

atomic ranch

MIDCENTURY MARVELS

- ps weekend house
 - eichler kitchen reno
- budget makeovers
 - indiana mod

SUMMER 2009



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A Jerry Johnson chair with a U.S. patent date of 1964 was thought to never have been put into production, yet here it—or a very similar cousin—is in a San Jose Eichler. (A slightly different version was living in Littleton, Colo., in “Channeling Dash,” summer 2008.) The Nagwani family rescued a much-maligned flat-roof Eichler and refreshed the original paneling and installed black slate floors throughout. Story page 46.

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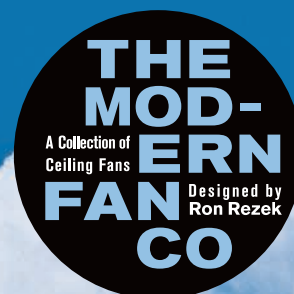
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◀ Designed by
Jorge Pensi



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modernwisdom

✱ I was floored to see the article on A.D. Stenger's houses in Austin in your summer 2008 issue. Several years ago I lived in Barton Hills, down the street from one of Stenger's smaller houses that had been built for a local artist. I was so intrigued that I did my own research on Stenger and his work. The original homeowner's murals were still on the walls, and there was a studio separate from the house high up in the trees.

Alas, the house was not for sale and we ended up in Massachusetts living in a former Portuguese sausage factory.

Patty Zerhusen

East Cambridge, Mass.

Ah Portuguese sausage—makes me think of Otto von Bismarck and the legislative process. But I digress ... Check out Stenger's Austin modernism in Issue 18, available at atomic-ranch.com.

—ar editor

✱ Your "Working Class Heroes" article was great, but the shot of Kari Briggs in her '50s kitchen actually made me cry. I said to my husband, "Oh my God—here's the kitchen of my dreams!" I used to think that a kitchen like that would only appeal to me because I'm a real love-all-things-vintage nerd. It gladdens my heart to know that not everyone is doing a Home Depot/HGTV gut and remodel to their vintage kitchens, but that they see them as I do—intrinsically beautiful, charming, well-crafted and, yes, even functional.

We recently went to an open house at the coolest '50s ranch but the kitchen was turned into a Tuscan nightmare! I was so appalled that I made a big stink about it in front of the real estate agent, who was doing everything she could to shuffle me out of the house. Hey, if I'm not going to fight for the preservation of kitchens like Kari's, who will?

Thank you for Atomic Ranch. It comforts my midcentury soul.

Lisa Plettinck

Fullerton, Calif.

✱ I hope you can help me identify my metal kitchen cabinets. My home was built in 1925 but extensively



remodeled in the 1950s, judging by the Franciscan tile in the kitchen and bath. I don't know which era the cabinets are from—they could be Streamline Moderne or midcentury modern. The cabinet in the photo has built-in florescent lighting in the bottom and some of the shelves have perforations to allow dishes to drip dry. The sliding reeded-glass doors are perfect for living in earthquake territory since they don't fly open and let the contents come crashing out.

We're redecorating the kitchen in midcentury style to match my Franciscan Starburst dishes. I am trying to find the best way to remove the many layers of paint so I can restore the cabinets to original condition. Some have suggested sandblasting, while others say chemical dipping would be better. I've even considered taking them to an automotive shop for stripping and painting! I have looked on the Web many times and have never found anything like these cabinets.

Rondi Werner

Glendale, Calif.

✱ I absolutely love your magazine and wanted to share some before & after photos of the kitchen of our midcentury modern home. The existing bottom cabinets were very, very old and not worth fixing, and the stove definitely needed to be replaced. We didn't want to go retro and duplicate the original style, but wanted something more contemporary.

We ended up getting IKEA wood cabinets for warmth to balance the stainless steel appliances. Then we had two of our original upper cabinets repainted with an electrostatic painting process, and added a



BEFORE



AFTER

backsplash from Artistic Tile in NYC that we think is a nice complement. The countertops are CaesarStone and the floor is porcelain tile that looks like cement.

Susan Wood

Westchester County, N.Y.

Youngstown, Geneva and St. Charles are some of the metal cabinetmakers that were popular in '50s kitchens, as Rondi's and Susan's geographically far-flung houses show. We've featured several homes with metal cupboards, which homeowners have reconditioned with lacquer paint or have, in fact, taken to an auto body shop for a glossy new pro finish.

—ar editor

* I have been enjoying Atomic Ranch greatly since I discovered it about a year ago. Since so much of your magazine and advertising centers around finding the

proper midcentury accoutrements, how about a classified section, either in the magazine or on your website? I think readers would find it a valuable resource.

I also really wish you could provide a little more information about the cost of the projects featured. I am often left wondering if we can afford much of what I see. Other home magazines have the same problem; I suspect it's an effort to retain some privacy for the people involved. But I perceive this magazine as being more for regular people than the other elitist publications that assume all readers have infinite funds. As such, I look to you for realistic options, but I'm left uncertain if that's true or not since the finances involved are almost never specified.

Thanks for listening and keep up the good work.

Andy Tubesing

New Mexico

* While reading the winter 2008 issue, I loved the focus on modest ranches featured in "Working Class Heroes." I, like many of your readers, will never attain the status of owning a million-dollar Eichler, but lust over my midcentury ranch all the same.

I'd like Atomic Ranch to focus more on everyday midcentury enthusiasts—those of us that are living the dream on a thrift-store budget. The roots of midcentury design were accessible to the average homeowner, but the majority of the homes featured appear to be expensive stagings. I hope to see more homes showing creative interiors that relate to the average ranch owner.

Kiley Haskins

Bloomington, Ind.

Actually, none of the homes we feature are staged, and we shoot the homeowners' furnishings and accessories pretty much as found. Sometimes we move a chair. Our aim is to show the whole mix of postwar houses—from custom architect-designed homes to the humble 2/1-w/attached-garage ranches built in most every state.

When we publish thrift-store furnished homes, we hear from the folks who think they're too kitschy. When we feature high-end interiors, we hear from readers who, like you, want to see more affordable

morewisdom

solutions for homes that look like their own. We think that there are inspiring ideas in even the most rarified home environment that the rest of us can benefit from: color combinations, furniture configurations, collectibles, landscaping solutions. And we encourage those of you with modest ranches, great interiors and strong photo skills to send some shots to editor@atomic-ranch.com for feature consideration in the "Heroes" series.

—ar editor



* I first wrote to AR in 2005 to challenge you to highlight more traditional ranch homes and to sing the praises of the Ranch Acres and Lortondale neighborhoods in Tulsa. Your magazine has succeeded in meeting my challenge. Meanwhile, the landscaping, the homes and the Ranch Acres neighborhood have all matured since that writing.

Of special note is the December 2007 designation of the Ranch Acres Historic District in the National Register of Historic Places. This designation was the culmination of a two-plus-year effort that was, in part, inspired by your magazine. The District contains more than 300 ranch-style homes reflecting a variety of styles, including colonial, California contemporary, neo-classical and traditional.

In October 2008, the National Trust for Historic Preservation held its annual conference in Tulsa and Preserving the Recent Past was one of the focal points. Several tours of the Ranch Acres and Lortondale neighborhoods took place, and we were honored to have

our home included in one of the tours. I have attached a recent photo of our "club room" for you guys to see. You should feature Ranch Acres in a future issue.

Thanks for keeping AR alive.

Steven Novick

Tulsa, Okla.

Beth, from modbetty.com, sent us a link to another ranch beauty that's been placed on the National Register, the League House in Macon, Ga. The pdf is 57 pages, so the lazy among us might want to skip to the photos beginning on page 32 of the file: nps.gov/history/nr/feature/weekly_features/LeagueHouse.pdf.

—ar editor

* I tend to never respond to articles in the magazines we subscribe to here at the office, but in this case I am compelled. I truly enjoyed the editorial showcasing one of Atlanta's more unique MidMod neighborhoods (winter 2008). As an architectural design consultant I have long enjoyed visiting the Northcrest neighborhood and, with each visit, I typically discover new details that I overlooked the time before.

Many communities in Georgia experienced the economic boom that occurred across the nation during the years following World War II. Examples of MidMod commercial and residential styles are considered hidden treasures in many of our communities but, ironically, rare examples are being demolished every day. I applaud Atomic Ranch for its stylish and cutting edge approach to increasing the awareness and appreciation for this very important phase of American architecture.

Chip Wright

Buford, Ga.

Spring 2009 corrections: Jon & Karen Wippich's name was misspelled in "Whippich, Whippich Good," and as Daniel Istrate pointed out, those are Bertoia bar stools on page 44. Additionally, the McLoughlin/Rader house on page 36 is actually in Columbus, Ohio. Our apologies.

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.





Artwork by homeowner Carlos Cardoza stands up to the killer vintage furnishings in this 1954 Dallas ranch. In the dining area, "Chaetodon," a yellow, black and white acrylic work, holds its own against the gray and melon walls and Panton chairs.

Dinocchios pad

W

hen classic midcentury modern architecture comes to mind, it's likely that north Dallas is not the first place that you think of. New York City? Yes. Chicago, St. Louis, Miami, Phoenix? Quadruple check. What about downtown Dallas, home to Philip Johnson's Chapel of Thanksgiving and "open mausoleum" memorial to John F. Kennedy, as well as the Dallas Theater Center designed by Frank Lloyd Wright? But north Dallas—probably not.

How about adding "residential" to the above? More than likely you conjured images of the Case Study houses, or the California tracts of Palmer & Krisel, Cliff May and Joseph Eichler, or maybe the handful of custom suburban commissions of Eero Saarinen or Wright's suburban work in prosperous industrial cities throughout the Midwest. But not likely north Dallas with its two-story Southern Belles and traditional brick ranches.

