside, original room dimensions and usages remained unchanged, other than the conversion of the master bedroom to an office.

Opposite: The view from the backyard pavilion takes in the sizable pool and shows the new solar panels on the roof of the house. The design of the guest house/pool pavilion (page 47) plays off the original structure, yet reinterprets it in an even more modern iteration.

Ripe for the wrecking ball

Designed by Austin's W.R. Coleman in 1957, the home was originally marketed as a teardown because of its half-acre lot and location just minutes from downtown, the state capitol and the University of Texas. But we saw the house as an opportunity to save one of the best local examples of period modern architecture while creating a less formal environment than our previous family home, a stately 1933 Prairie School American Foursquare.

We also wanted a new home that would provide interesting opportunities for indoor and outdoor entertaining, as we frequently open our doors to host charitable events for various arts organizations. And we knew that this house would be the perfect showcase for our extensive collection of paintings and sculptures made in Texas between the mid-1930s and the mid-1960s.

The intent of the restoration and renovation was to provide an efficient, usable and refined space. We engaged Austin architects Robert Steinbomer and Greydon Petznick, who were sensitive to our desire to have only historically correct additions to the house. The architects' charge was to update, expand and restore the original lus-





ter to this modern gem. Over a one year period, they carefully renovated the original three-bedroom, two-and-one-half-bath, 2,300-square-foot house while adding an 800-square-foot master bedroom suite, a front entry courtyard and, later, a rear pool pavilion.

Due to the condition of the house, we had to approach this project with open minds. While the major structural elements were fundamentally sound, the house was in disrepair, having been a rental property for several years and having endured the insult of a 1970s-era application of aluminum siding. The lot and original pool area were fantastically overgrown with invasive bamboo and other non-native species. And inside, while the open living, dining and kitchen configuration functioned efficiently, the house had a very small master bedroom and bath, and there was no guest room. Despite these daunting problems, the house had the pure and elegant modernist design elements that we had been searching for.





Opposite: Appliances by Thermador and new concrete countertops join resurfaced original cabinetry in the kitchen. The Sarrinen barstools are by Knoll, and David Brownlow's "Nocturne" hangs above.

Clockwise from upper left: The Summers' furniture is primarily vintage Knoll and Herman Miller, and original art hanging in the dining area includes works by Robert Preusser, Everett Spruce and William Lester. The sculpture on the table is by Gene Owen and the pottery on the 1950s Knoll credenza is by Harding Black. The hallway also functions as a modernist art gallery. The addition includes ample closets and a large master bath that has terrazzo flooring, clerestory windows, marble countertops and a walk-in glass tile shower/tub room.





In a corner of the main living area, three Nelson bubble lamps and paintings by Bror Utter, Dorothy LaSelle, Chester Toney and Cecil Casebier hang over the bar. An Eames Sofa Compact and Nelson bench with a view of the front courtyard.

Enhancing its modernity

On the inside of the home, the open-cornered brick fireplace with integral seating—the centerpiece between the kitchen and dining areas—was refaced with stucco. Original fireplace hardware and stainless surrounds were refinished and reinstalled. The kitchen was reconfigured and updated with concrete countertops (matching the original concrete seating at the fireplace), glass-tile backsplashes and new commercial stainless steel appliances. All original cabinets were resurfaced with laminates and vintage hardware was added. The original terrazzo floor that continues—without expansion joints—throughout the living, dining and kitchen areas was carefully restored to its gleaming original finish. Period-style cork flooring replaced older carpet throughout the entry, halls, the children's bedrooms and the new study (formerly the master bedroom).

Work on the exterior consisted of removing the original brick wainscot and a later addition of aluminum siding, and giving the house a new stucco skin. The decision to stucco over the brick on the exterior and the fireplace surround was driven by a desire to simplify the overall presentation of the home and limit the number of materials and textures. Inefficient aluminum windows were



replaced with storefront-type models, giving the home additional light and improved energy efficiency. Solar panels were installed on the south-facing roof of the main house, which provide approximately 10% of our total electrical usage.

A new master suite wing added parity to the front of the house by balancing the mass of the garage and defined a space for increased living and entertaining possibilities. The resulting glass-walled courtyard creates an improved street presence and added privacy. A pierced metal gate leads into the courtyard, which is flanked by a series of “floating” stucco walls, translucent glass panels and a 5,000-gallon koi pond with waterfall.

Backyard retreat

To increase overall functionality and enjoyment of the large back yard, we also added a 600-square-foot pool pavilion to the original pool area. Consistent with the main house restoration, the design for the pool pavilion was driven equally by function and aesthetics. Because the main house is conservative in size and lacked a guest room, we helped the architects design an outbuilding that would serve as guesthouse, office and entertainment venue, as well as providing additional gallery space for our art collection. The ultimate design was driven by these functions, but was also informed by our favorite modernist homes: Neutra’s Kaufmann House in Palm Springs, Mies van der Rohe’s Farnsworth House in Illinois and Johnson’s Glass House in Connecticut.

Ten-foot sliding panels manufactured by Fleetwood surround the pool pavilion living area and enclose the rear office/guest suite. All of the service requirements were packed into a cube-within-the-cube, which serves three specific areas: On the north side, the inner cube contains the kitchen and bar equipment, including an icemaker and dishwasher; on the south side it has a Murphy bed and built-in side tables for the guest bedroom; and on the west side, an indoor/outdoor steam shower opens to a small private dressing area, the hot tub and pool. The center of the cube contains the bathroom, which has all stainless steel fixtures and, like the master bath, is completely finished in glass tile. Finally, the long, uninterrupted interior walls that are not glass function as additional gallery space for our collection.

The material selections for the pavilion were driven by a simple idea—the authentic expression of the intrinsic qualities of the materials themselves. All metal is stainless steel or aluminum; the wood inner core is oil-finished sapele; the



Movable glass enclosures make up the walls of the pool pavilion. On the left behind the hot tub is the guest room, separated from the entertaining space by a metal cube housing the bath, mechanicals and more.

floors and pool deck are diamond-honed concrete that exposes the aggregate and offers traction when wet; the walls are plaster. There is no paint or other coatings.

We accepted the challenge to preserve one of the few remaining fully realized modernist residences in Austin. As our family home, a frequent location for events in the Austin art and architecture scenes, and the backdrop for our collection of period furnishings and art, the house is truly a “machine for living.” We use all of the original and new spaces daily—there are no formal rooms that sit empty until dinner parties or the holidays. Restored and expanded, our house is a multi-functioning, midcentury retreat in the heart of the capitol of Texas. 🏠

Attorney Robert Summers is the chairman of CASETA, the Center Advancement of the Study of Early Texas Art, and a trustee of the Austin Museum of Art. Learn more about indigenous Texas modernist art at his website, TexasModernArt.com. Hillary Summers has an art history degree from the University of Texas and serves on the board of Women and Their Work Gallery.

