

# atomic ranch

MIDCENTURY MARVELS

SPRING 2011



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- pet proof



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# spring 2011

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### cover

A chartreuse accent wall pops in a Portland, Ore., ranch that was remodeled by homeowners sensitive to universal access concerns. Their furniture is a mix of midcentury vintage—the Florence Knoll credenza and Brno chair—and comfy contemporary. Wide hallways, an open floor plan, seamless thresholds and a raised backyard patio mean a home that welcomes all and allows aging in place. Story page 14.





# my2cents

My brother died last fall from one of those nasty forms of cancer with a low survival rate. Like many adult siblings, he and I had periods of closeness as well as estrangement, but in the last couple of years we focused on our similarities as middle-aged adults.

Bob was a photographer with a studio in Hollywood in the '70s, shooting people and products for a variety of clients; he began his career doing album covers for Capitol Records. There was a pool table, some lounge-y seating and a swinging vibe—knife-pressed bell-bottom jeans, cowboy boots and unbuttoned Qiana shirts—that kind of thing.

Like lots of us, Bob thought of himself as a bit of a style leader—an early adopter in today's parlance. One of his pronouncements, "I'm so glad Zinfandel has gotten more popular," made me grind my teeth at the time, but it now seems like the type of self-congratulatory comment we all make in our 30s. Despite our differences, he had plenty of aesthetic influence on me, his younger sister.

Although Bob lived in a two-story 1920s Tudor Revival, the interior wouldn't have been out of place in Atomic Ranch. The living room had a low, modern couch with an arc floor lamp shining down on the glass coffee table. The dining room's black leather and chrome chairs surrounded another glass table, and the built-in cabinet held red and yellow plastic Hellerware dishes; for holidays, the blue and white Dansk stoneware came out.

What makes this (perhaps) worth sharing with readers is the tendency we have to dismiss the previous generation's taste and contributions as passé and a little laughable—until the cycle comes around and it's popular once again. Case in point: Dwell recently ran a somewhat caustic piece on Warren Platner, implying he was in part responsible for the "fern bars, wood paneling and brass of the 1970s," and that some of his commercial work from the '80s and '90s is "just plain awful." Of course the author is an architecture critic, and she did have some more measured comments as well, but I was struck by the I-don't-like-it-and-that-makes-it-BAD tone.

It's possible that indoor plants, wood paneling and brass will never again be popular—wait, those brass lamps in Andy Marcus' house are pretty cool (page 56), and paneling, yeah, I love David Gauger's original paneling (page 52), and plants, did you know that they improve indoor air quality, which is *really* important for my family, you say? And what about linoleum, tiki mugs, Danish modern furniture, prefab construction and, dare I say, ranch houses; 20 years ago this stuff was so much dreck.

We run into our share of MCM fans who are happy to tell us authoritatively how it was back in the day, or suggest that we Google 'Wegner' or 'McCobb' to see some great design. Jim and I both grew up in the '50s and '60s, so I chalk it up to newbie enthusiasm and the blogosphere's mantra that every passing thought should be shared. My point—and let's hope I do have one—is before Julius Shulman or Donald Wexler or Charles and Ray Eames walked on water, they were has-beens in the societal mindset of everything-young-is-hot-everything-old-is-not.

I submit that Mr. Shulman took good and bad photographs and that 'The Selby' does the same. Because the room looks lived-in, or the image is in black and white does not in itself impart value—and trends will always come and go. My brother was a tastemaker in my life and I could have told him so. Let's hear it for acknowledging the value, and the human frailties, of those who come before and those who will follow.

*Michelle Gringeri-Brown*  
Editor





# atomic ranch®

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# modernwisdom

I live in a 1955 Eichler in San Rafael, Calif. As an enthusiast of modern design and style, I try to make not only my home look modern, but my workplace as well. I happen to be a second-grade teacher so I can make decisions about how to organize my classroom.

The school I teach in was opened in 1921, and a lot of its midcentury furniture and design has been scrapped or given away over the years, but there are still a few gems left. For example, many of the teachers' desks and wooden chairs were made at San Quentin Prison and are absolutely beautiful!

What I would love to see in your magazine is how others have taken their love of modernism outside of



their homes and brought it to their workplace. And public buildings like the Marin County Civic Center are just as exciting to me as a fantastic midcentury house. Just a suggestion!

**Graham Davis**

\* I was ecstatic that you featured a Cliff May house and included the floor plan. Recently I found a paperback on his work in a used bookstore with 18 of his designs with floor plans and photos for each. His style is readily recognizable and the houses are a real lesson in the history and development of the western ranch-house style.

Please continue to include floor plans with your articles; the photos are like an appetizer, and the floor

plan is the entree. I hope your new book will include floor plans.

**Ron Brooks, ASID**

*Atlanta, Ga.*

*We include plans whenever they exist, and all of the homes in our upcoming book will feature one, rest assured.*

—ar editor

\* Recently I finished reading *One Brief Shining Moment* by William Manchester and noticed that he had been a professor at Wesleyan University. A few days later, I picked up your Fall 2010 issue and I was amazed to see the article on Manchester's house in Middletown ("Connecticut Modern," page 36). I was doubly intrigued, because last year I retired as a Middletown police officer.

I bought my own midcentury marvel in December 2009. I love my 1958 house and now have an appreciation for all things retro. It is 1,450 square feet, not counting the cavernous unfinished basement, and all



the rooms have cool push-button Honeywell light switches. There is a slate-floored atrium as you enter, and the main doors are all hand carved. When I bought the house, it had sat empty for three years, so we are very carefully giving it our TLC.

Please keep up the good work, and continue spreading the word about these beautiful homes.

**Adrian Stroud**

*Waterbury, Conn.*



# morewisdom



✱ As big fans and long-time subscribers of Atomic Ranch, we were on the quest for the perfect home like the ones your magazine features. We found this community in the Tamarac area of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., that has the most unique looking midcentury modern homes. The Woodlands, a golf course community, has over 800 homes and could be the best-kept secret around. Last year we sold our cookie-cutter Mediterranean-style home and bought a terrific house here.