The truth, though, is that the north side of Big D is spotted with midcentury gems.

text Noah Fleisher
photography David Lyles

An unsigned oil set the color wheel for this area just outside the master bedroom (next spread). The apple green Coconut chair and a Saarinen side table anchor the corner, which looks out to the vintage furnished deck and backyard pool.









The furniture is the result
of years of study,
of honing an artistic sensibility and—
most of all—
of patience in waiting for the right piece

Tomorrowland

Ask any true modern architecture devotee in Dallas and they will mention not just north Dallas, but the neighborhood known as “The Disney Streets.” There you’ll find what might arguably be a theme park of great mid-’50s suburban home building ideas, concepts that took to heart the lessons of postwar construction and machine-age technology. These homes celebrate the clean lines and open spaces that defined the possibilities of the new era of American middle-class prosperity. An hour spent on a leisurely drive through streets with names like Cinderella, Peter Pan and Snow White is to feel, if only for a moment, what the future must have looked and felt like more than half a century ago.

If the optimistic ideology may now seem quaint, the architecture doesn’t. Simply put, the homes have held up through the countless cultural shifts of the past 50 years. Many of the inhabitants of these quietly important houses in this quietly important neighborhood see themselves, rightly, as stewards of classic design, and none more so than Carlos Cardoza and his partner, Teddy Lewis, who occupy one of the most classic midcentury houses on Pinocchio Drive.

Cardoza, a graphic designer, arrived in America with little material goods but a great eye for design. The couple has been profiled in the local press for the period-perfect Christmas decorations they painstakingly put up each year, and they are always a featured stop on any Dallas tour of residential modernism. On his journey to building a world-class furniture collection Cardoza used his design sensibilities to craft a modernist’s dream home.

The all-white master bedroom has what looks like a Marshmallow sofa genome experiment run amok. In reality, a round IKEA bed is teamed with a headboard made of barstool cushions affixed to a hardware store metal frame by the homeowners. Artwork includes “Wall of 100 Moons” by Barbara Teel and a sculpture of the face of David by Michelangelo.





Many of the inhabitants
of these quietly important houses in this
quietly important neighborhood
see themselves, rightly,
as stewards of classic design

Inside and outside, no detail has been spared. The furniture is the result of years of study, of honing an artistic sensibility and style and—most of all—of patience in waiting for the right piece of furniture at the right time. But the journey first started when Cardoza saw the house.

"I knew immediately that this was 'my' house," he says. "Even more beautiful was the 'For Sale' sign in the front yard." Within a matter of weeks, the house was purchased and the long awaited collaboration between artist and perfect canvas began.

Parade Queen

Built in 1954, the four-bedroom, four-bath house with attached two-car garage was designed by Gordon Nichols, a Dallas builder who specialized in contemporary homes. Nichols and other local builders and architects began designing homes for Midway Hills, a new tract of Disney-themed streets that would feature all of the "mod cons" available at the time. Nichols' wife, according to press materials from the 1954 *Parade of Homes*, "does all decorating of homes," and also "approves all plans as to suitability from a woman's standpoint, before a job is started."

The sprawling flat-roofed design was built with beams running the length of the house, maximizing space and light. The post-and-beam construction allows the living, family and dining rooms to be combined into one large area. A massive freestanding fire-

Gino Sarfatti designed the Arredoluce Triennale lamp in the family room, which illuminates "A Tribute to Bill Hinz," a painting by Carlos Cardoza.

place, with built-in gas grill, serves as the visual center. The back walls of the L-shaped house have floor-to-ceiling windows and sliding glass doors with a spectacular view of the deck and kidney-shaped swimming pool.

Over the years Cardoza and Lewis compiled a collection of furnishings that reads like a Designer Hall of Fame: Arne Jacobsen, Charles Eames, Isamu Noguchi, George Nelson, Alvar Aalto, Le Corbusier, Eero Saarinen, Harry Bertoia and numerous others. While each room has a color scheme that coordinates with the pieces in it, groupings are constantly being rearranged and the walls are known to boldly change color with the seasons. Stylish and comfortable, the home serves as the focal point for Cardoza and Lewis' wide social network.

"An important aspect of our life is sharing our home with family and friends," Lewis says. "The beauty of midcentury modern furniture lies not only in its design, but in the quality of its construction. Even though some of the furniture is 40 and 50 years old, it is so well constructed that it can withstand daily use with ease."

Gemstones

The focal point of the formal living room is a Jacobsen Egg chair and ottoman in bright royal blue vinyl accompanied by a blue 1952 Karpen sofa, a Corona chair by Poul Volther, a Jacobsen Swan chair, a Nelson Coconut chair and a white Nelson Ball clock. The overall look is completed with an Eames Elliptical table and a grouping of Nelson lantern and cigar lamps.

The stars of the dining room are a massive Saarinen marble-top tulip dining table and six Verner Panton Cone chairs, all illuminated by another Nelson bubble lamp. An Eames Storage Unit, a Nelson Eye clock and a Bird chair and ottoman by Bertoia pop against the gray painted wall. In the family room, a tufted red sectional sofa faces the fireplace, and a Noguchi coffee table and Triennale three-armed cone lamp furnish the comfortable, casual area.

The mirrored master bedroom contains a unique, round bed

The living room chairs are important midcentury designs and each adds a graphic punch to the black and blue living room. From the left-hand room divider, which was saved from a since-demolished MCM in Dallas, panning to the right, are a Jacobsen Swan (green), Volther Corona (white) and Jacobsen Egg (bright blue). The original white acoustical tile ceiling mirrors the shiny white porcelain tiles on the floor; the Cardoza painting on the wall is called "Hombre."







The kitchen is full of original and new details, from the oversize whisk hanging from the ceiling and the diamond stainless steel backsplash and door to the birch cabinets and '50s collectibles. The three pink lamps were once a tiered brass fixture that the homeowners separated and sprayed with silver paint.






and two Eames pieces, a rocking chair and La Chaise. At the other end of the house, one bedroom has been converted to a home office with a Broyhill desk and credenza and an apple green Pastil chair by Eero Aarnio. The guest bedroom off the family room houses Cardoza's collection of tin toys dating back to the 1930s and an Eames rosewood 670 lounge chair and 671 ottoman, a subtle homage to the husband and wife designers who were avid tin toy collectors themselves.

Not to be outdone, the poolside deck is decorated with the same attention to detail and style as the interior. An overhang provides shade for a Saarinen tulip dining set and a taller bar set, while sun lovers can bask in one of four Bertoia Diamond chairs under a vintage aluminum umbrella.

"It is a wonderful feeling," says Cardoza about the journey that brought him from Guatemala to a classic home in Dallas. "I came to this country with little more than a suitcase. Now I've got a great modern home full of classics, all worthy of being in a museum collection."

Sometimes you have to step backward in time in order to arrive in style. The Nichols House on Pinocchio Drive is a perfect example of this, as are Cardoza and Lewis, the owners and stewards of its legacy. 

Above and opposite, below: This ranch shows a typical contrast in its facades: the private front sprawls across the lot, while the back is almost all windows, and the L-shape embraces both covered and wide-open entertainment spaces.

Noah Fleisher has written for many antiques publications and also writes a daily blog at stylecenturymagazine.com/stylewire. His forthcoming book, *Warman's Price Guide to Midcentury Modern Furniture and Accessories*, is due out summer 2009.

home page

Portland, Ore.

My house was built in 1941 and I am the second owner. What I love about the house is its '50s-looking exterior and its '30s interior. It was pretty much untouched with all sorts of interesting details. The outside is very plain and was originally white with green shutters (soon to be that way again). The inside has arches, a curved staircase, a bowed-front Art Deco fireplace and mottled hex tile in the bathroom. It has a foot in both the pre- and postwar worlds, fulfilling my love of both old and modern.

Chris Wilson

Oak Lawn, Ill.

We used to live in a Chicago bungalow but have since embraced midcentury. We bought our house from the original owners, who had it built in 1964. It's a tri-level (with a bonus sub-basement) featuring 13' vaulted ceilings, red cedar tongue-and-groove ceilings throughout and exposed brick walls. The house was in pretty tired condition, so we have been renovating it a room at a time; so far we've completed the kitchen, den and one of the bathrooms, as well as all of the landscaping. It's funny: when the house was first advertised, it was described as being Art Deco!

Keith & Nancy Majeske

Jim Thorpe, Penn.

I purchased this house as a weekend place in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. When I bought it, the entire place was covered in dark brown wood paneling and there were lots of small rooms, although none of the walls were load bearing. I proceeded to take out all of the paneling and open things up as a true ranch should be. Now my only problem is that I can't stop buying vintage furniture; I guess it's a good problem to have.

Kraig Kalashian

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.



Portland, Ore.