Site plans and before photo courtesy Steinbomer & Associates, Architects AIA.

modern masters for your ranch:



George Nelson (1908–1986)

George Nelson



Meet George Nelson. Chances are, you may already own a piece of furniture or lighting he designed. But did you know that if your house has a family room, or if you've ever sat in an office cubicle, that you have him to thank, too?

An influential author and architect, Nelson helped introduce America to modernism, and in the process designed some of the most memorable furniture, lighting and home accessories of the Atomic Age. Despite his numerous accomplishments, most people know little more about him than a few of his classic designs, like the Ball Clock or the Marshmallow Sofa. Yet 100 years

text Tim Sullivan

Photos courtesy Herman Miller



Nelson's success stemmed from his focus on solving problems in modern life.



Opposite: The iconic Marshmallow Sofa (1956) has cushions that can be interchanged to wear more evenly or create a new look.

With his bubble lamps, Nelson introduced an affordable and practical solution for a hanging fixture that remains popular today.

Photo: Treadway Gallery

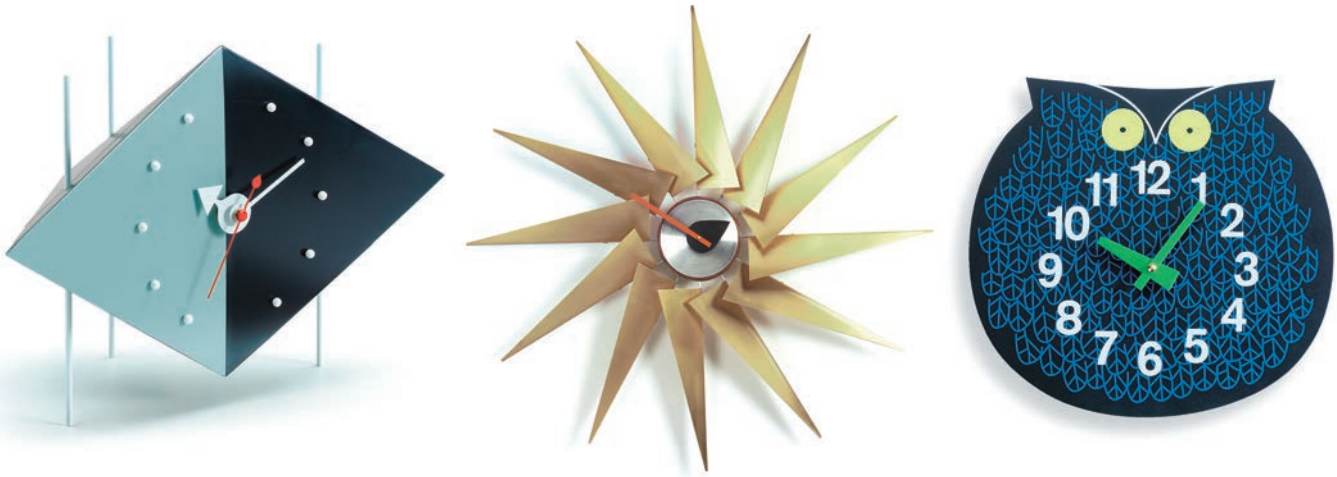
The Coconut Chair (1955) was designed to be comfortable in multiple sitting positions.

after his birth, some his designs are still produced and are well within the reach of many homeowners, even those on a budget.

Nelson grew up in Hartford, Conn. Intelligent and gregarious, he entered Yale but didn't think about becoming an architect until he ducked into the university's architecture school to escape a rainstorm. Walking through its halls, he encountered a student exhibit that intrigued him and he began to take courses in the field. He flourished in the architecture program, and before long was publishing articles in prestigious journals. Courtied by famous firms that wanted to hire him for his

excellent drafting skills, he chose a different path. After Yale he won the celebrated Rome Prize and spent 1932 soaking up European art and design at the American Academy in Rome.

While in Europe Nelson had the first of what he called "zaps"—flashes of inspiration that led to great creativity and innovative ideas. He decided to travel around the Continent conducting interviews with the leaders of European modernism (including Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe) so he could publish them when he returned to America. Back in the States, *Architectural Forum* recognized his talent and hired him



as an editor. Being characteristically strategic, Nelson used his new position to popularize European modernist architecture and to argue for more practical, modern residential design. He railed against the historic styles of houses his colleagues were building and insisted that architects create structures that would better the world and take into account contemporary lifestyles.

In 1945, Nelson published *Tomorrow's House*, a revolutionary book on the modern home. In it he offered practical advice for the homeowner and architect. He popularized the concept of the family room and recommended using wasted space inside walls for modular storage units like those in hardware stores. The book was a sensation, making it all the way to the *New York Times* best-seller list. Herman Miller founder D.J. DePree was so impressed that he visited Nelson in New

York and convinced him to become his new director of design. Nelson accepted and created innovative furniture and office solutions for the company until his retirement in 1972. He also enlisted a dream team of designers—including Charles Eames, Harry Bertoia and Isamu Noguchi—who created furniture that made Herman Miller's sales skyrocket.

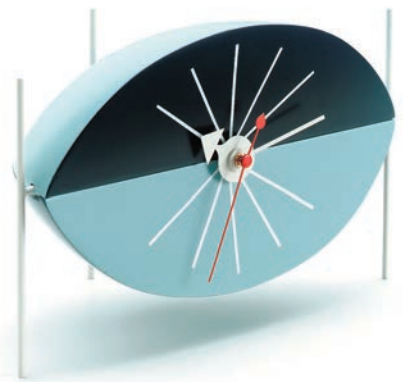
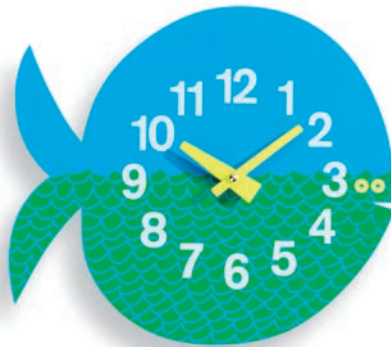
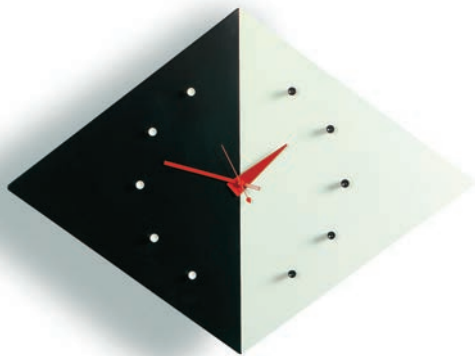
Nelson's success stemmed from his focus on solving problems in modern life. People understood his furniture and could afford it. Though he sometimes missed his mark—the Marshmallow Sofa had to be made by hand and was too expensive for the average consumer—many of his creations fit the casual lifestyles and budgets of millions of postwar families. The Coconut Chair was a multifunctional, yet sculptural lounge chair that people could relax in in a variety of positions. And Omar

Nelson's inventive and whimsical clocks are still available from Vitra. From top left are the Diamond, Turbine, Omar the Owl, Kite, Fernando the Fish and Watermelon clocks.