A real estate agent was kind enough to give me a folder with old home brochures that I'm posting on our Woodlands website, thewoodlandstamarac.com. Here is a sample that I think you will like.

**Sharon Aron Baron**

✱ After reading the letters in the 'Modern Wisdom' section of no. 26, I decided to let you know that I agree with all opinions that urge you to show midcentury houses in corners of the country that were not featured so far. Although some of the great American midcentury designers and architects have worked in Bloomfield Hills, and Herman Miller still produces the Eames lounge chair in Grand Rapids, everybody seems to have given up on Michigan. Even if the economy is bad and Detroit is in trouble, the state has a lot more to offer, including MCM.

Our 1962 2,443-square-foot tri-level home is located only five minutes from Cranbrook Educational Community in an area with mostly traditional colonial-style houses and big and—in our opinion—utterly tasteless mansions. Despite the great tradition of contemporary design, it seems that Cranbrook is known in the metro Detroit area mostly for its exclusive private schools, not for the art museum and modern designers like the Saarinens, Ray and Charles Eames or Florence Knoll.

The builder of our house was Nick Palmer and we do not know if he also designed the house or used a floor plan published somewhere else. Originally from Germany, we still keep our 1980 Bauhaus-inspired duplex in southwest Germany, not ready yet to let go. We are often amused by its similarity to our 'new' MCM house: big windows in different irregular shapes, high ceilings, plain and functional, clean lines but nevertheless warm and inviting.

# even more wisdom



We spent most summer weekends and evenings of 2009 in home improvement stores. The great thing in the U.S. is that styles do not change rapidly and we could actually find replacements for our bathroom showerheads or light fixtures that are still sold after almost 50 years. On the other hand, it is really hard to find contemporary design at a reasonable price. As much as we like IKEA, sometimes we want something different and find that European home improvement stores offer so much more contemporary design at a good price. Last spring we ended up bringing some extraordinary modern hooks for the bathrooms home from Portugal.

Thank you for a great magazine that has inspired us when we were doubting our decision and, yes, we also think that MCM is a growing trend!

**Sybille Krause-Roth & Juergen Roth**

*Bloomfield Hills, Mich.*

\* My husband is always curious to see the wonderful things people have done with their houses, particularly those on limited budgets. It seems modern design is



often linked to expensive projects or larger cities.

We live in a smaller community and Joe does all the design and most of the construction on his own, which makes modern style much more attainable. I have included some pictures of his designs in our home. It would be great to hear (and see) similar stories!

**Kimberly Henry & Joe Parshall**

*Richmond, Ind.*

\* I grew up on an estate in England that was trying to copy American neighborhoods in the style of the houses and the layout of the streets. The first phase of the project was used as a futuristic backdrop to Francois Truffaut's 1966 film adaptation of Ray Bradbury's sci-fi novel, *Fahrenheit 451*; the homes were considered to



be very modern, especially for 1960s rural England.

At the time I had no idea that our neighborhood was supposed to look American or was midcentury modern, but maybe that's where my love of all things modernist began.

**Jay Strongman**

*Pasadena, Calif.*

Look for Jay's own house on a cover later this year.

—ar editor

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We'll print the good ones.







# Open to Possibilities



*text and photography*  
Jim Brown





After the 1956 house was stripped down to the studs, HardiePanel vertical siding and battens of radiata pine formed the new exterior. A smooth concrete walk from the driveway (see table of contents) addresses the homeowners' interest in ADA compliant design, while the path from the curb has decorative gaps filled with Mexican pebbles. The orange Simpson door is a promise of modern things to come.



**Y**ou'd be surprised at how long some features take to come to fruition here at Atomic Ranch. Those montages of a cub reporter dictating a breaking story from a phone booth to the grizzled city editor, cut to a speeding press and the printed package that arrives at your doorstep the next morning—well, it's nothing like that. And when you realize that many of the homes that constitute this magazine's meat and potatoes are 40 to 50 years old, it's only right that our stories take a little while to develop, too.

A prime example of this process is the home of Shannon Spence and Jeanne Tobey, two Realtors who renovated a 1954 ranch in the Reed neighborhood of Portland, Ore. The couple purchased the home in 2007 and began an extensive down-to-the-studs renovation. Driving around Reed, a mix of both modern and traditional brick hip-roof ranches

built by developer Way Lee, I spotted this home still under construction in 2008. With its bright orange front door, it loudly promised a cool midcentury update.

I rarely do this, but that day I boldly approached the contractor and slipped him my card. I thought maybe this house, if everything turned out right, might be an Atomic Ranch feature. Occasionally I'd drive by the home, watching the progress, until finally it was ready to be photographed in June 2009. From first contact to now, it's a little shy of three years that this feature has taken to get to your mailbox.

But inside it wasn't a slow process. "Hats off to Brad," Spence says, referring to their contractor, Brad Lackey. "He knew we were paying two mortgages every day we weren't in this house. He had the subs hustling to keep up with him; we never missed a day waiting for someone to show up."

Spence toured his first Rummer some 15 years ago and





Neel Briggs of Big Branch Woodworking was responsible for the rift-sawn white oak cabinets that line the three walls of the kitchen and set the minimalist tone. The Jenn-Air refrigerator and Bosch dishwasher are clad as well, and the counters are "Rosemary" CaesarStone with a Blanco faucet at the bar sink. The Saarinen dining table is paired with contemporary chairs, and a Noguchi Akari floor lamp is visible against the north wall of the living room, which has a couch and armchair by Castellano Custom Furniture.