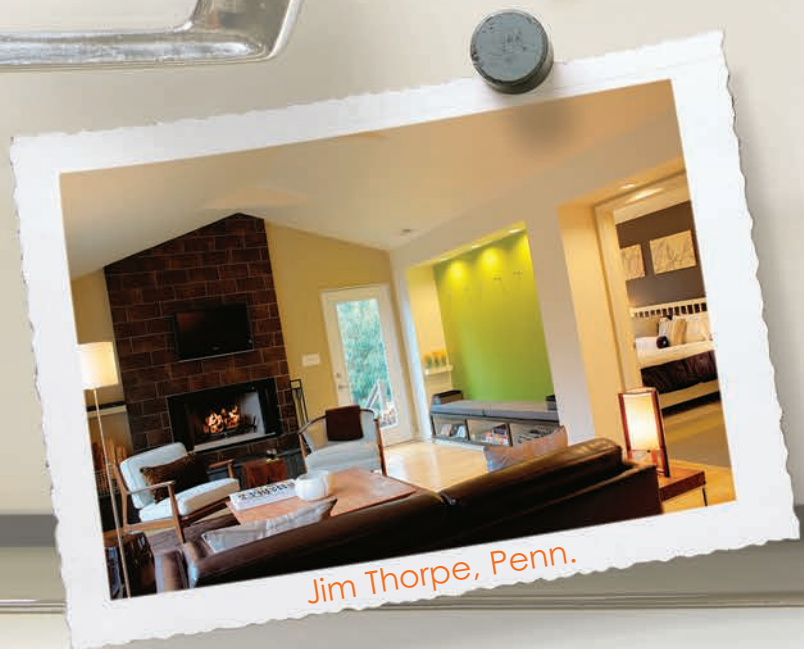


Oak Lawn, Ill.



P

H



Jim Thorpe, Penn.

Thornhurst Addition:

When Indiana Went
ATOMIC



text & photos Connie Zeigler
additional photography DeAnne Roth



IN her short 44 years of life, Avriel Christie Shull became one of the Midwest's most significant residential designers. Growing up in a one-horse town outside of conservative Indianapolis, Shull was the go-to gal for modern home design in Indiana.

With no formal training in architecture, she became a master designer/builder whose custom homes continue to make their mark on the neighborhood landscape of Indiana's capital city and its suburbs. Years before branding was an essential component of business success, the name "Avriel" became both a well-known brand and a synonym for modern design.

CARMEL CORN

In the mid-1950s, 25-year-old Shull set about planning a tract in Carmel, a small farming community outside Indianapolis. At Thornhurst Addition she made decisions that were unusual in the context of postwar Indiana housing, deciding to build only modern-style homes. Although the rush of marriages that followed the end of World War II made housing one of the most important life issues in the U.S., most new homes built in postwar central Indiana were either simple ranches or small, revival-style designs.

Local newspapers, rife with advertisements for freshly platted subdivisions and additions full of sparkling





new homes, showed illustrations of various ranch iterations. In one ad, a house deemed a “California Contemporary” was really a simple L-shaped ranch described in the copy as a “lovely country colonial.” Indiana ranches in the 1950s were generally small, single-story homes with redbrick or limestone veneer. Their facades featured either picture windows or a large central window framed by narrower casements. All these new ranch homes filling Indiana’s suburbs and small towns meant that Avriel Shull’s work in the modern genre set her and her architecture apart.

LIKE EICH

Her sense of style was extraordinary in Carmel and in '50s Indiana. This was not California, where smart, young developers like Joseph Eichler were earning reputations as innovators of modern design. It’s likely that Shull knew about Eichler homes as they were publicized in national magazines like *Life*, which had done a spread on her own 1951 wedding to reporter Robert Shull.

Similar to Eichler, Shull used post-and-beam construction to allow for wide expanses of floor-to-ceiling windows that linked inside to outside. Lacking California’s temperate weather, she nevertheless chose to bring the outside in by limiting visual obstructions between interiors and exteriors. Patios sheltered by walls or plantings and viewed through full-length windows and sliding glass doors turned rear or side lots into living space during the warmer months. They also made indoor rooms chilly and drafty during the cold Indiana winters.

If Shull was not an avowed Eichler disciple, she certainly came to adopt a point of view about home design that paralleled his. In a 1960 quote, Eichler said, “Beauty is achieved by the architect’s skill in



Shull's personality
came across in
Life magazine's
spread on her
1951 wedding.



designing details, his blend of materials and proper proportions, and above all, the exercise of good taste. In short, we produce a work of art." Fifteen years later, Shull echoed that sentiment. "I am an artist—painter, sculptor, engrosser, designer—all that the word implies. I have been since birth. I am also a master builder and all that that implies. ... I am horrified by the number of registered architects who profess to be designers and engage in the practice at the sacrifice of all of the very disciplined elements the word 'design' denotes."

INTERIOR TRENDS

While modernist architects were designing new sorts of exterior boxes, interior designers were picking up modern cues that Shull also adopted in her Carmel homes. When industrial designers Russel and Mary Wright wrote *Guide to Easier Living* in 1951, they proselytized modern ideas about decorating and maintaining a newer, less formal home and lifestyle. The Wrights helped solidify a national trend toward informal living in purportedly "self-tidying" streamlined homes.

Shull's interiors mirrored the era's new ideas with lots of built-in cabinetry—perfect for stowing away clutter—and combined kitchen and dining areas for easy entertaining and informal family meals. The interior plans that she drew included sofas with hairpin legs, vinyl topped stools and tripod-leg lamps. Spiny-armed "Sputnik" fixtures decorated entryways. Stainless steel kitchen appliances and star-shaped doorknob escutcheons were other space-age design elements found in Thornhurst homes. A disciple of modern living, Shull revealed her beliefs both inside and outside her homes.

According to Rosie Crowley, who bought a Thornhurst Drive home in 1960, Shull didn't hesitate to express frustration with potential buyers or even longtime homeowners if they decorated their homes inappropriately. Shull's daughter Bambi remembers her mother showing up at one of the homes to give the surprised owner a lamp that she had decided must be added to their living room. More often than not she got her way in these incidents of guerrilla decorating. She had a reputation for a quick temper that didn't heed dissenting viewpoints and blue language when expressing her own. Gary Blanton, who owns a home in Thornhurst Addition, worked for her as a carpenter and recalls that she "swore like a lumberjack." And competing local builders remember well her showing up for work in a bikini and a tool belt.

BUSINESS MODEL

Whatever her eccentricities, Shull was a smart businesswoman. Like developers across the nation, Indiana's postwar housing designers sought FHA financing approval so they could market their homes to veterans on the G.I. Bill and to other young marrieds with moderate incomes. Shull followed that example in Thornhurst. In 1955, she sent her first three prototype home designs to the FHA for approval. Being both aesthetically inclined and street smart, she would not sacrifice good design, but knew that sales depended on FHA mortgages so she made her designs work within federal guidelines.

Construction in Thornhurst Addition began in 1956. Most homes in the tract were completed by 1960, but Shull didn't build the last home until 1971. By then she was bringing along her two daughters, Bambi and September, to help clean up around the construction sites. By the time she died from complications of diabetes in 1976, Shull had built 21 modern homes in the middle of the cornfields of central Indiana.

She had also become a well-known modern designer across the state by then and was selling house designs to customers all across the U.S. and Canada. In fact, husband Richard Shull continued to fill orders





for the residential designs she created for *Home* and other house pattern magazines for a decade after her death. But it was at Thornhurst that Avriel made her name in the modern design world.

Many of the current homeowners have lived in Thornhurst for more than 20 years, raising children who have since bought their own Shull homes. Even in the shaky economy that has made Indiana one of the hardest-hit real estate markets, Thornhurst Addition homes rarely go on the MLS listing, selling instead by word of mouth to a friend or to one of the potential buyers who put notes in neighbors' mailboxes saying that he or she would love to own a Thornhurst home if ever they decide to sell.

No one would ever call 1950s Indiana a hotbed of modern design; in fact, no one would call 2009 Indiana such a thing. But a small community in the middle of the state, designed and built by a boss lady in a bikini continues to proudly display its midcentury modern style to a growing group of devotees. 🏡

There are 21 Avriel-designed homes in Thornhurst Addition and seven in-fill houses added after her death. A nomination to the National Register of Historic Places is in preparation. If accepted, it will be the first addition of midcentury modern homes recognized as a historic district in Indiana. To learn more about saving homes and neighborhoods in your state, *Preserving Resources from the Recent Past* by Jeanne Lambin is invaluable; it and *Guide to Easier Living* are available at atomic-ranch.com.

Connie Zeigler—a historian, writer and lover of midcentury modern—and artist DeAnne Roth both live in Indianapolis.



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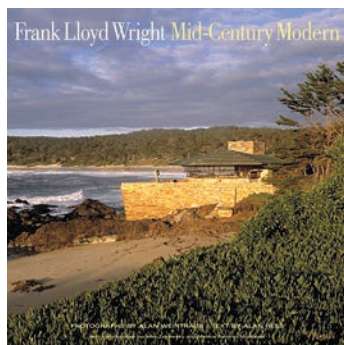


new! **The Vintage Home**
by Judith Wilson

A small hardcover book that includes some looks that won't be everyone's cup of tea—Country Vintage and Boudoir Vintage come to mind—but a core of midcentury-flavored interiors with a UK accent bring to mind the Terence Conran books of the '70s. The room-by-room approach is helpful—the kitchen section chats about cabinetry, dining furniture, flooring, appliances and tableware—in inspiring us to think beyond the usual suspects, particularly if you don't live in a modernist marvel. 144 pp., \$19.95

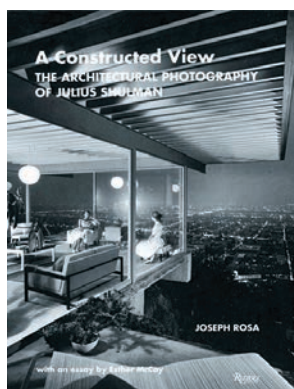
Frank Lloyd Wright Mid-Century Modern
by Alan Hess *new!*