Photos: vitra.com

Nelson's early Swag Leg fiberglass chair (seen on page 5) flexed for comfort, making it useful in office or dining situations. Right, as the group looks today.





the Owl was a playful timepiece that made “watching the clock” fun for kids and adults alike.

In his Bubble Lamps, which were first created in 1947, Nelson sought to produce an attractive and inexpensive lighting fixture for the average American home. He used sturdy but lightweight steel and plastic to manufacture a variety of shapes and sizes, which could be hung in groups, put on stands or used on the table or floor. Affordable and durable, they are still produced today, providing a warm, even light source that is good to work and read by—something practical for every room of the house.

But Nelson was not just interested in the inside of a house. He was also an early environmentalist and insisted that designers should be “aware of the consequences of their actions on people and society.” His

goal was to do more with less, and his Swag Leg furniture groups did just that. Using a minimal material footprint, he bent steel to create furniture that was light but durable. Still in production, Nelson’s Swag Leg chairs and tables are now made with recyclable materials, honoring his interest in the environment.

George Nelson’s design philosophies are as relevant to today’s ranch house owners as they were to those of the Atomic Age: Live comfortably in a way befitting today’s lifestyle rather than create a slavish imitation of a past that never quite existed. Do more with less. And use products that make life comfortable without harming the environment or those around you.

Boston-based author Timothy Sullivan received his M.Phil. and M.A. from Yale University, where he is a Ph.D. candidate.



Nelson designed this pair of practical nightstands for Herman Miller, combining open storage for reading material with a drawer to hold more personal items. He also believed that modern families required modern solutions: In this 1950s tray table, Nelson created a flexible surface that was good for remote controls and TV dinners in the family room. Photos: Treadway Gallery

Dutch Treat:



Mainlining the '70s

text Angelo Madrigale

photography JWSamson.com, Samson Studios





a former cameraman for the notoriously violent underground wrestling league ECW, ranch house owner Matt Neideigh has lately been busy writing children's stories. "The first book is about a boy who, while hiking, has spores sprayed into his face by a malevolent tree lichen," he explains.

Matt inherited his father's rural Pennsylvania boyhood home from his late grandparents, a place where he spent weekends and holidays, playing with toys and running around the spacious backyard—much like his father before him. Located in the heart of Amish country, the Neideigh manse is tucked away in a heavily wooded cul-de-sac of classic ranches. Now, after claiming the house for his own, Matt found himself without any furniture to begin his life as a homeowner.

Built in 1962 for his grandparents, this custom ranch was their first home, one they preserved without any major changes or upgrades—sans central air and three-prong outlets. As children of the Depression, their house was a dream come true and represented all the comforts that hard work could grant them.

A massive pop-culture collector and trivia geek, Matt had been a personal friend of my wife and mine, as well as a steady customer at our nearby store, Metropolis Gallery. He was buying a painting here, a chair there, but after realizing he'd just become the proud owner of a totally bare ranch, Matt decided to enlist us to help him replace the charm he remembered the home having in his youth. He told us, "My hope is to create the sense that, when [you're] in my house, it's as though you'd been

Opening spread: As you enter the Pennsylvania ranch house, this G-Plan credenza and midcentury lamp are on your left; the living room seating group is to the right. Above the teak credenza hangs one of Matt Neideigh's framed original airbrushed Mexican movie posters.

On the hallway wall leading to the bedrooms is a teak glass cabinet holding Kidrobot's by artists like Mars-1, Doma, Pete Fowler, Jesse Ledoux, Jeremy Fish and Nathan Jurevicius—pop art toys that are currently a big deal (kidrobot.com). Above is "Captain America Fights The Terrorists" by Dallas artist Jonathon Kimbrell; to the left is Matt's collection of works by Lancaster artist Nancie Yang also seen on page 5.





The portable turntable has a vintage look that complements Matt's many copies of *Avant Garde* magazine and hundreds of LPs. "I try not to spend too much on an individual record—like I wouldn't go on eBay and spend \$500 on a single LP. But I tend to gravitate toward really rare stuff—Krautrock, lost psych recordings, obscure reggae. And I'll buy anything with cool cover art."

A Magnus Olesen couch and matching armchairs were recovered in vintage Knoll fabric, while the Jens Risom lounge and ottoman are shoehorned in next to the bay window. The tables are no-name teak, some Danish, some not.

Lisa Madrigale retooled the vintage fabric as drapes to frame the scalloped, valanced window.

injected with a hypodermic needle filled with whimsy."

Beyond ridding the house of some ghastly '80s wallpaper and tuning up the master bath, the three-bedroom, one-and-a-half-bath house needed little structural improvement. Though as Matt tells it, that was plenty of work. "There was so much glue, that was the most arduous process," he says. "Every room was floor to ceiling wallpaper and, in some areas, several layers of wallpaper—every surface. They were layered on top of each other."

His grandparents left most everything original, intact and in working order. Essentially, Matt had a simple yet classic ranch in which to showcase his massive personal collection of toys, books, records and artwork.

"It has truly become the family homestead," Matt's father, Ben, explains. He both grew up in the house and for a brief time lived there as a newlywed. "Though my wife and I never physically lived there without my parents, now Matt is the third generation. Even my grandfather was there for a time, so technically, this is now the fourth generation. When it was built, behind it were just fields, farmland, all of which has been built up since then."

With each room having its own theme, Matt had a distinct plan for every space, and he showed us everything from his preexisting collections that he wanted to include. A prominent part of this was a number of luridly airbrushed Mexican movie posters.

"I had bought all these original gory movie posters from this antique dealer who then ended up calling me three times a day for months trying to lure me into his house. I had to completely disappear and get my cell phone shut off to avoid him," Matt explains.

The wood built-in unit in the living room was an original feature of the house and Matt was intent on remaking the space surrounding it in a classic style. His appreciation for Danish modern was simple yet informed. "It's really the clean lines that that furniture had. With older stuff you can almost feel the weight of its history—who had sat on it or used it, the stories it holds."