The stove and exhaust fan are DCS by Fisher & Paykel, and the suspension lights are "Pint" by Tech. The door leads to the garage and an exercise room, and all original rough-sawn interior beams were resurfaced with radiata pine.



recognized how ranches successfully linked outside and inside, and that one wasn't isolated from the site by a second story. But he also admits that California ranches with slab floors and vaulted ceilings don't work as well with the colder winters of Oregon.

"Both '20s and '50s houses are considered by home inspectors to be the very best because both were built after a big war, with a surplus of men and materials," Spence comments. "There are stories of carpenters and roofers getting a huge box of nails and being told they had to use them up every day."

It was the flat lot, single-level and volume of the main room, as well as how the inside and outside communicated with each other, that brought the couple to this modest L-shaped ranch. Coming from a 1950s duplex that they loved, designed by modernist architect Kenneth Birkemeier, the couple felt this new house put them in a great neighborhood close to downtown—a big deal in bike-centric Portland.

While Tobey and Spence are technically only the second owners, the home had been a rental for several years and

suffered from severely deferred maintenance. Worn carpet, outdated heating, vintage electrical, kitchen cabinetry falling apart and original siding in need of intervention pretty much describe the condition. "I could have got \$5 in beer bottle deposits when we cleaned out the house," Spence jokes.

The seven-month project included new HVAC, electrical and plumbing systems, as well as insulation, new sheetrock and exterior siding. A 560-square-foot master suite addition at the rear brought the home's square footage up to 1,710. Enlarged doors and windows, a custom kitchen with white oak cabinetry and all new hardscape in the back yard round out the list and give an idea of the work involved.

"We gutted the whole house except for the original studs and the mahogany panels on the [living room] north wall," contractor Lackey explains. "Once you open up the walls, things like earthquake retrofitting make sense. At that point, it would be a disservice not to do a complete renovation."

"I can't remember who can claim the idea for the master, but I know it came up very quickly the first time we walked through the house. The footprint was just too small," Tobey





says. At just a little over 1,100 square feet, the two-bedroom, one-bath house didn't have a single window looking out to the underused back yard.

"It's a small addition with a vaulted ceiling and a slightly higher roofline that still keeps with the design of the existing house," Lackey says. "Since we replaced all of the exterior siding, it ties in nicely. Some of the old beams were reused on the exterior trim, and reclaimed flooring was sistered in to the red oak of the original house. A bank of sliding glass doors and a skylight in the bathroom

give them plenty of natural light."

Tobey says she gained valuable insight from the experience that she now applies to clients. "The remodeling process has a poor reputation for good reason. It's not your intention at first, but one thing leads to another and you soldier on. It's influenced our opinion of buyers who think lightly of a large remodel—we spend a little more time warning them to think through what that really means."

The finished house feels very open and spare, even spartan, but that's just how they wanted it. "We have a





Opposite: The original mahogany paneling remained up throughout the restoration process; it was cleaned and oiled to bring back its luster. The fireplace insert is by Scan, and the surround and hearth are Ann Sacks tile. On the mantel, a bas relief cat is by Benny Bufano.



Above, clockwise: The painting by Christine Bourdette (see page 15 for expanded view) and a cement sculpture by Christine Clark sit on the marble-topped Knoll credenza. Ceramic art on the entryway wall is by Dana Louise, and the plant stand was purchased on a trip to Bali. A collection of antlers and cribbage boards is on display on the trilevel table.



good friend in a wheelchair. We didn't design it for him, but the thought of making it accessible was a pretty neat thing," Spence remarks. "It's our belief that a house this easy to modify should be made that way. It was an opportunity and we owed it to the house."

Tobey adds, "The ADA modification was a huge component of our plan. We knew my father faced mobility issues, but now my parents always stay here when they visit." To that end, the home is strictly one level, with opened up doorways, a wide hall, roll-in shower, minimal thresholds and zero step-down to the paved back yard.

Beyond the universal design, the home speaks to their feelings about "stuff." "With this new economic climate I read more articles about people living in a smart space rather than living in a giant space. The urge to simplify is gaining and people are looking at the way Europeans are living," Tobey says.

"We see people come back from abroad and, instead of complaining or being scandalized by how small a footprint people are living in, they say it's so cool to open a drawer and there is a rice cooker and a little toaster oven, and you can make your whole meal right there. People here in Portland will stop at a farmer's market for a great loaf of bread instead of stocking up at Costco with four loaves they'll freeze."

It should be no surprise that realtors like to look at houses. Spence and Tobey will book extra time on vacations to tour real estate listings and, midway through the renovation,