Nicely captured in Alan Weintraub's color photography, this hardcover book looks at Wright's late-career residences, which include Fallingwater, the Seth Condon Peterson cottage, the Usonian houses and many other unabashedly modern homes built in the Midwest and beyond. Lesser-known designs such as his hemicycles and the Marshall Erdman prefabricated homes are included, and the photography offers a nice mix of site, interior and detail views. The next best thing to an architectural pilgrimage, as readers slip inside homes rarely open to the public. 336 pp., \$55



Saarenen
by Pierluigi Serraino

Eero Saarinen pretty much did it all: architecture—the GM Technical Center, Case Study House #9, North Christian Church, the Irwin Miller House, the TWA and Dulles terminals, the St. Louis arch—and furniture—the Tulip and Womb chairs are covered in this volume along with his collaborations with Charles Eames—and all in a career cut short at 51. This readable book profiles 21 of his notable designs, with a great mix of vintage and contemporary photography; softcover, 96 pp., \$14



new! **A Constructed View:**
The Architectural Photography of Julius Shulman
by Joseph Rosa

You know Shulman for his much celebrated Case Study series, but this hardcover b&w photography book takes readers well beyond that. The plates encompass the architecture of Koenig, Lautner, Schindler, Lowey, Saarinen, Eames, A. Quincy Jones, Neutra, Ainslie and Wright, as well as early 1930s studies of LA-area commercial buildings and '70s and '80s work in Brazil, Mexico and a variety of states. The text entertainingly covers biographical information along with his photographic staging and relationships with some of modernism's biggest names. 224 pp., \$50



no. 21,
Spring 2009

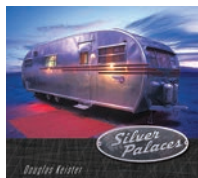


no. 20,
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Silver Palaces

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



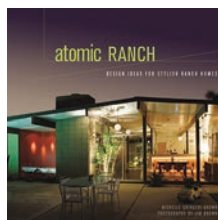
Preserving Resources from the Recent Past

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



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



Atomic Ranch: Design Ideas for Stylish Ranch Homes

New to the magazine? Complete your mid-century reference shelf with an autographed copy of our hardcover coffee-table book. From budget decorating and neighborhood preservation to high-end remodels and online resources, there's plenty of inspiration in its pages. Michelle Gringeri-Brown & Jim Brown, color photos, 192 pp., \$39.95



new!

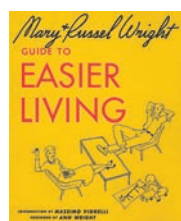
Ranch Houses: Living the California Dream

A largely picture-driven book thanks to Joe Fletcher's photography, the writing style is casual, accessible and brief after the 20-page historical introduction. Beautifully covering 14 mid-century homes, it also expands your ranch vocabulary to include several dating from the 1800s as well as six more recently built interpretations. David Weingarten & Lucia Howard, hardcover, 240 pp., \$50



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." Built on tight suburban lots, the neighborhood and its unique architecture is inspiring. Rob Keil, 144 pp. \$35.00



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



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



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. \$13.50



Heywood-Wakefield Blond: Depression to '50s

A definitive softcover volume on H-W's birch modern and streamline '30s pieces with vintage photos of upholstered pieces, tables, chairs and case goods; includes current values. Leslie Piña, softcover, 248 pp. \$29.95



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

This softcover guide to tiki bars and their signature drinks, as well as kitschy restaurants and motels, is a good handbook for sampling local hangouts or planning your next road trip. James Teitelbaum, b&w images, 360 pp., \$16.95

ranch. review

Ranch Houses: Living the California Dream

by David Weingarten & Lucia Howard; photography by Joe Fletcher

This latest tome from Rizzoli will leave you drooling. Though, as the authors admit in their introduction, you don't have to live in the Golden State to find California-influenced ranch houses. The style exists practically everywhere—one of the writers even grew up in a Tennessee version outside Nashville.

But in this book, David Weingarten and Lucia Howard (principals at Ace Architects in Oakland) pay homage to the California native. Their trek across the state uncovers the history and evolution of the ranch, beginning at Rancho Camulos, built around 1853. The hacienda has the low-slung roofline, use of natural materials and focus on outdoor space that are characteristic of all ranch homes.

The historical journey also includes the work of architect Cliff May—considered by many to be the father of the modern ranch—who was hugely influenced by Camulos and other 19th-century Monterey-style

adobes. May paved the way for the Case Study movement, Richard Neutra and Joseph Eichler, who all morphed the modern aesthetic with a ranch-house approach.

Sumptuous photos by Joe Fletcher (photog for *Wallpaper* and *Architectural Digest* and the book *Cliff May and the Modern Ranch House*) treat lookie-loos to a home tour of 26 stellar California examples that offer design inspiration galore. Visual highlights include interior shots of "Twin Palms," a.k.a. the Sinatra House in Palm Springs by E. Stewart Williams, which looks as if it's been decorated by pop designer Jonathan Adler. Another standout is a peek at the private residence of Fred and Lois Langhorst, students of Frank Lloyd Wright who brilliantly designed around light and shadow.

Then there are the movie-screen windows of the Alice Erving residence in Montecito by



Lutah Maria Riggs, which frame the lush Thomas Church landscape, and Cliff May's 1956 Pascal/Weinraub residence in Brentwood, an eclectic blend of rustic-rancho-meets-mid-century-modern-on-a-tropical-vacation. Also included are recent examples of post-modern ranches that use eco-friendly materials and innovative design. All in all, a great addition to your design resource bookshelf.

**Hardcover, 240 pp.,
\$50 at atomic-ranch.com**

—Apryl Lundsten

Apryl Lundsten is a freelance writer and podcast producer in Los Angeles who lives in her very own atomic ranch, featured in fall 2004.

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atomic-ranch.com: buy: gear

It all started with a nightmare. Well two, actually.

"I had a slick Italian kitchen designed in 3-D CAD and was ready to tear out the original kitchen," says Loni Nagwani, a realtor specializing in San Jose Eichlers. "But I started having nightmares that when the contractors came to rip out the cabinets, I was nailing them back up; I realized I should rethink it."

"Every time I tried to make the layout work with the fridge and other things moved somewhere else, I'd end up putting them back where they were in the first place. It makes you realize that actually there's nothing wrong with the design, that maybe you're the problem."

Her open-plan kitchen is in a flat-roof 1958 Anshen and Allen-designed Eichler in the Fairglen neighborhood. Instead of gutting the space, Nagwani and her husband, Bharat, chose to update judiciously while keeping the original speckled brown "Zolatone" cabinets. A multicolored lacquer paint finish still used by auto body shops, Joseph Eichler specified Zolatone in some of his tracts, but it's unusual to come across an extant installation today.

The central island that holds the vintage Thermador cooktop has been raised on legs to make the surface a

Getting a Flattop

text Michelle Gringeri-Brown

photography Jim Brown







"I realized that bigger and shiny and newer is not necessarily better," says homeowner Loni Nagwani about her decision to keep most elements of the original kitchen. The new stainless steel finishes—counter and backsplash, refrigerator, feet on the cooking island and the bar stools—tie in with the vintage Thermador wall oven and cooktop. These original kitchen lights are seen less often than the ubiquitous Eichler ball fixtures, as is the brown Zolatone cabinet finish. Red Wing Smart Set dishes circa 1958 are on display on the upper cabinets (previous spread).



A Noguchi Cyclone table from Knoll and Series 7 chairs designed by Arne Jacobsen comprise the compact dining area in the open family room/kitchen. The Nelson Crisscross bubble lamp and Eye and Ball clocks are all reissues.

more comfortable working height and, along the back wall, a stainless steel counter and backsplash are also new. A GE Profile refrigerator and Fisher & Paykel drawer dishwashers were added, but Nagwani kept the signature pivoting laminate table, which makes a great buffet or a place for daughters Shanti, 12, and Shreya, 9, to work on school projects.

"Our kitchen is an example of what an original Eichler kitchen can be with very little cost—\$5,000 to \$10,000 in upgrades," Nagwani explains. "It looks modern because it was designed modern. If I had a sleek Italian kitchen it wouldn't go with the rest of the house. Keeping the kitchen was one of the smartest decisions I made."

Neighborhood Nightmare

The other bad dream connected to the house was readily apparent to anyone driving down the street. Some years earlier an enterprising contractor had convinced more than one Eichler owner to solve leaky roof and insulation problems by installing pitched roofs atop the originals. A few Fairglen homes still have them, as did the Nagwanis' house when they bought it.

Roof aside, the home's original condition is what really clinched it for Nagwani, but per usual she was representing homebuyers and her duty was to them first and foremost. "For all of the years I was specializing in selling

The remuddled roof on the Nagwanis' house was similar to this one nearby. Tearing it off and returning the roofline to the original turned the Anshen and Allen design back into a midcentury classic.



Eichlers, every house went to a client," she says. "My husband was threatening to use another realtor so we could find our own Eichler.

"My clients came out [of the open house] and called me and said, 'This is the worst Eichler I've ever seen!' It smelled like mothballs, it had 42-year-old green shag carpet, asbestos tile and red indoor/outdoor carpet duct taped together at the seams. The part people couldn't get over was the roof. I didn't even think twice about ripping it off," she says blithely. "From the minute I stepped inside, it was over. I grabbed the lock box to make sure no one else was getting into the house."

The Nagwanis discovered the oven had only been

used to store Tupperware, and it appeared that the bachelor owner never cooked and didn't have a washer or dryer. The original grass cloth-covered sliding closet doors were in good condition, and "every fixture, every knob, every switch plate was intact," she enthuses. "It's so much easier taking off a roof than piecing all of those things together. You end up having to scrap the idea [of originality] because you just can't find a whole house of switch plate covers that match. The best previous owners to have are frugal, practical people like ours was. They would rather fix something than replace it."