An amazing bay window in the living room overlooks the front yard and lets in a ton of natural light. The cushions on a very rare vintage Magnus Olesen teak living room set were recovered with original Knoll fabric, and a



His grandparents left most everything original,
intact and in working order.



classic Jens Risom lounge and ottoman also made the cut. The vintage mirrored art was a major find, as it reflects all that light coming in as well as matching the wood and darker “burnt” colors of the fabric.

A second bedroom became Matt’s hangout room, done in the style of his favorite ’70s sci-fi films: “2001,” “Sleeper,” “Logan’s Run,” etc. The Henrik Thor-Larsen Ovalia Egg Chair was the number one item on his wish list; aside from being a true design icon, it’s got speakers, a phone jack and a reading light inside. The stereo, a super mod GE unit Matt already owned, was totally made for the space. Adding in a Rya-style rug as well as tons of classic Kartell plastic decor, plus the massive Pipistrello light gave this room the “Clockwork Orange” feel he was after. Many of Matt’s classic fantasy and sci-fi prints now reside here, along with original work

The vintage plastic b&w captain’s chair in the hang-out room is probably U.S. made, while the table lamp on the white Kartell shelving unit is a super rare Pipistrello lamp by Gae Aulenti. Above the light is more of Matt’s Mexican movie poster collection.

An Italian arc lamp looms over the Ovalia Egg Chair in the hang-out room; the orange tables are by Kartell.



The Word is ... Plastic

Helplessly obsessive collectors, my wife and I have gone through many different periods of midcentury hoarding. These would include a Herman Miller obsession, a blonde furniture period and a Danish modern freak-out. Before we were together, Lisa was dragging home Russell Woodard chairs back in high school. My father was a designer for Knoll, and subsequently filled my childhood home with any and every random prototype, factory second and other scrap that would be retrieved from the Design & Development dumpster.

So that brings us to now, where we have finally set-

tled (yeah, right) on focusing our obsession on plastic furniture. The commonality it shares with Pop Art—referencing the same high-concept attack on commerce that Warhol and Lichtenstein perpetrated—aligns it with the decadence and cynicism of its time. Plastic furniture, including many pieces by Verner Panton and European companies Kartell and Artemide, gave us the hi-fi future now by using bizarre new materials to create semi-functional home furnishings apparently ripped from Peter Max paintings. This era of design was a revolution that cast off the affordability and attainability of the furniture that came before it. While the Eameses gave high design to the masses, this new period was a style of decor seemingly made solely for creepy foreign



James Bond villains in some remote fortress.

By being so darned elitist, there are, of course, currently more critics of this style than impassioned collectors. The knock on plastic furniture would be obvious—it lacks the textural presence of wood, it's nearly impossible to repair and, when compared to Danish teak pieces for instance, is sterile and coldly futuristic.

And that would describe everything we love about it. Growing up collecting every plastic action figure in existence from He-Man to GI Joe to the more obscure Micronauts and Ultraman, everything I loved was plastic. It was brittle and rare—all primary colors and compulsively kept as close to "Near Mint" or "Mint Minus with slight coloration on card" or "VG++, slight wear to box"

as humanly possible. So why not inflate that childhood OCD to life size and fill a house with the stuff?

Some of the most celebrated designers of the era—we're talking late '60s through the '70s—Joe Colombo, Vico Magistretti, Giotto Stoppino and other fellow Italians—designed the sets of sci-fi films and TV shows, from desks and chairs to lighting and storage units. With a little luck, we've been able to amass a rare collection of their pieces and build our very own adult-sized secret-spy superhero hideout. For my whole childhood (and man-child adulthood), I've wanted little more than to live in the futuristic machine-worlds offered in "Space: 1999" and "2001: A Space Odyssey." Now, it's a reality.



In the breakfast nook is a Danish hanging metal light, a blue leather chair and folding table by Eames, Burke pedestal chairs and a grill seen in episodes of "That '70s Show." Artwork includes Cuban reissues of political posters and a large vintage Spirograph-esque plastic Op-Art piece. Kartell and Dansk are among the plastic kitchenware collection.

by Brooklyn artists Aya Kakeda and David Cook.

In the kitchen, Matt replaced the worn floor with Armstrong tiles. With bright lemon yellow paint he highlighted the cool architectural elements, including the recessed ceiling light. The original wood cabinets remain, as well as the Formica countertops and rotary-dial wall-mounted phone, with, shockingly, the original phone number. "That has been our phone number since before I was born," Ben told me. "[It] was the only phone number in my lifetime there that I ever knew."

A massive collection of bright red, yellow and orange Hellerware dishes sets the tone for the kitchen. "These things give me little kid flashbacks," Matt says wistfully. In keeping with the colors, vintage Burke chairs with blue cushions and propeller bases fit in well; Matt was delighted that they were the same model as those used on the original "Star Trek." Also gracing the kitchen is an Eames gate-leg dining table, an impossibly rare Velca collapsible coat rack (as seen in "Soylent Green") and a brick red, ball-shaped barbecue grill.

In the hallway is Matt's collection of Kidrobot toys, as well as paintings by emerging artist Nancie Yang. "Kidrobot makes these cool, really collectible toys that I can obsess over," Matt says. "I like that the toys are art. They're not shilling for a breakfast cereal or a lousy movie. They're just cool designs, miniature plastic sculptures."

These Kidrobots are flanked by possibly the coolest piece he owns—a framed check for "bunny rental" he received at age 8. Father Ben, a successful ad exec, was part of the development of the Cadbury Bunny and rented Matt's own pet rabbit, Jack, for the classic Easter commercials and print ad campaign.

We left the basement more or less untouched; Matt wanted a room where his friends could lounge and be generally lazy and inconsiderate without fear of destroying rare midcentury furniture. Combine that with the fact that his grandparents had made this basement the stereotypical ranch house rec room, there was little we could do to improve upon it. By transplanting his collection of arcade and pinball games and doing a little touchup painting, Matt left the basement as the little time capsule it already was. "I wasn't concerned with style as much; I wanted more of a bachelor area down there. The typical man



cave, but to the Nth degree," he explains.

The basement's hand-poured floor was an essential key to his inheritance of the house, as it was never to be altered or removed. Ben vividly remembers it being installed. "The basement floor went in two or three years after we moved in, so maybe [about] 1965. It was state of the art then. I believe it was called Torganal, or something like that. It was literally poured in place as a liquid. We were advised to get out of the house for several days while it set," he recalled. "The guys who installed it had to wear gas masks."

With his Dutch country hideaway refurbished and revitalized in under a year, Matt is content to spend his days holed up in his grandparents' ranch whittling away on his series of twisted children's books. Breaking at times to add to his ever-growing toy, art and record collections, he lives quietly in high style, a do-it-yourself modernist hermit.