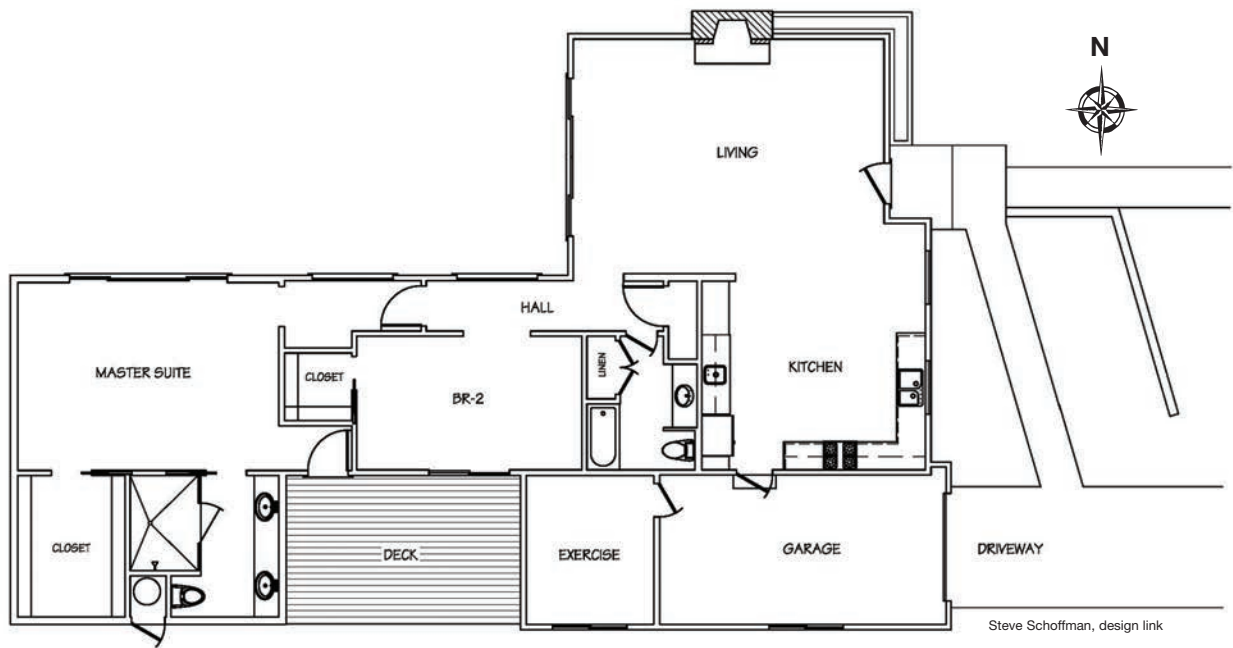


Above: A wide hall and open doorway lead to the master bedroom, with its bed and nightstand from Bali. "Birds on a Wire" by Rachel Sanders hangs on the orange wall, and a rain stick from a trip to the Amazon leans in the corner.



Left: As shot from inside the roll-in shower, the master bathroom's ebonized white oak cabinets are also by Big Branch Woodworking, and the faucets are Kohler. The tile is all Ann Sacks; in the shower is Avalon White, and on the floor, Crystal in Grass.

Opposite: The patio view shows the slightly taller addition on the right, with the original house sections in the center and the gabled living/dining/kitchen volume. Anderson sliding glass doors bring the outdoors into the master suite and flood the hallway with natural light.




they visited Arapahoe Acres, near Denver. The topography of that subdivision gave them an appreciation of siting and hardscaping that they applied to their own home.

The original back yard had a seven-inch step-down from the house and reflected typical '50s landscaping: some mature plantings surrounded by toasted grass and broken concrete. Working with Barbara Hilty Landscape, they added an expansive patio, curved borders and a reflecting pond, while retaining a sizeable Japanese maple, camellias and rhododendrons. Out front, with the exception of the original brick half wall, native Northwest plants and new wide

concrete pads and paths define the front entry, as well as that knockout orange door.

Last words go to the happy homeowners. "I give a ton of credit to Jeanne," Spence says. "I tend to just say things like, 'The interior should communicate with the exterior and walls should be transparent,' but Jeanne says, 'This hallway is nice and wide; how about putting in some glass and we'll have more light?'"

Tobey shrugs the praise off. "I didn't expect how beautifully it turned out—the ideas we gave skilled people were a seven and they delivered a 10."  Resources page 75



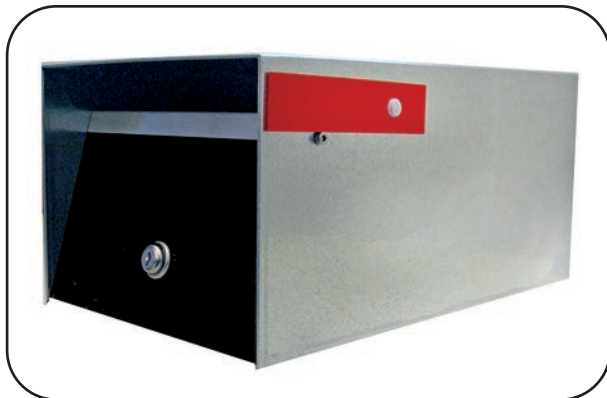


# cool|stuff



Handcrafted from domestic hardwoods, Scout Regalia's new bookcase is their first foray into indoor furniture. With five shelves and a cabinet at the bottom, the made-to-order system (one- to three-bay configurations available) offers plenty of room to showcase your love of reading or collecting. We're particularly liking the small footprint; at just over one foot deep, it's a great option if you don't want to lose too much of that precious square footage. With 210 low-gloss, nontoxic paint colors and sealed wood options, a single bay starts at \$2,300; [scoutregalia.com](http://scoutregalia.com)





Galvanized metal, perforated aluminum and an acrylic door sound like a DIY pet door, but in Hector Perez's hands, they add up to a handsome mailbox he calls a Neutra Box. Using scrap materials left over from bigger jobs, Perez builds each to order. Features include a slot for first-class mail and a slanted door for periodicals, plus a jaunty red flag that your mail carrier will just love to flip. There are wall-mount and locking options, but you had us at "holds large magazines with no folding or bending." Available at [neutrabox.com](http://neutrabox.com); from \$249.



Still pining for the Jetsons' live-in robot, Rosie? The new Mint hard surface floor cleaner is one step closer to the very midcentury dream of robotic maid service. Nearly silent and capable of both wet and dry cleaning, the little square unit also earns bonus points for its ability to endlessly entertain cats. And with its GPS-like Cube navi system mapping the ceiling, maybe the tech-head at your house will be signing up for extra chores. From \$200 at [mintcleaner.com](http://mintcleaner.com) or **Bed Bath and Beyond**.



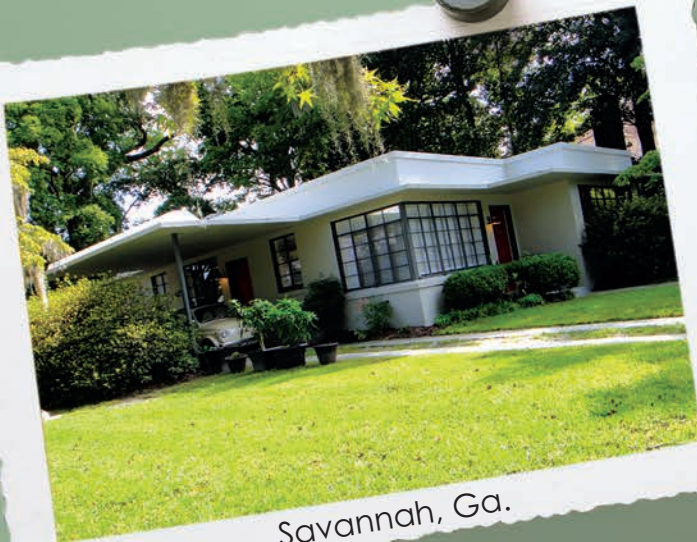




Victoria, B.C.