Consistent Upgrades

The couple had the offending roof demolished, put in remote-control skylights, upgraded the electrical system and installed black slate flooring throughout. (An estimate for a skim coat of concrete ran \$5,000 more than slate.) They reroofed with insulating rigid foam topped with tar and gravel for aesthetics, and had the missing beams and trellis on the front facade re-created. The grooved Eichler siding was repaired, sanded and stained, and the interior mahogany paneling was refurbished (see sidebar page 54). Nagwani was finally able to draw on the resources she developed over years of helping new Eichler owners renovate.

"One of the most important things is, when you walk in the front door, nothing should stop your eye but the back fence," she instructs. "That may mean painting out the

posts so that they disappear, or making sure your materials are consistent, or putting in the best flooring and making it the same throughout the house. It shouldn't be carpet and it shouldn't draw too much attention away from the architecture, and it should contrast with the walls. Slate, VCT, cork, bamboo, polished concrete, terrazzo, linoleum—they all work.

"[This neighborhood is full of] Eichler enthusiasts, but not necessarily purists," she says. "Keeping with the architecture is my guideline. If you decide to do ultramodern, that can be beautiful. I group myself among people who are interested in maintaining the integrity of the architecture and the period and let it be what it is. It's modern architecture, so any modern really works—Asian modern, midcentury modern, ultra modern, Palm Springs modern."



Opposite page: The family room is the entry point from the atrium. The Eichler siding is painted the same color inside and out, as are the darker posts and beams. Furnishings from Design Within Reach include a Daphne sofa, George Nelson bench, Eames shell chair with Eiffel tower base and a Toto illuminated side table. The gray potato chip chair and a coffee table from Pure Design repeat the stainless steel look in the adjoining kitchen. The Judy Gittelson painting is called "Family of Planters Swirling."

Industrial designer Steve Escobar made the fountain sculptures in the atrium.

Below: In the living room, an IKEA couch and a custom credenza with doors made from vintage Eichler oblique glass join one of two teak Jerry Johnson chairs that came with the house. A flat screen TV pivots for viewing, freeing up the fireplace surround for a Shag print.



Bees Do It

Loni Nagwani's cure for tired, dirty paneling takes the less-is-more path. "So many times people think they need to sand the mahogany down or use degreasers that will take off the finish. With Howard Feed-N-Wax and a light stain, it looks wonderful," she advises. "Take a Scotch-Brite sponge and squirt the beeswax on it, and rub against the grain. It takes all of the dirt off so very seldom do you actually need to re-stain. The scrubby pulls the dirt out and removes built-up body oils off from around light switches and doorknobs and conditions the wood. It took four guys and \$600 bucks to do the whole house in one day."



The bath still has its original fittings and, with a refreshed finish on the mahogany paneling, looks every bit as modern as the rest of the house.



Not a fan of architecture review committees, Nagwani thinks public education is key. "Eight years ago, I'd sell an Eichler and the first thing they'd do was tear out the original features. Now it's a completely different ballgame—they want to find parts and restore it," she says. "HGTV has done four Eichlers and Safeway wanted to shoot [a commercial] here in a retro kitchen. When houses are getting close to 50 years old, the appreciation is just beginning. The more these homes are written about, the more people network, the more they'll be respected and the less we'll have to mandate design guidelines."

Education seems to be working, at least on the home front. "When we're walking we'll rate a house from one to 10," older daughter Shanti told us back when she was 9. "Sometimes my mom will ask me five things I'd change about it. One time I saw one with a giant gold door handle, and squiggly little house numbers and a glass sculpture of a leprechaun. I get rid of the sculpture, and get a new handle and ask Carmen for new numbers."

Mission accomplished. 🍕

The house numbers Shanti Nagwani refers to are made by Carmen Nichols, a neighbor and the proprietor of Eichlernumbers.com. Tour another Fairglen home in summer 2008's "Do You Know the Way to San Jose?" available at atomic-ranch.com.

cool|stuff



Easy Breezy

Is it getting hot in here? Try turning off the A/C and firing up a ceiling fan to cool things down. Don't let the brown monstrosities of yore fill your head; these are from another planet entirely. Modern Fan's series of simple, modern designs will get the air moving as well as turn your friends' heads. From \$328 to \$352, available from ylighting.com or go to modernfan.com.



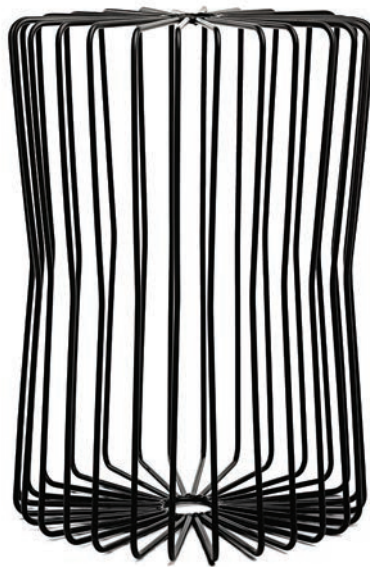
Bamboo You

Get your bar and back yard ready for summer slicing and dicing. Whether your style is a little vintage tiki or more modern, these boards should float your boat. The tropical collection has a fun, festive look (chop a pineapple ON a pineapple) and the GreenLite boards are even dishwasher safe, perfect after a long night with friends. Plus bamboo is a renewable resource that won't break the bank; from \$10 to \$35, totallybamboo.com.



Ply Me With Love

Columbia Forest Products, green good guys who produce sustainable plywood and veneers, wants you to have an affordable bit of Alexander Girard in your own home. Six cheery designs from Girard's work for Herman Miller are available as PLYprints, graphics printed directly on 14" formaldehyde-free plywood squares. Hang 'em on a wall in the kids' room, suspend them in multiples as a room divider by the front door—at \$90 a pop they're easy on the wallet. Available at velocityartanddesign.com, zwello.com, designpublic.com and others.



Sometimes It's the Little(r) Things

Frustrated that your perfect sectional is on hold for now? Maybe the equivalent of a mood-lifting cocktail would help. You may think 'furniture' when you hear Bo Concept, but they have plenty of foxy accessories. Neither too modern nor too spendy, the very vintage looking bronze candlesticks clock in at \$39 to \$49. The wire stool/side table is versatile in black or white (\$120), and the brown glass bowl (\$129) just begs for a sunny spot in the house. Stores and retail locations at boconcept.us.

pinching

A Twin Cities suburban ranch gets a new life with a frugal fix up

text Jason Weinbeck
photography Greg Jansen



The painting over the credenza in the living room is by San Miguel de Allende artist Juan Ezcurdia.

pennies



W

hen I was in the market for a new home in early 2007, I knew one thing for sure: it had to be a ranch. While magazines like this one are bringing new and creative perspectives to the ranch home, the style is also gaining attention around the country due to its interior flexibility and its affordability—not to mention the fact that they're everywhere.

I'm not rich but I can transform houses, so I was looking for something inexpensive with a lot of potential. I knew from experience that ranch homes were easier to work on than pre-war Craftsmen, Tudors and Colonials. A ranch lends itself to an open floor plan, efficient lighting and a balance of both vintage and contemporary fixtures and furniture. It didn't take me long to find the perfect California-style ranch in Richfield, Minn.; it was definitely a fixer-upper, a pure 1958 classic.

I immediately fell in love with the house. I was struck by the simple beauty of the peninsula fireplace, which was in pristine condition, and also loved the vaulted ceilings, open floor plan and exposed ridge beam. On the negative side, the kitchen wasn't in working condition and the laundry/furnace area was open to the rest of the house with nothing but a shutter screen to insulate the noise. There were also a couple of awkward partition walls in the main living area, and the floodlights that ran across the acoustical tile ceiling seemed to be in arbitrary locations. Nonetheless, I wanted the house and knew I could give it a new life.

The first thing I did before moving in was tear up the carpet that extended even into the kitchen and bathroom. I didn't have a plan or a timeline for my home renovation yet, but I knew I wouldn't be able to sleep until the carpet was out of there. Underneath, I discovered that the cork tiles hadn't weathered the years very well and the subfloor was sagging between the joists.

In 1958, when sheet materials were fairly new, the subfloor in my house was installed in the wrong direction, parallel instead of perpendicular to the joists. It was at this point that I decided to take time off from my design business and work on renovating my home fulltime. I took out a second mortgage and never looked back. Working alone, I usually put in 12-hour days.

Taking advantage of unseasonably warm weather, I started on the outside with a fresh coat of paint and a new roof. I replaced the old window glazing with thermopane glass and refreshed the landscaping by planting smaller scale arborvitae bushes along the sides of the house and adding a new crab-apple tree to the front yard. I also ordered custom house numbers. Since my home sits on a corner lot, I ordered a set for the



The cabinetry is from IKEA and all of the kitchen appliances were purchased locally on Craigslist. "It's time consuming and sometimes frustrating because the items may not be in as 'shiny-new' condition as advertised, but in the end the money saved is well worth the footwork," Jason Weinbeck advises. His best find was unfinished 3/4" teak flooring for the living room and hallway left over from an installer's job that he bought for \$3.50 a square foot—delivered.



Jason Weinbeck





front as well as the side that's visible to drive-by traffic. And I installed small spotlights that automatically illuminate the house numbers when it gets dark.

The inside of the house was next. I drew a floor plan, kitchen plan and lighting plan. With a post and beam structure, I knew exactly what was feasible. I tore down existing walls and ceilings, and spent more than a week installing a new subfloor. Then, I opened up the back of the house for an 8' patio door. After removing the old 32" hinged rear door and framing it in, I found out that, of course, the siding I needed was no longer available. So I improvised and made matching beveled siding with a table saw and router.