Lisa and Angelo Madrigale are co-owners of the Metropolis Gallery in Lancaster, Penn. Specializing in midcentury furniture, modern art and designer vinyl toys, they combine art and design of the past and future; metropolis-store.com. Samson Studios is a full service commercial studio whose works include architecture, people, entertainment, fashion and more. ✨

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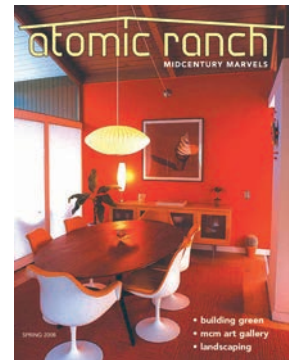
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Touring Palm Springs
Working Class Heroes 2.0
Atlanta's Northcrest Tract
Seattle's Paul Hayden Kirk



no. 19, Fall 2008
Landscaping
Round Cement House
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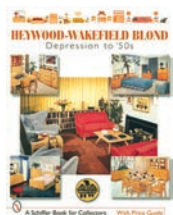


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San Jose Eichler
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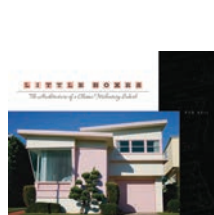
Heywood-Wakefield Blond: Depression to '50s

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Preserving Resources from the Recent Past

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



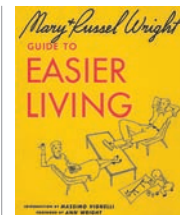
Little Boxes: The Architecture of a Classic Midcentury Suburb

Westlake, the quintessential postwar neighborhood in the Bay Area, gets the glamour treatment in this attractive hardcover book looking at the "boxes made of ticky-tacky." Rob Keil, 144 pp., \$35.00



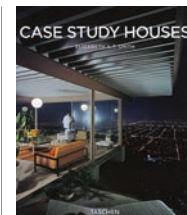
Eames

This small softcover book is a concise overview of the designs and talents of both Charles and Ray Eames. Highlights include their films, two Case Study houses, early plywood experiments and their numerous chairs. Gloria Koenig, 96 pp., \$14.00



Guide to Easier Living

This reprinted vintage book addresses modern living Wright-style, from organizing household chores to streamlining the dining table. Of particular interest are the sections on contemporary floor plans and Russel and Mary Wright's philosophy of informal living. A great look at the couple behind American Modern. Wright, softcover, b&w illus., 202 pp., \$18.95



Case Study Houses

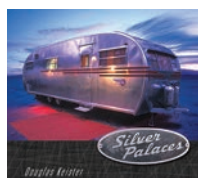
Arts & Architecture's iconic Case Study Houses are the be-all and end-all for most MCM fans; find out why in this accessible softcover book. In addition to Julius Shulman's vintage photos there are elevations, floor plans and contemporary color shots. Elizabeth Smith, 96 pp., \$14.00

Visit atomic-ranch.com 'buy' page for descriptions

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Silver Palaces

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



Inspiring 1950s Interiors

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



Forgotten Modern: California Houses 1940-1970

Custom Modernist homes—from Edward Fickett ranches and a condo by William Cody, to Wright-disciple Foster Rhodes Jackson's compound in Claremont—are covered in Alan Hess' thorough text. Some 25 architects are explored in Alan Weintraub's 300 contemporary photos, including Mark Mills' organic Bay-area vernacular. Hardcover, 280 pp., \$39.95



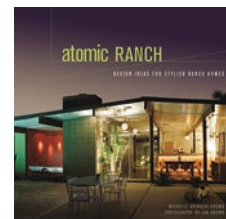
Tiki Road Trip: A Guide to Tiki Culture in North America

This updated guide to bars (and their signature drinks), restaurants, motels and more is for anyone with a passing interest in sampling nearby tiki hangouts or planning their next road trip. James Teitelbaum, softcover, b&w images, 360 pp., \$16.95



Saarinen

Focusing on his architecture—Case Study House #9, North Christian Church, the Irwin Miller House, the TWA Terminal—with abbreviated coverage of the Tulip and Womb chairs, this volume explores the roots of Saarinen's design sensibilities in interesting detail. Pierluigi Serraino, softcover, 96 pp., \$14.00



Atomic Ranch: Design Ideas for Stylish Ranch Homes

Complete your midcentury reference shelf with an autographed copy of our hardcover coffee-table book. From budget decorating, neighborhood preservation and landscaping to high-end remodels, there's plenty of inspiration in its pages. Michelle Gringeri-Brown & Jim Brown, 192 pp., \$39.95

and links to books, back issues and AR gear

cool|stuff



Paint it black (or not)

Don't you love that fresh paint smell? No, neither do we, especially after realizing that the smell is the off gassing of chemicals. Sounds yummy. Following up the Aura low-VOC line, Benjamin Moore has just released Natura, which isn't just low but zero-VOCs. Thankfully the green aspect doesn't limit you to crunchy granola approved muted tones; all of the Benjamin Moore color palette and color-matching is yours as well. Now if they only made choosing a color for our bedroom easier... Priced at \$49.99 per gallon, visit benjaminmoore.com for retailer locations.

Glass it up

Did clumsy holiday guests (or strong-tailed dogs) leave you with a mismatched set or just not enough plates? Maybe you've grown bored with the basic white set? Either way, some fresh looks (at an even fresher price) from Corelle would fit well with your vintage, modern or hand-me-down kitchen style. From delicate Asian-inspired floral patterns or sweeping graphic lines to your basic, always exciting vanilla. Sixteen-piece sets average \$75.99 at corelle.com.





Tweet tweet

Reward the return of local chickadees, cardinals or finches to your yard with a sweet modern birdfeeder. Handmade in Brooklyn, these little guys are perfect for garden or balcony. Give your own Sylvester something to drool over as neighborhood birds dine at the window. Not into birds? Hang near your front door for a stealthy landing pad for your keys. Produced with environmentally friendly processes, they're made of white earthenware with a leather cord (Perch) or colored ribbon (Lunchbox), both \$84. Go to perchdesign.net for purchase or retail locations.

Retro-laxing

Glide, rock or bounce in vintage style with Mulberry Street's original patio and garden furniture. Structurally sound and refurbished thankfully does not mean the character is buffed out along with the rust. Primed and repainted, these pieces are ready for a new life; your yard or mine? Prices range from \$299 for a refinished rocker or bouncer to \$1,900 for a five-piece patio set; available from mulberrystreetonline.com.