Hutchinson, Minn.



Savannah, Ga.





# home **page**

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## Victoria, B.C.

We purchased our much-loved MCM home from the original owner, who saw it in a 1958 issue of *Western Homes and Living*, purchased the plans from the architect and had their own version built by 1960. It has a number of original details, including light fixtures, grass cloth wallpaper and teak wall shelving. We adore the open-concept design with its brick fireplace, fir beams and cedar ceiling that nestles beautifully in its West Coast setting. Along with some much-needed kitchen and bathroom updating, we had an addition built last year and ensured that the post-and-beam design was continued in the new part of the house.

**Emilie Hillier & Carey Lee**

## Hutchinson, Minn.

All five of us kids grew up in this house our father built in 1955. Dad's inspiration came from a similar model seen at a builders' show in Minneapolis/St. Paul. Our three-bedroom home features redwood exterior panels, a vaulted roofline with clerestory windows, a skylight over the entry porch, a built-in china cabinet and cork tile floors throughout the main level. Mom and Dad have passed away, but we all own the house and use it for holidays and family gatherings. To this day, we enjoy the three large south-facing windows that allow plenty of sunlight in on short winter days.

**Laure Pishney Grandin**

## Savannah, Ga.

Savannah probably doesn't pop up high on people's lists of midcentury hotspots, but this is our home right in the middle of the Chatham Crescent/Ardley Park neighborhood, which was started in the '30s and homes continued to be built until the early '50s. Details on this house are a bit sparse, but it dates to 1946 and, until the mid-'90s, was used as a medical office—first a doctor, then a dentist and finally home to a child psychologist. The house is almost entirely concrete and stucco, with a poured concrete roof and block walls.

**Peter Hendy & Nancy Fullbright**

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

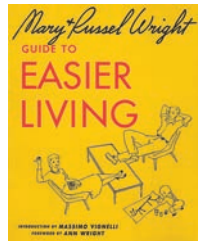


# atomicbooks



## Saarinen

This small gem introduces you to Eero Saarinen's architecture—the St. Louis arch, TWA terminal, Case Study House #9 and many more—his Tulip and Womb chairs, and his design history and collaborations with Charles Eames. Pierluigi Serraino, softcover, 96 pp., \$14



## Guide to Easier Living

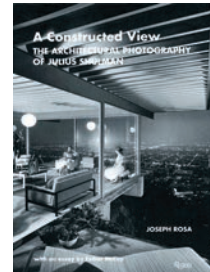
This reprinted vintage book addresses modern living Wright-style, from organizing household chores to streamlining the dining table. Of particular interest are the sections on contemporary floor plans and Russel and Mary Wright's philosophy of informal living. A great look at the couple behind American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



## Cliff May and the Modern Ranch House

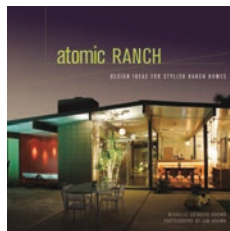
Cliff May was one of the most successful promoters of the ranch house and the California indoor-outdoor lifestyle. Color and b&w photographs explore the builder's mainstream modern homes and large custom designs, like the Ojai residence in our Fall 2010 issue and his own home, Mandalay. Daniel Gregory, hardcover, 256 pp., \$60

*Save 20%*



## A Constructed View: The Architectural Photography of Julius Shulman

Worth a space on your bookshelf for the sheer variety alone, this hardcover book captures what made Julius Shulman midcentury's most celebrated photographer. The Guggenheim, Lautner's Chemosphere House, Frey House II, Taliesin West and a half-dozen Case Study Houses are included, along with biographical material and colorful anecdotes about his relationships with modernism's biggest names. Joseph Rosa, color & b&w photos, 224 pp., **On sale, \$40!**



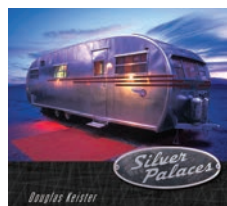
## Atomic Ranch: Design Ideas for Stylish Ranch Homes

AR's first hardcover book has plenty of inspiring homes from our early issues to get you going on those projects. From retro interiors to coolly modernist family homes, plus resources, preservation stories, history of the style and decorating on a dime—it's got it all. Oh, and it's autographed by Michelle Gringeri-Brown and Jim Brown. Color photos, 192 pp., \$39.95



## 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, color and b&w vintage photos, 144 pp. \$35.00



## 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—are thoroughly covered inside and out in this fun softcover book. Douglas Keister, Color photos, 160 pp., \$24.95

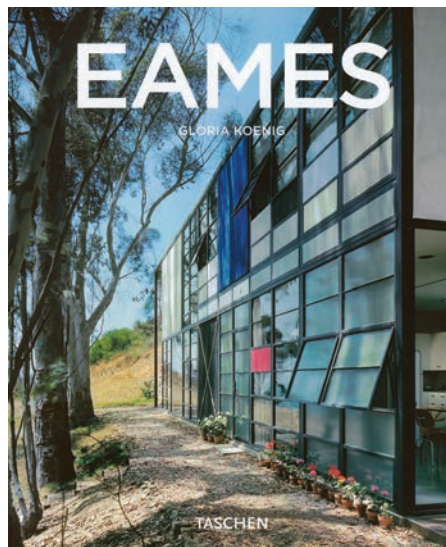


## Forgotten Modern: California Houses 1940-1970

California modernist homes, from Claremont to the Bay Area, are captured in great color photographs by Alan Weintraub in this coffee-table book. Architecture by Alexander, Eichler, Neutra, Fickett and Cody is featured, along with the work of Mark Mills and Foster Rhodes Jackson. Alan Hess, hardcover, 280 pp, \$39.95

# &backs&more

Back Issues—\$6.95 while they last ...