The 1,300-square-foot house has three bedrooms and one bathroom. I use one of the bedrooms for an office and the other for my media room. The original floor plan had the laundry/furnace area open to the rest of the living room and kitchen; whenever the furnace cycled on it sounded like a jet engine. In my new plan, there is a full-height, soundproof wall and a solid core door between the kitchen and the utility room.

To save money I sourced as many items as I could locally and on the Internet. I found my patio door and all appliances on Craigslist. The kitchen cupboards as well as the dining and living room credenzas are modified IKEA cabinets. I loved the style and color of the Nexus line; the yellow-brown tone with its horizontal grain and clean lines was a perfect fit for my midcentury house. The counters

are a honed granite called Golden Oak, and the walnut Radius stools that pull up to the breakfast bar are from Room & Board.

My ambition is to someday design and build furniture, so I also incorporated several handmade pieces that fit the look and feel of the house. I built a boomerang bench for the front entry, bevel-edged walnut nightstands for the bedroom and a kidney-shaped granite coffee table fitted with stainless steel legs from a small dairy equipment manufacturer in my hometown. A Danish modern chair was salvaged from my parents' basement and refinished.

I also designed the chandelier that hangs over the dining room table and had it fabricated by a local lampshade maker from wire frames I ordered online. Two orange pendants over the kitchen island are from a vintage lamp dealer in the Netherlands, and were surprisingly inexpensive.

The great thing about the original builders of this classic home is that they used quality materials. The base trim and the doors were reinstalled after the construction portion was complete and then enameled a creamy white. Some of the grooved redwood stock from the upper portions of the demoed walls was reused as a patterned accent above the cabinets in the kitchen. Original wood posts and beams were still sound, and by painting them the same exterior gray color, I emphasized the structure of the home.

The brickwork and mortar on the fireplace that attracted

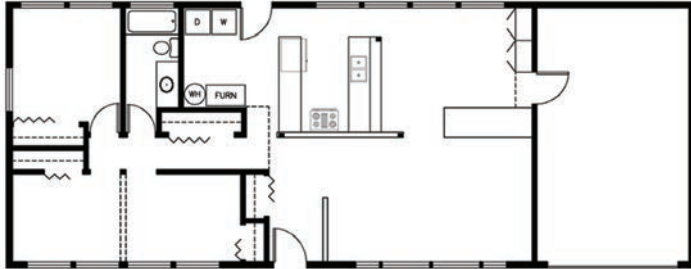


Jason Weinbeck

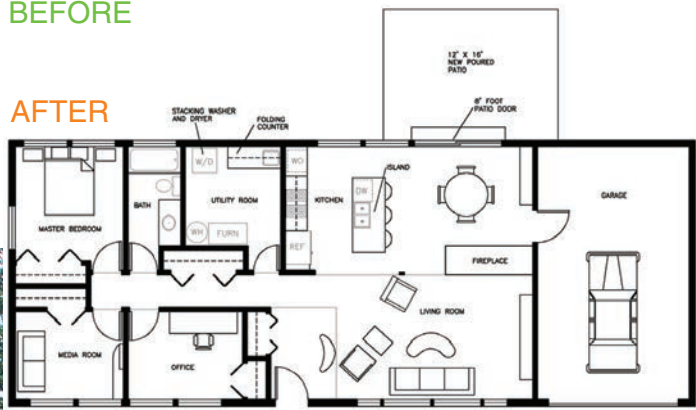
"The bathroom had wood paneled walls that were scratched and discolored. I decided to enamel over the existing wood with Benjamin Moore Satin Impervo," Weinbeck says. "I love this paint because, after it dries, it has a beautiful sheen. It also levels nicely and hides imperfections. The best part is that you can still see the wood grain beneath the paint surface." The cabinetry is Nexus from IKEA.

Radius chairs and a Saarinen dining table are from Room & Board. Credenzas in the dining and living areas are IKEA Nexus upper wall cabinets hung low. Weinbeck installed the cabinets six inches from the floor using the IKEA rail system. The now-usable fireplace is the focal point of the house. Opposite: In the living room, less is more: a reupholstered vintage couch and chair team with the homeowner-made coffee table and bench, and an Eames aluminum lounge chair.





BEFORE



me to the house was flawless. It seemed like it had never been touched and I soon found out why. The first celebratory fire was a disaster: It filled the house with smoke and I ended up carrying one of the still-smoldering logs out to the front yard and throwing it in a snow bank. As it turned out, the chain mail screening that covered the three open sides of the fireplace was too much open area for the fire to properly draw. I did a lot of research on fireplace design and worked with a friend to build a new metal framework and sliding draft door, and installed fire-ex glass doors to fix the problem. It works perfectly now.

What I appreciate the most is the simplicity of my house and its character. Interestingly enough, a lot of the positive comments I have received from friends are about the original elements—the peninsula fireplace, the grooved redwood, the exposed post and beam structure. These elements had gotten lost either from age and discoloration or were hidden behind partial walls. All I needed to do was highlight what was already there. 🔥

Jason Weinbeck put himself through architecture school by working construction jobs; he can be contacted at jasonweinbeckdesign.com. Wedding photographer Greg Jansen's work can be seen at gregjansenphotography.com. Like modest homes? Check out "Working Class Heroes" in fall and winter 2008 before they sell out; atomic-ranch.com.



Improvements: What & Why

Interior

- High-efficiency central air with cold air return system and improved fresh air intake
- Increased insulation throughout
- Sub-floor strengthened
- New copper plumbing (easier to use and improves water pressure)
- Floor plan improved to take advantage of floor-to-ceiling fireplace sight lines
- New lighting plan with contemporary fixtures
- Andersen patio door off the dining area
- Walnut kitchen cabinets and matching island
- Granite countertops in kitchen and bath
- New 3/4" teak flooring in living room and hallway
- 16" French limestone tiles in dining room, kitchen, front entry and bathroom
- New shower with limestone surround, built-in shelving and sliding glass door
- TOTO (bath) and Schön (kitchen pull-out) faucets
- Sink, storage cabinets and high-efficiency washer/dryer in laundry room
- Valli & Valli stainless cabinet knobs
- Stainless steel kitchen appliances
- Integrated Klipsch sound system in living room, kitchen and dining area
- Lutron Diva dimmer switches
- Velux skylights in front entry and bathroom

Exterior

- 12' x 16' backyard patio & cedar privacy fence
- Low maintenance landscaping & restored lawn
- 35-year architectural roof shingles
- Exterior lighting improvements
- All new thermopane windows
- Garage shelving system



ranchdressing

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



Q: I recently purchased this rocking chair at an auction in Nebraska and it was love at first sight. There are no markings or labels. Do you have any idea who produced it and where? Any information would be appreciated.

Tara Wiegert

A: *Sam Floyd replies:* "The chair was manufactured by the Florida-based company Kodawood sometime in the 1960s to early '70s. More often seen without the rocker runners, this Kodawood design is very popular—especially with those who have been recently bitten by the midcentury bug. (I owned one when I first started collecting and, of all the designs—some pretty rarefied—I have had on display in my home, this one garnered perhaps the most compliments from guests.) It is often mistakenly attributed to Finn Juhl for some reason, and although the chair is of American design and manufacture, it certainly does have 'Danish Modern' written all

over it. Indeed, the design benefits from a pleasing structural form most strikingly reminiscent of Hans Olsen's lovely clamshell-shaped Lænestol nr. 134 for N.A. Jørgensens Møbelfabrik, circa 1955.

"Kodawood chairs are not of the highest manufacturing quality, but they are quite durable, very comfortable, and—perhaps best of all—widely enough available to be affordable for most collectors. Although I have seen examples of this chair mistakenly attributed to Juhl sell at auction or on eBay for as much as \$1,500, they can be had for as little as \$150 to \$200."



Q: We found these lamps at Goodwill for \$20 for the pair and love the way they look on our sideboard (a curbside find). I have no information about them, as they have no markings I can find. They stand 30" from base to the top of the harp, and appear to be cast ceramic and wood. We are unsure of the type/style/shape of shades to use, and haven't been

able to find similar ones on the Web for ideas. Any information and suggestions would be most welcome!

Tea Hess

A: *D'Lana Arthur of Moon Shine Lamp and Shade (moonshinesthades.com) has the skinny:* "This is a classic 1960s lamp. There were many different versions manufactured during this period and most do not have any manufacturer's mark or brand name on them.



ORIGINAL SHADE



REPLACEMENT

"When you do find them with the original shades, they're typically a tall drum shape with an inch difference between the top and the bottom diameters, the top being the smaller end. They are usually about 15" to 18" tall or so and have a deeply recessed fitter that attaches to the fixture's harp. This pairing creates a pretty tall lamp.

"One of my favorite ways to modernize this style is to choose a replacement shade that is about 14" to 17" in

diameter and about 10" to 12" tall. This more modest drum shade balances the vertical line of the lamp instead of adding to it, creating an updated version while staying true to the original design. I have also seen examples of using tiered shades to give it extra punch; a two- or three-tier shade adds some additional interest to this classic lamp."



Q: We love our 1955 ranch in the Lake Hills neighborhood of Bellevue, Wash. We especially love the floor-to-ceiling wall of windows (48" x 96" panels) in the living room and kitchen, and would like to maintain the original look when we replace them with more efficient double pane windows. Although we have spoken with several window companies we have not been presented with an option that satisfies our desire to stay true to the architecture and openness of our house. Please help.