Whippich, Whippich Good

Empty nesters
graduate to mcm
and do it
on the
cheap.

jon and Karen Whippich look the part: nerdy/trendy glasses, logo T shirts and baggy shorts, and that laid back yet caffeinated undercurrent that says, “I’m a Portland graphic designer and my stuff is a little skewed—but I’m originally from the Midwest; can you tell?” The partners run Dotzero Design, producing things like a silk-screened poster for Buttrock—a battle of the bands—cards for Northwest pears that have old-timey cowboys rounding up a 10’ green Anjou, or an image of a vintage gas station attendant spouting their motto of sorts, “We will serve you design that you *will* like!”

Empty nest syndrome

The couple has two grown daughters and only drank the midcentury Kool-Aid with the purchase of their current home, a 1956 ranch whose initial attributes were its proximity to their downtown design studio and views east to Mt. Hood. “Karen had already gotten into the midcentury style at our 1938 Cape Cod, but it didn’t work that well with it,” Jon says. “We had nearly 3,000 square feet there and wanted to find something smaller since it was now just the two of us. I have always loved architecture and I like the quality of older homes, so looking specifically for a ’50s house had me a little leery. I didn’t want cheap hollow doors, cheap door-knobs and aluminum windows.”

text Michelle Gringeri-Brown

photography Jim Brown



He's had a conversion since, discovering that this postwar house was solidly constructed with steel beams and a vastly superior grade of concrete foundation than in their previous home. In the scorching real estate market of 2004–5 (remember that?), they were unable to find the virgin gem they hoped for, but this one had hardwood floors, unpainted Roman brick fireplaces upstairs and down, and a cast concrete block wall around the patio. It also had an '80s remodeled kitchen and bath, but turning those around seemed doable.

The Whippiches surmise that the previous owners remodeled 25 years ago and then never touched anything again. The kitchen's chipped vinyl tile floor, patched and stained plywood cabinetry, harvest gold mini blinds and fridge, and Jenn-Air oozing with grease—none of it spoke to their design sensibilities.

Five months sans kitchen

A remodeler friend gave them a good bid on redoing the kitchen and two baths. After demoing the kitchen and leveling the floor, he got too busy with his own houses, so the Whippiches received quick tutorials on laying VCT and ceramic tile and took on the tasks themselves. Another friend heartily recommended big-box-store cabinetry, but after wait-

ing nine weeks, the components arrived damaged and the largest ones were too big to fit through the kitchen doorway.

"The company said our installer would have to cut them in half and reassemble them, which we didn't feel good about and we didn't want to have to pay for the extra work," Jon recalls.

"And there was a huge gap, like an inch, between each door; it wasn't a butt fit at all like we asked for," Karen says, counting up the additional deficits. "They told me, 'That's normal. That's a butt fit.' " The couple returned the order and started fresh with a local company, Huntwood Custom Cabinets. Five more weeks without a kitchen ...

For the countertops, they chose laminate with a metal edging and black granite tiles for the backsplash. Because of a curved counter section, it was a challenge to find an installer for the edging, but after lots of calls two craftsmen familiar with coved vinyl baseboards brought it off. The Whippiches chose dark neutrals for the backsplash and counter instead of trendy colors or a boomerang pattern, thinking it will help keep the space from looking dated in a few years.

"We didn't want the kitschy, fuzzy-dice, jukebox, black-red-and-teal look, but we liked the touch of metal," Jon says. "We wanted it to look like an upscale '50s kitchen with some



Karen and Jon Whippich in their ad-hoc basement silkscreening studio.

The Whippiches hoped to recycle their kitchen cabinets at the local salvage center but they turned out to be site built, which meant they didn't have backs or in some cases, sides; when the contractor pulled them out they fell apart. The vintage-look pulls are from a big box store, the metal edging from Lansing Linoleum and the breakfast nook light fixture from Lamps Plus.





Opposite, left: The bed and dresser are a Heywood-Wakefield set that Karen's parents bought for themselves as a wedding present in 1952. The bedspread is vintage chenille. "The walls were covered with striped wallpaper with a grandma flower pattern," says Jon Whippich, "but we painted them blue and brown, which got rid of the busyness but kept the embossed striping."

The upstairs bath had nightmarish oak switch plate covers, towel bars and TP holder, and a yellowed fiberglass shower surround with a faded decorative scene. The Whippiches removed the enclosure and had 12" porcelain tiles installed on the floor, countertop and from floor to ceiling around the tub. "We like the verticality of having entire walls of tile, but also had some walls painted to keep it from being too cold, too much the same and too echoey—and it was cheaper," Jon says. A row of green glass tile accents the counter, and the cabinetry and pulls are the same as those used in the kitchen.

This page: The reupholstered couch and Mansion House coffee table have plenty of style assist from a Heywood-Wakefield table in the corner, original bullet sconces, vignettes of collectibles and a pair of lighted 3-D ballerina art. In the dining area, the coat closet retains its scalloped molding but corner spindles that boxed in the planter were removed.





vintage details like the soffits and the rounded display shelves,” Karen adds. “When you just have an empty room with a plywood floor, it’s hard to picture what it’s all going to look like. It’s not easy making the choices.”

Tweaking until it’s right

Lots of choice was involved in Karen’s selection of paint colors for the house. In their Cape Cod, they’d done the ’90s thing of painting each room a different color, and at the ranch they were inheriting a my-realtor-told-me-to-paint-everything-white scheme.

“Here, it’s so open that I wanted it to be the same color pretty much throughout,” she says. “Sitting in the living room, you can see all the way into the kitchen. I think of it as the flow, moving from one room to the next—that’s how I approach it. I did the colors off of ’50s lamps and artwork, the glasses we collect and barkcloth, which I love.”

The bedrooms each had one storage wall faced in wood veneer that got Karen started on a one-brown-wall theme,

something she carried over even into the laundry room. Being a professional designer doesn’t mean she’s immune to missteps, though. Take the living room with its greenish hue and dark accent wall.

“We painted when we first moved in but the couch hadn’t been reupholstered and a lot of the furniture wasn’t here, so I played off the bricks and chose a reddish brown. When the couch came in, [the wall] wasn’t working for me, so I kept changing it. I wanted a neutral brown—not a blue- or green- or red-brown. A color that kind of went away, that you didn’t notice.”

Color us frugal

The Whippiches’ taste used to run to dark ’30s and ’40s furniture; since moving they’ve fully embraced vintage of a more recent era. Other than the reupholstered late-’40s couch that they’ve owned for 15 years, a contemporary bentwood armchair and an inherited Heywood-Wakefield bedroom set, they’ve bought almost everything else for \$75 or



Jon and Karen collect a number of things: silk-screened drinking glasses with a variety of themes—states, national parks, bowling—small clocks, radios, lamps and a large collection of midcentury plastic Santas.



less. The Bernhardt dining set off craigslist was more, but a \$17 ribbed-vinyl slipper chair from Portland vintage store Shag, and a \$50 Heywood-Wakefield table now in the corner of the living room are typical finds.