**Charles & Ray Eames**

If this issue's Modern Masters whetted your appetite to know more about the dynamic duo, this compact book is a great place to start. From Charles' early work with Eero Saarinen to Ray's textile designs and their numerous collaborative projects, author Gloria Koenig has crafted a highly readable story of the couple's career arc.

She tells of Charles smuggling parts into the spare bedroom of their apartment to build the 'Kazam!' machine that was part of their early plywood furniture experiments and their leg-splint commission for the military. The Eameses' own Case Study House, as well as the adjoining John Entenza House #9 are covered in some detail in photos and text. And the production pieces the couple is best known for—the ESUs, fiberglass shell chairs, the lounge chair and ottoman, and the Aluminum Group, among others—are explained from a design, cultural and manufacturing point of view.

The couple's other projects—toys, magazine covers, world's fair pavilions, department store window displays, films and exhibitions like 'Mathematica'—start to hint at the sheer depth of creativity that was Charles and Ray Eames. Color and b&w photos, 96 pp., \$14



no. 24 Winter 2009



no. 25 Spring 2010



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Hot  
Diggity

Dog  
Ziggity







# Boom!

## what you do to me

**W**hen last seen in fall 2008, the Atomic Ranch landscape was two years old and experiencing some growing pains. Pains named Gretel and Auggie.

The corner lot of our 1952 ranch was grass and foundation plants and not much else when we bought it. We worked with a young landscaping firm, The Portland Yardbirds, on a new design that combined Oregon stalwarts and midcentury-appropriate plants with relatively low maintenance needs (see “Rocky Road,” issue no. 19). Things were starting to grow in when our mild-mannered dog died, and the two replacement puppies necessitated a taller fence and funky chicken-wire plant protectors. The dogs were rambunctious teenagers when we last shared our successes and failures.

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*text* Michelle Gringeri-Brown

*photography* Jim Brown



The beds were demarcated with rusted steel edging and, in this 2008 view, the corner planting had been in for about a year and a half. The fence was extended to contain Gretel and Auggie, who are taller than their predecessor, Bonnie, a beagle mix. Page 40 shows the same area with the Japanese snowbell (*Styrax japonica*) and the Bloodgood Japanese maple in 2010. In the left foreground is a mature yew, and in June bloom, a rhody.

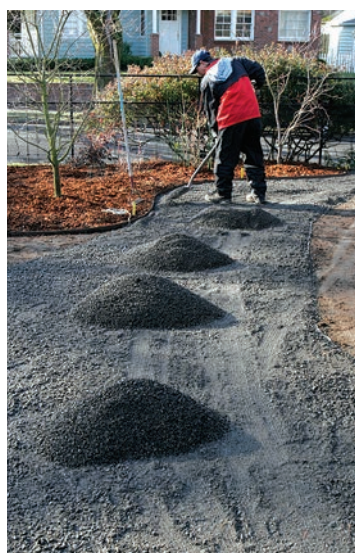


2008





Top, left: The same view in February 2009—yes, six months later; picking up after the dogs was a trial once fall rains began. Below, left: Removing the remaining sod netting matrix took the soil level down several inches and gave a nice, flat base for the landscape cloth and gravel. We thought that the steel edging would keep the material in bounds, but that proved not to be the case. Below: Sedges (*Carex testacea*), Golden sweet flag and, later, Japanese forest grass were repeated from the front yard in the bark-mulched areas around the patio and along the gravel path.



### **Mud and roses (ok, no roses)**

Although we'd successfully had two dogs and a fescue lawn in our previous California home, somehow the combination of urine burnout and the Portland rain steadily turned the sod into a muddy mess—perfect for an episode of "Wipeout." Fencing off and repairing portions with new seed or a mix of wildflowers and grass seemed an exercise in futility, and no groundcover sounded hardy enough to withstand the dogs' play and our foot traffic. But the idea of a porous material like decomposed granite, hazelnut shells or gravel had promise.

DG had tracking issues (which we already experience with the local tradition of bark dust mulch) and wasn't readily available, and we found out the cracked hazelnuts would attract squirrels—a giant plus for the dogs, but not a scenario we needed to encourage. We already had a small gravel patio, so gravel it was.

### **Firm footing (kind of)**

A crew removed what remained of the struggling grass, put down heavy-duty landscape cloth, a layer of quarter-minus and finally, a couple of inches of pea gravel. Based on our experience







Losing a 75-year-old maple across the street prompted the need for an umbrella. In the tall gray pot is a rice paper plant (*Tetrapanax papyriferus*), and in the foreground in the reverse view with Auggie on the bench, a Twilite false indigo (*Baptisia variicolor*), which has blue and yellow, lupine-like flower stalks. The small round stones and larger flat rocks were added to keep the dogs from exposing the edges of the landscape cloth with their fitness circuit antics; it's working pretty much ... Opposite: A basalt basin rock intended as a birdbath makes a super fine dog drinking fountain. The ferns are all volunteers.







**2010**

with the patio and the path from the front yard to the back, compacted quarter-minus offered a nice, firm base for walking, much like some nurseries that have that satisfying crunching sound underfoot.

A rope laid on the ground guided the curve of the path, and once the gravel was in place, bark chip mulch was laid over adjoining areas. But there was no evidence of a compactor during the install, and the crew boss made a vague comment indicating we should look into edging of some sort before they departed.

Who among our savvy readers knows what's coming next?