Jennifer German

A: *Brad Lackey, of Lackey Construction (503.318.0012) in Portland, Ore., replies:* "My company is copying the window wall feature from an existing midcentury ranch home on one entire wall of a new shop building on the property. The biggest engineering challenge is addressing the lateral loads (simplified = the force of wind or seismic activity on a structure) of a

ranchdressing

wall that is essentially 90% glass. This same issue will likely be your biggest obstacle when replacing your windows.

"I would start with contacting an engineering firm in your area (any reputable contractor/architect should have someone that he/she can recommend). This analysis may require that you reconfigure the current layout somewhat to accept whatever new framing is involved to meet current building codes. For example, you could end up with five windows instead of six. Next, go to your local building department to see what else they will require to get a permit. After you have a permit and some sort of simple (or not) drawings in hand, you will more than likely want to find a contractor to do the demo/structural work required.

"As far as the actual windows and jambs themselves go, I would look for a local company that specializes in storefront-type glass installations. Keep in mind that there will be several different glass and jamb options available. Most commercial storefront glass systems use aluminum jambs that have a higher U-value than wood or fiberglass jambs (you want a low, not high, U-value). The most efficient option would be to have double-pane low-E with argon windows in either wooden or fiberglass jambs. On our project, we are fabricating and installing our own wooden jambs, which will match the existing ranch house. We will then have a glass company install new low-E /double-pane windows into the jambs.

"Consulting with the local building department before starting any work would be wise for several reasons: they can help make sure that you do not over- or under-design/build your new window wall system and, depending on your location, it may be possible that you can have a storefront glass company replace your existing windows with high efficiency units without having to change the existing framing/structural configurations. Good luck!"

Q: Eleven years ago I was helping my father clean out my grandparents' house in San Diego. On one of

our many trips to the dump, I saw this totally cool sofa—it was like a flying saucer on top of a 12' mound of garbage. It was made of fiberglass similar to a Saarinen chair and was very weathered. Since then I have been trying to identify it—i.e. possible designer, dates manufactured, etc.—in hopes of finding another. I would greatly appreciate any help.

Brian Staley

A: *Angelo and Lisa Madrigale of Metropolis Gallery have the 411 on your dump crush:* "We've seen some pieces exactly like this back when we lived in the Detroit area—we both remember them being in various malls as common-area seating that was super durable and easy for a janitor to wipe down. Some would have a planter in the middle, while others would be wrapped around a light post or column. Unfortunately, these are most def-



initely not by a name designer—they're just functional pieces made by a company that would supply commercial settings. The only way one could find duplicates would be to befriend a local dismantlement company, watch for old malls getting a makeover or maybe look for a city auction of industrial items—old stoplights, desks, things of that nature.

"Short answer: it's cool, we'd love to have one, but it's not anything name-wise and these sorts of companies were lousy at giving credit to their designers so it could be a tough piece to track down."



Q: I recently acquired an interesting modern chair at an estate sale, and I'm having difficulty identifying its origins. The tag simply reads: "J.G. Furniture Company, 543 Madison Ave., New York." I'm fairly certain the upholstery is original. The overall design of the chair looks familiar, but I've yet to find it in any book. I was wondering if anyone on your staff might be able to help identify the designer or company who produced it.

Carter McEvoy

A: We went to Peter Maunu, aka Mr. Chair, for the lowdown: "This is one of my favorite '50s chairs—and I do believe you are correct in thinking that this upholstery is original. The chair was designed by Ray Komai in 1949 and was manufactured by the company noted on your tag. Komai also designed a plywood 939 chair very similar to this except that the back had a narrow slit down the middle ending at the void. This design riffs on the Saarinen dining chair for Knoll with a similar hole in the back.

"Komai was a textile designer as well. He studied graphic art at Art Center School in Los Angeles until he

was interred in a Japanese American camp during World War II. After the war he moved to New York, where he opened his own design studio and was soon commissioned to produce textile designs for Laverne Originals. Komai saw his textile design work as being influenced by the likes of Paul Klee and Pablo Picasso, as well as tribal masks from Africa and New Guinea. Your chair is a great find!"

croutons

✖ If someone hasn't already given info on the walnut-grain kitchen table (Fall 2008, page 32), I think I can help. In 1965 I had a Memphis Sales and Manufacturing Co. table and chairs almost identical to this one. Chromcraft also made a similar one, I think; both companies were located just south of Memphis.

Linda Blackmore

✖ Sandra, from Deco to Disco in Portland, Ore., (decotodiscopdx.com) called in a fabric I.D. for Josh Hudgens' "Levitz" upholstery question (spring 2009, page 80): "The material is freize, a nylon loop fabric that no one makes anymore. We have a bolt of vintage dead stock very similar to his original color and pattern."

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.

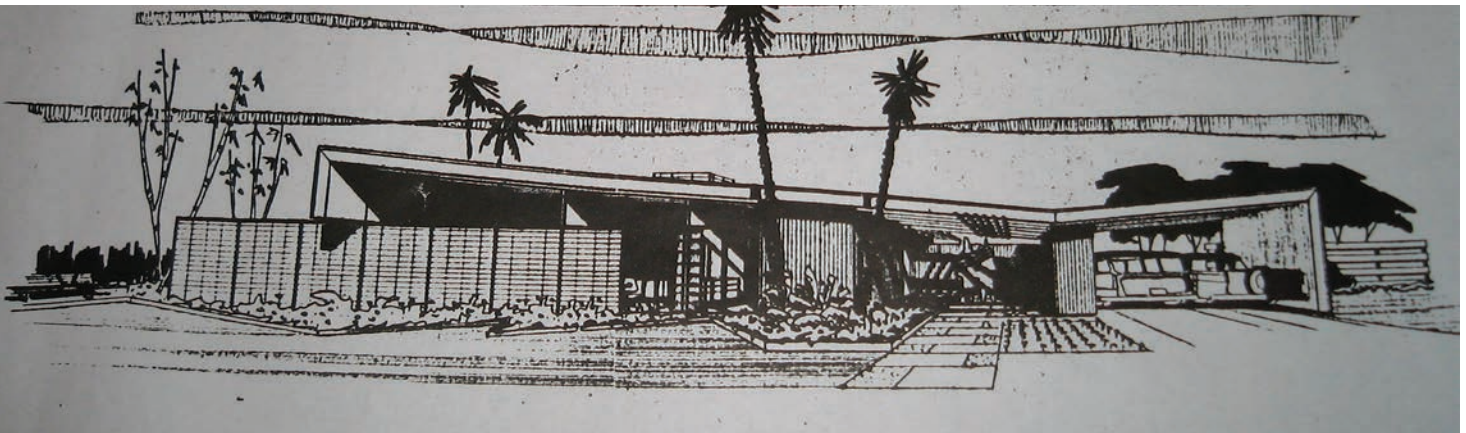


text and photography Gary Grasso

A Leap of Faith: How We Finally Found Our MCM House



palm springs



My wife, Shahla, and I first became interested in midcentury architecture while visiting my father in Palm Springs. We began our search to find a modernist vacation house in 2003, looking at several Alexander homes located in the Racquet Club Estates area. At the time, these homes were being restored and flipped, and were priced from the high \$200,000s to the low \$300,000s—more than we planned to spend for a second home at the time.

Two years later, with the economy and my business booming, we decided the time was right to renew our search. Of course, by then home values in general had skyrocketed, as had the demand for modern architecture. We were now looking at homes priced in the \$500,000s, \$600,000s and even the \$700,000s! Although our search was focused in Palm Springs, I soon came across a listing for a butterfly roof house in nearby Rancho Mirage. It was designed by William Krisel, the same architect who, as a partner in Palmer & Krisel, designed the iconic Alexander homes that brought modernism to the masses and transformed Palm Springs from a retreat for movie stars and the wealthy into a city filled with affordable second homes for the middle class.

We rushed to Rancho Mirage to see the house, which was an outstanding example of '50s modern architecture. Krisel also designed homes for some other developers in the desert, and this one was part of a small modern development on two cul-de-sacs built in the early '60s. The neighborhood looks like a piece of Palm Springs transplanted to an area otherwise filled with gated communities and conventional homes.

The striking butterfly roofline, clerestory windows, carport and floor plan were nearly identical to Krisel's Alexander houses in the Twin Palms development, the first Alexander tracts built in Palm Springs. But this home had some interesting differences, the most striking of which was an entire rear wall of glass overlooking

As shown in William Krisel's rendering, the Grassos' vacation home is virtually original. Thanks to the flippers, it was also turnkey: the only changes they've made were to paint the front door and one wall in the living room.



the pool and yard. In the Alexander homes, this same area has an off-center fireplace flanked with windows and a sliding glass door in the living room and dining area. In the Rancho Mirage design, the fireplace is moved to a side wall of the living room. It was a beautiful design, and even better, the house was totally and faithfully restored—what a find! We immediately placed an offer and drove home to plan how to furnish our new second home.

The next day we learned that the owner decided to sell the house to a couple who had seen it weeks earlier and had finally made their offer just a few hours before we visited. We couldn't believe that after finally finding the perfect house with a great pedigree, this one slipped through our fingers.

Disappointed, we placed our search on hold and turned to other matters until, one day in March 2006, we were visiting Palm Springs and decided to drive around and visit some open houses and check out the Twin Palms neighborhood to see how it looked now. Turning a corner, we spotted a For Sale sign planted in the front yard of a vintage butterfly roof Alexander that was undergoing restoration. A young woman was working on the front of the house, and a man was running back and forth carrying building materials.