As a designer anticipating trends, “my taste constantly evolves,” Karen explains. “If I had a \$500 lamp, I couldn’t just get rid of it. But with a \$25 one I can say Now I’m going to start buying chalkware or ’70s lamps and sell it on craigslist.”

“We love color, living in a designed space and just the interesting design of so many things,” Jon, a disciplined collector, adds. “We approach interiors from a graphic design point of view.”

As we went to press, he e-mailed us that Karen, who’d made the barkcloth drapes, had exchanged the boomerang-pattern master bedroom ones with the green floral sets in the living and dining room. “That made her want to paint one of the walls and then rearrange furniture, rugs and wall decor from room to room until things looked right to her,” he typed. The neutral “Milano” rug by the couch was now too light, so she swapped to a deep green one. And the pale wall that needed to be the same brown as the accent one to set off the lighter drapes—she did that with a leftover gallon, natch.

Sounds like the one-brown-wall mantra may just be so last year. Who knows what’s next? [12](#)

ranchdressing

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



Q: I was wondering about this chair I got for a couple of dollars at a junk store a while ago. I've always loved this type of living room furniture, but it's so hard to find in good shape. Of course, there are no manufacturer labels or any markings and, as you can see, it's well used. It has a backrest that drops down into what I would assume would be a very small child's sleeper. I want to have it recovered, as the original upholstery is too worn to salvage, but I am having very little luck in finding identical fabric. Do you know of a glorious hidden stockpile of NOS fabrics like this or have any ideas on the maker? There doesn't seem to be much info about this kind of "Levitz" living room furniture that I can find. I'd appreciate any enlightenment!

Josh Hudgens

A: David Storm, whose similar furniture was shown in *"Working Class Heroes 2.0"* (Winter 2008) fills us in: "The chair in the picture wasn't intended as a child's sleeper chair but was part of a standard living room set that would include a sofa and ottoman. It was fashionable for furniture of the era to be able to recline, and my own sofa and chair also have the "click" mechanism

with several degrees of reclining. You're lucky if the chair can still click down, as that tends to be the first thing to break and is very difficult to replace.

"These are fairly common furniture pieces and can now be found in many antique and vintage stores. The chair was mass manufactured then shipped to a department store or large furniture store and retagged with the store's label. As for authentic fabric, I would recommend calling local vintage and antique stores in your area. I personally would go with a modern fabric that looks vintage, though. Older fabric that has been sitting around for 50 years may have mold and strength integrity issues. There are tons of new fabrics that are very hard to distinguish from vintage, and a store like The Whole Nine Yards in Portland, Ore., is a great resource for finding interesting fabrics."



Q: I never miss an issue of your magazine, but I need help identifying the end tables that I found in a thrift shop. The tables are of heavy cantilevered chrome tubing with walnut laminate on the shelves. The design echoes Streamline Moderne and would look good as a set piece for "L.A. Confidential." There were no paper

or metal tags identifying the company. Could you or your readers help me identify the manufacturer?

Dennis Dell

A: *Pittsburgh-based academic-cum-Scandinavian-modern-collector Sam Floyd replies:* “The table is almost certainly American, though the design seems to purposefully echo Breuer’s work for Thonet. The chrome side panels suggest a mid-’50s date to me, though the walnut colored laminate doesn’t tell me much about its origin.

“There are a few designers of note—whose work is of real value—to whom the table might be traced that come to mind as outside possibilities: Donald Deskey, perhaps for Modernage or Amodex; Gilbert Rohde, likely for Troy Sunshade, were it his work; and Wolfgang Hoffmann for Howell. In each case, the date of the table would then be earlier—perhaps 1920s to ’30s American Streamline design of considerably higher quality. What makes me think the table is later is the style of the apparently aluminum runner that wraps the table’s surfaces, which is reminiscent of typical diner-esque pieces. Earlier ones would usually either lack such a design element altogether, employ a solid band of more substantial metal or involve a more heavily decorated motif.”

Q: I purchased this original UFO table at a yard sale. The previous owner bought it new in Sweden when he was in the military, from which he retired more than 35 years ago. It’s been painted but the “Smiley Face yellow” is peeking through, and it appears the paint could easily be removed to restore it to the original color. There are no identifying marks and I’ve been unable to find a single thing online about vintage UFO tables, but several sites sell reproductions for anywhere from \$4K to \$12K!

Please tell me more about this little table and its current value. As a newly single mother, if it has appre-



ciable value I would possibly be interested in selling it to help finance two growing kids.

Sally Shipman

A: *We went to Angelo Madrigale of Metropolis Gallery and the author of this issue’s “Dutch Treat”:* “The UFO table is not what you have. That’s a new piece from Superieur of Switzerland, first issued in 2002. Currently in production, I’ve seen them on various contemporary furniture websites. The designers of the UFO table were undoubtedly ‘inspired’ by your original, made in 1968 by a relatively unknown Milan design company called Asparte. The table was unmarked like many similar pieces of this era, and very little is known about it. It’s easily believable that it could have been bought new in Sweden more than 35 years ago by the original owner, though I doubt the table was ever distributed outside Europe.

“The table has an amazing look about it, though if it had a better-known designer attached to it, like Eero Aarnio or Luigi Colani, surely it could command astronomical prices. That being said, I would put effort into restoring it. With fiberglass, oftentimes the best way to fix up paint issues would be to get it to an auto body shop, as they’re accustomed to dealing with fiberglass objects.

“A lesser, relatively anonymous vintage version of your table was offered at Wright Auctions in June 2008 and was estimated at \$700–\$900. I would place the value of your table higher—maybe \$1,000 in its present condition, possibly double that or more if restored.”

ranchdressing

Q: I am trying to find a source for the light switches in our 1960 home. No one seems to have seen a switch like this.

David Allen



Q: I'm hoping that you may be able to help me learn a little more about the somewhat unusual light switches in my house. The house was built in the early '60s in Memphis and the



Honeywell light switches consist of a round push-button for each switch; most are single but there are also a few with multiple buttons that

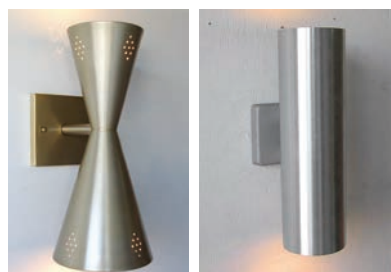
operate multiple lights. Do you know where I might find replacement parts such as the clear plastic switch plates?