### **Dave says a compactor helps (ha)**

When the gravel was wet, it offered a close approximation of what we anticipated, but when it was dry, it was like walking through beach sand—dry beach sand. Our neighbor, Dave, listened to my whining and recommended we rent a power compactor, which had solved a similar situation at his house. Next picture, two middle-aged clowns struggling to keep a heavy machine from running down the slope into the million-dollar fence ...

The compactor's effect was miniscule, and by then we were distracted by the next realization: the discrete areas of gravel and bark were rapidly becoming one mixed material as the dogs chased one another, rocks flying in their wake. Unless we wanted to spend weekends sifting 1/4" gravel out of 1" bark, this was the look we were going to have.

### **And another thing (or two)**

One of the more successful areas of the landscape was our small entry garden, with hardy sedges surrounding a reflection pool, drifts of Japanese forest grass, and midcentury-perfect







The 2008 view of the front yard shows sedges just recovering from their winter setback, but the horsetail looking its best. More recent shots show how the Scotch moss has grown in around the pavers, the gunnera, which can reach 6' tall, and the inherent problems with horsetail (see detail, opposite). The tall grasses behind Gretel are Karl Forester, which we've found to be bulletproof and a nice seasonal screen from the street.

## Pet Pix

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Submit your name, pet's name and no more than three high-resolution photos of 250K to 2M size to [editor@atomic-ranch.com](mailto:editor@atomic-ranch.com) by May 15, 2011.

horsetail. The sedges soon grew to overfill some parts, and those plants that were on the edges succumbed two winters in a row. It seemed they were hardy self-sowers but susceptible to our yard's microclimates.

And speaking of volunteer plants, the horsetail, which was supposed to be corralled by the steel edging the landscape designer installed, was all too happy to escape its confines. Horsetail spreads via underground rhizomes, much like bamboo, and they began popping up here and there, including through a crack in the aggregate concrete path. At the same time, they struggled in other areas where they *had* been planted, or constantly grew so tall they'd first lean, then fall down, defeating their architectural purpose. This is one plant I wouldn't recommend to others, and I wondered if our landscaper had ever grown it himself.

This year we've replaced some dead sedges with additional wild ginger plants, which Portland Yardbirds



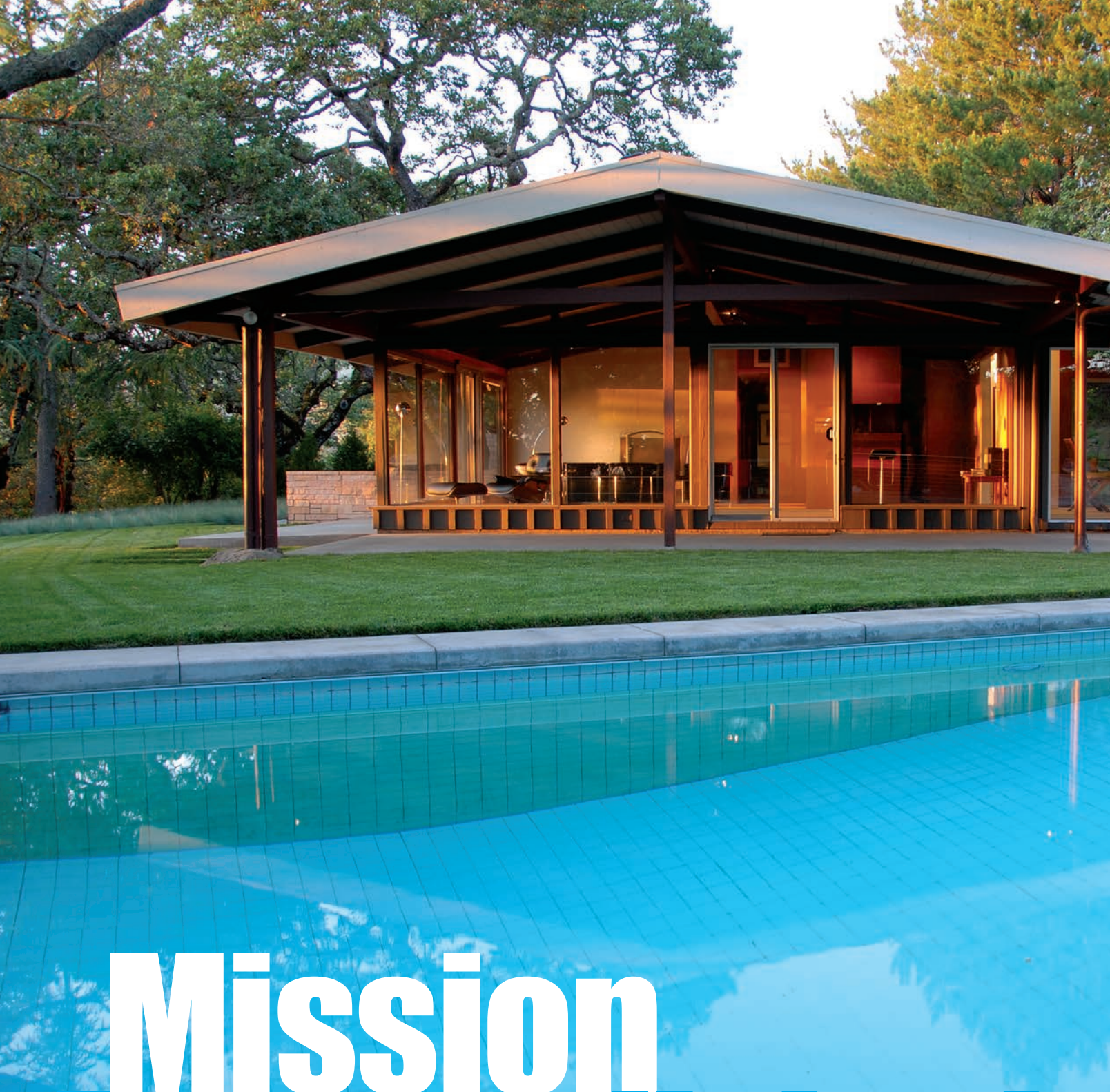


had installed along the edges of the area, and transplanted extra sedges to the back yard. Where the horsetail did poorly, we're trying a prehistoric-looking gunnera. Having made the "onesies" mistake many times as a novice gardener, I'm making sure that all new plantings are multiples of varieties used elsewhere on the lot.