I jumped out of my car and walked up to the woman to inquire about the house. She explained that she and her husband had purchased it from the estate of a long-time resident. They were undertaking an extensive renovation to the house with the intention of flipping it for a profit.

There was much work to be done. Although the house was intact, the previous owner had nailed dozens of wooden slats across the beautiful clerestory windows to block the desert sun. Awnings obscured the front windows, and the kitchen and bathrooms desperately needed a redo. But none of that mattered to us. We had finally found the right



house, and it was not only an Alexander, it was a butterfly roof model, *and* it was in Twin Palms—we didn't want to miss another opportunity.

We persuaded the owners to give us the first opportunity to purchase the house when renovations were completed—in about three months by their estimate. They planned to pour new concrete floors, remodel the bathrooms and kitchen, and to open the kitchen to the living room by removing part of a wall—a modification found in many redone Alexander homes.

However, we would witness none of the renovations as they were being done; the owners refused to allow us to view progress or even to suggest interior colors. They explained that they intended to remodel the home according to their own plans to make the house appealing to buyers in general. This way, if we backed out at the last minute they wouldn't be stuck with interior colors or other specifications that we wanted but which might not appeal to other buyers. If we wanted this house we would have to take a leap of faith, hoping that the owners' idea of a "sympathetic" restoration would come close to fulfilling our needs.

As the next few months dragged by, I researched more history on the architects, builders and even some of the early residents of Twin Palms. I learned that Debbie Reynolds and her first husband, Eddie Fisher, owned a butterfly roof house just around the corner from our future

Above and opposite, top: The sofa and table lamp are contemporary items, while the upholstered chairs are from eBay and Funnel, a vintage store in Pasadena, Calif., that supplied the coffee table and Brown Saltman dining room set. A small Brasília cabinet between the two chairs holds a stereo unit and several Viking Glass vases. Opposite, bottom: The Shag print over the wall-hung storage cabinet was purchased at the L.A. Modernism Show.



Above: The art and wall sculpture in the living room were found at Xcape and other antique stores on Fourth Street in Long Beach. The couple has various Brasília pieces, including this credenza and a dresser and headboard in the master bedroom. The Broyhill furniture line, which was made in the '60s from solid pecan and walnut veneer, was inspired by the architecture of Brazil's capital city, much of it designed by Oscar Niemeyer. This hutch displays a distinctive Majestic table lamp. Opposite: The new kitchen put in by the sellers works fine in a weekend getaway. A portable midcentury fountain was found at the Rose Bowl swap meet in Pasadena.



second home, while others were screenwriters, actors and various people involved in show business.

Finally, in June 2006 the owners notified us that the house was ready for our inspection—it was time to make the commitment or walk away. They took us room by room, explaining what they had done, from the installation of sleek glass countertops in the kitchen to custom lighting features in the foyer and living room. It all looked great, but the best part was that the home's architectural features were intact and beautifully restored—the original fireplace, the clerestory windows in the front and back of the house, the exterior siding, the original floor plan—all there.

Other than the kitchen update, the biggest modification was that the atrium in the master bedroom had been annexed by some previous owner years ago. Now part of an enlarged master bathroom, it transformed the original postage stamp-size room into an area large enough to include a walk-in shower. We wrote the purchase contract the same day and prepared to search for vintage furnishings to complement our new vacation home.

Meanwhile, I became more intrigued by the story of the Alexander Construction Company and the design "language" of William Krisel. I learned that Krisel, although long since retired was still active and living in Los Angeles. I decided to try to reach him. The phone rang once or twice and he answered, "William Krisel." I explained how we had just bought one of his houses in Palm Springs and he was immediately very cordial and pleased to hear from me.



He reported that he had been receiving several calls a week from owners of Alexander homes asking about historic and architectural details. I was impressed with Krisel's recall of the minutest details of these houses; his designs of more than 50 years ago were still fresh in his mind. He knew the exact measurements of the sliding doors in the living room (he said that he designed the doors to be wider than those manufactured today "to allow more of the outside in"). He discussed how the tract had the same floor plans, but with differing rooflines (gable, butterfly, "sunfold," etc.) and street orientation to create a custom look for each home. Our house model is commonly referred to as the "extended butterfly" roofline.

A few months later, we invited Bill Krisel and his wife, Corinne, to dinner along with a few other owners of Alexander homes in Palm Springs. Bill presented us with a copy of his original drawings showing the front elevation of our house. We had not only found the perfect home, we had met and learned some great details from the architect himself. You can't get a much better midcentury modern experience than that. 🦋

Gary Grasso is a public relations consultant in Pasadena, Calif., who collects vintage watches, cars and now this Palm Springs house. For more on classic California modernism, we recommend "PS: How I Spent My Spring Vacation" in winter 2008; *Ranch Houses: Living the California Dream* by David Weingarten & Lucia Howard; *A Constructed View: The Architectural Photography of Julius Shulman* by Joseph Rosa; and *Forgotten Modern: California Houses 1940–1970* by Alan Hess. See pages 42–43 or atomic-ranch.com.



atomicevents

May 30 West Lafayette, Ind.

Back to the Future: A Mid-Century Modern Home Tour

Tour five homes with a connection to Purdue University built between 1955 and 1966. Four designed by Robert Smith feature private front facades, expansive rear glass walls, stone accent walls and built-in planters. For tickets, visit historiclandmarks.org or call 800.450.4534.



James Draeger

Heath House by Beatty and Strang

June 5–7 Madison, Wisc.

Wright and Like 2009

Tour the interiors of five FLW homes, as well as several works by contemporaries, at this year's tour emphasizing restoration and green architecture. Highlights include a new Usonian-inspired studio/carport and three International-style houses by Beatty and Strang. wrightinwisconsin.org

June 6–7 San Francisco

Art Deco and Modernism Weekend By-the-Bay

From Arts and Crafts to vintage Western and mid-century, the Concourse Exhibition Center at 8th & Brannan streets is full of collectibles for your home. Visit artdecosale.com for info on walking tours and more.

**Through June 7
Oklahoma City
Julius Shulman:
Oklahoma Modernism
Rediscovered**

Catch the last days of this exhibition of 65 little-

seen Shulman images that focus on Oklahoma's modernist homes, churches, banks, museums and hospitals. At the Oklahoma City Museum of Art; okcmoa.com.

July 11 West Vancouver, B.C.

West Coast Modern Home Tour

Visit five architect designed MCM homes perched on the rocky slopes of West Vancouver and attend a special wine reception held in a showcase home after the tour. Westvancouvermuseum.ca for more information.



2008 photo Salwyn Pullan

August 22 Vancouver, B.C.

Downtown Vancouver Walking Tour

A 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. guided walking tour of downtown Vancouver's modernist buildings; details at vancouverheritagefoundation.org.

August 28–30 Denver

Denver Modernism Show

In addition to MCM vendors, this year's show includes a display of vintage Airstreams, a Sunday car show, a tiki lounge and live-live-live hula girls. At the National Western Complex; denvermodernism.com.

September 24–27 San Francisco

San Francisco 20th Century Modernism Show & Sale

Fifty 20th-century dealers at the Herbst Pavilion at Fort Mason Center, with an opening night gala to benefit the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. sf20.net





2008 photo by Robert Lerner Meyer

October 3 Vancouver, B.C.
Mid-century Modern Residential Bus Tour

Save the date now for The Vancouver Heritage Foundation's annual 1 to 6 p.m. MCM tour of five significant homes; details at vancouverheritagefoundation.org.

October 13–17 Nashville
Creating the Future in Harmony with our Pasts

Another zingy title for the National Trust for Historic Preservation's annual conference; check out this year's modernism and Recent Past workshops at nthpconference.org.



Photos by Steve Oliver

Jerome Ackerman, functional ceramic vessels designed and produced for Jenev Design Studio, Los Angeles, 1953–59



Evelyn Ackerman, "California Poppies" wall hanging, 1970, designed for Era Industries, Los Angeles

Through January 10 San Diego
Masters of Mid-Century California Modernism: Evelyn and Jerome Ackerman

A retrospective of the Ackermans' 50-year artistic career, which helped shape California midcentury modernism, at the Mingei International Museum. The couple, now in their 80s, worked in a variety of media: ceramics, textiles, painting, drawing, mosaic, wood, metal and enamel. mingei.org.

resources

getting a flattop, pp. 46–54

Loni Nagwani's Eichler-resource website: hitechrealtor.com ✕ Artwork: Judy Gittelsohn, judyg.com ✕ Paneling product: howardproducts.com/feednwax.htm

pinching pennies, pp. 58–65

Design & construction: Jason Weinbeck Design, jasonweinbeckdesign.com ✕ Cabinetry: IKEA Nexus line in yellow-brown, ikea.com ✕ Kitchen/dining furniture: walnut Radius stools and chairs, Saarinen dining table, Room & Board, roomandboard.com ✕ Fireplace surround: Marlaïne Cox Metalworks,

Minneapolis, 612.618.2629, marlainecoxmetalworks.com

✕ Vintage kitchen island pendants: Rens Alta, alta-design.nl ✕ Dining room fixture fabrication: Carol's Lampshade Wagon, Minneapolis, 612.861.2748 ✕ Upholstery Danish modern chair and sofa: Cy Winship Design, Minneapolis, 612.379.4070, cywinship.com ✕ House numbers: Weston Letters, westonletters.com ✕ Living room art: Juan Ezcurdia, ezcurdia.com

open house: palm springs, pp. 74–79

Vintage furnishings, reupholstering & artwork: Funnel, Pasadena, Calif., 626.395.0141 ✕ Xcape, Long Beach, Calif., xcapelongbeach.com

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