Frank Steele

A: David in Mississippi and Frank in Tennessee share what look like the same switches and buttons. Tim Wetzel of *Rejuvenation* replies: "From the initial descriptions they seemed like one of many low-voltage switches (see *Ranch Dressing*, Issues 7 and 8) but after viewing more photos, these clearly operate on line voltage, 110–115VAC.

"The cosmetics bits—the wall plates and push button caps—are surely extinct. Looking on eBay or in the salvage market is all I can suggest, but they'll be uncommon to find in those places, too. (For more low voltage nitty-gritty, go to Tim's eurekamodern.com/low_voltage_switching.htm.)

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croutons

✱ On the topic of midcentury-appropriate furniture legs (Issue 20), D'Lana Arthur of Moon Shine Shades wrote to tell us they are a resource for five sizes of hairpin legs in four finishes; visit moonshinешades.com.

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.

atomicevents

February 28–March 1 Cincinnati 20th Century Cincinnati

Art Deco, Streamline, midcentury modern and Op/Pop furnishings will fill the Sharonville Convention Center, 11355 Chester Rd. Special 2009 Exhibit: Edie Harper—Unseen Mid-Century Works, paintings and prints from the 1940s and '50s. 20thcenturycincinnati.com

March 27–29 Chicago Chicago Modernism Show & Sale

Sixty international dealers of 20th century design with a Friday preview gala benefiting the AIA Chicago Foundation. Admission \$10, 1422 N. Kingsbury St; chicagomodernism.net

April 4–5 Phoenix Modern Phoenix Week

The fifth annual Expo and Founding Fathers of Modern Phoenix Tour focuses on the Uptown and Arcadia neighborhoods. In addition to resources for your midcentury or modern home, lecture



subjects include the commercial architecture of Phoenix (1945–'75), Cal Straub's career, researching the history of your home, historic color palettes, using cacti and succulents and more. Tours will visit midcentury condos and homes by

Ralph Haver, Al Beadle, Don Woldridge, Straub and others. Additional info and tickets at modernphoenixweek.com.



April 25–26 Dallas White Rock Home Tour

MCM and sustainable architecture is the focus of the 12-5 p.m. tour of five Dallas homes around White Rock Lake, including two Ju-Nel residences by Rowley and Wilson. Whiterockarts.org; 972.502.5815



Josh Jordan

May 1–3 Los Angeles Los Angeles Modernism Show & Sale

Now under the banner of Dolphin Fairs, the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium's gala benefits United Cerebral Palsy's Wheels for Humanity, followed by three days of vintage shopping from 90 international dealers. Weekend admission \$15, Pico & Main street; lamodernism.com

May 30 West Lafayette, Indiana Back to the Future: A Mid-Century Modern Home Tour

Tour five homes built between 1955 and 1966 with a connection to Purdue University. Four of the five were designed by Robert Smith, and they feature private front facades with expansive rear glass walls looking out to the university's golf course, stone accent walls and built-in planters. One home's turquoise front door color is repeated in its terrazzo and slate floors, tile counters and kitchen cabinets. Open 1:00 to 6:00 p.m. For tickets, visit historiclandmarks.org or call 800.450.4534.

Ongoing Albuquerque National Atomic Museum

Last fall the museum changed its name to the more staid National Museum of Nuclear Science & History, and in spring 2009 moves into a new 12-acre facility that will house aircraft, rockets, launch vehicles and parts of a nuclear submarine. Gearheads rejoice; atomicmuseum.org.

morewisdom

continued from page 11

✳ Regarding Chris Lowe's Fall 2008 request for information on midcentury furniture plans, like him I was stymied until I came across the works of Mario Dal Fabbro—Promoter of "Modernist" Furniture Designs (woodworkinghistory.com/manual_author1.htm).

His books, such as *How to Make Built-In Furniture: Step by Step Instructions for Constructing 102 Contemporary Built-Ins*, have never been equaled. Even titles that purport to be all-inclusive about a designer will not give you the schematics and full-sized detail drawings to actually build the furniture.

I bought most of my copies used on Amazon and they were quite reasonable. Even after 60 years his books are a gold mine; I wish a publisher would reprint them.

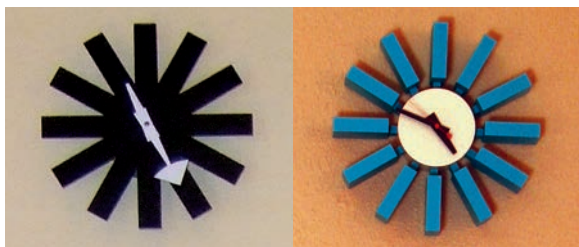
Bob Cox

Grand Haven, Mich.

✳ Chris Lowe and others may find *Tage Frid Teaches Woodworking, Book 3: Furnituremaking* from Taunton Press helpful. This book will teach you how to build fine wood furniture that will last hundreds of years. It contains detailed and scaled plans as well as advice and design principles that you can't find anywhere else.

Dimitri Tsimikas

Cranston, R.I.



✳ I love your magazine although I live in a 1915 Victorian twin. My previous house was a 1950s ranch with radiant floor heating in a neighborhood that included a Lustron Home. If I ever move again it will be back to a ranch.

One of the things I really like about your magazine is that it includes affordable homes and renovations. Allentown has a lot of 1950s ranches as well as Victorian row homes with high ceilings and beautiful wood floors that can incorporate some modern touches like the Asterisk clock in my kitchen.

I just wanted to let you know that the clock on page 25 in the Fall issue is a George Nelson Block clock, not an Asterisk, which is metal and comes in black and white.

Diana Frank

Allentown, Penn.

update



If you saw any of the online reports about the September 14, 2008 flooding of the Farnsworth House in Plano, Ill., the fourth since 1954, you'll be glad to know that by October the house was again open for special tours aimed at raising funds for its restoration. Situated on five-foot pylons in the flood plain of the Fox River, the Mies van der Rohe modernist icon was inundated with 13" of muddy rainwater. Furniture had been raised on milk crates, but a teak wardrobe, doors and the wing walls were stained and warped. Even the travertine exterior pavers have to be inspected for moisture retention, and there is an estimated \$25,000 of damage to the landscaping.

Tours are scheduled to resume in April 2009. "It is likely that we will still be conducting some restoration work at that time, but the house, even damaged, shows beautifully," says Whitney French, the site director. Watch progress and support their efforts at farnsworthhouse.org.
—ar editor

Write us at editor@atomic-ranch.com or send a note to Atomic Ranch, Publishing Office, 3125 SE Rex St., Portland, OR 97202. We'll print the good ones.

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Interior design consultant: Judith Rand, Tustin, Calif., judithrand.com ✖ 714.544.2303

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