The yard continues to be a work in progress. With the growth that the trees and shrubs have put on, we're enjoying a little more privacy from the street, but we'll have to relocate some blueberries and a peony that are now in too much shade. The dogs have matured enough that the plant cages are no longer necessary, and the mix of gravel and bark is 75% better than the mud bog of old. Auggie and Gretel still love to chase each other at breakneck speed through a complicated and ever-shifting circuit, but the entertainment quotient is just one of the reasons we love our dogs. ☼







# Mission Accomplished

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*text and photography* David Gauger





**M**y wife, Lisa Jear, and I live in an Italianate Victorian house built in 1877, but several years ago we purchased a modern ranch house in an area of Sonoma, Calif., called Mission Highlands. This summer home was virtually untouched since its original construction in 1956.

I have been creating advertising for homebuilders since the '60s—my early ads at Sam Smidt Associates in Palo Alto were for some of Eichler's last developments, and they followed the strong branding and stylized architectural illustrations that the company had developed. This home spoke to us.

As lovers of midcentury architecture, we were attracted to the expanses of glass, open-beam ceilings, wood paneling and other period details. But we saw the opportunity to remodel, add some additional square footage and make it more environmentally friendly, while preserving the unique '50s architectural style and finishes. Being indoors while enjoying the outdoors, and vice versa, was the emotional objective of the redesign.

We faced two major challenges: First, the Sonoma planning department would allow an addition of no more than 500 square feet due to zoning laws. Secondly, to maintain





We had to **engineer**  
**midcentury style** within the  
confines of **21st-century**  
**building codes**

the expansive walls of glass, which did not comply to current engineering requirements, the additions at either end of the home act as bookends, helping anchor the house in the event of an earthquake. Since we wanted the additions to maintain continuity in style and openness with the original architecture, we hid 6" steel girders (similar to those used in high-rises) within the window frames. The steel beams required offsite fabrication, numerous welding inspections and extensive foundation work. It was the only way to engineer midcentury style within the confines of 21st-century building codes.

The original 1,500 square feet included an entry hall, living room, den, kitchen and two bedrooms and baths. Nearly all the existing room configurations were kept intact, but the







Previous spread: We rebuilt the covered patio near the pool, following the original design; the volume on the right is the new dining room. Ipe decks and an outdoor kitchen were part of the project.

Opposite: A Cor-Ten steel retaining wall holding back the slope allowed the new entryway path to align with the door to the dining addition. On the original facade, the door was painted bright red to direct guests to the entry.

By extending the exterior facade toward the carport, the master bedroom and bath almost doubled in size. The Arizona Stone, in shades of tan, cream and pink, is offset with a rusted Cor-Ten steel planter at the base; that material was used for the retaining wall, entry gate and several planters.



**before**



In the remodeled master bath we created a secluded spa-like environment across from a private patio. A mosaic of floor-to-ceiling tile and a large electric skylight add drama to the expansive open shower. The aqua Bisazza Codex tile is similar to that found at the Valley Ho in Scottsdale, Ariz., one of my favorite midcentury hotel getaways.



master bath was completely reconfigured and the master bedroom wall was pushed out 7'6" and a walk-in closet added. This expansion created the opportunity for a new exterior facade.

Inside, the original beamed ceiling with tongue-and-groove decking was matched throughout and, on the opposite end, a dining pavilion was added. To access the new dining room, a 5'6" doorway was created from the kitchen and living room area. That mostly glass addition becomes a visual portal: approaching the entry, you look through it from the walkway to see the pool beyond.

Lisa and I were involved on nearly a daily basis with the design decisions and were responsible for the interior design. I was able to provide concept sketches as well as detail drawings and specifications for the master bath and entry gate to our architect.

While we were restricted in our interior addition, more than 1,000 square feet of patio and deck were added surrounding the home, pool and gardens. The pool's original tile was restored, while all the working parts were replaced and an outdoor kitchen was added. The front landscape, encompassing nearly an acre, is accented by rusted Cor-Ten steel details, while stainless steel was used in the rear. Battered walls of multicolored Arizona stone were added to the facade and to integrate decks and patios with the landscape.





The bath fixtures included Kohler Man's Lav sinks, Dornbracht Tara faucets and 24" Bisazza Logos glass-embedded tile squares on the counter and floor. Sconce lighting is from Form One.

The bed and nightstand are from the Zola Collection, and the bench is a Giulio, all from Design Within Reach. The bedside lamps were purchased from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art store, and above the Marcel Wanders-designed Bottoni seating for Moooi is a geisha photograph by Lisa Kristine. The Samurai photo by David Robin was commissioned for an advertisement my firm created for San-J International, while the African Kuba textiles are from our collection.







We use the den as a home theatre, office and guestroom; the Ligne Roset Multy sofa turns into a bed.

Opposite, bottom: Affordable chairs from Cost Plus Imports surround the Le Corbusier table in the carpeted dining room; the painting is by Mark Ranes.

The kitchen is untouched, with the exception of under-cabinet, low voltage lighting and a new refrigerator and wine cooler. Two LEM Piston stools provide counter seating at the bar area. Original terra-cotta tile floors connect the entry hallways, kitchen and den.





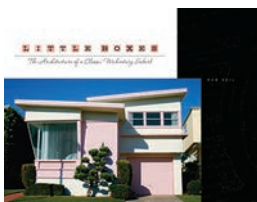
We worked closely with landscape architect Tammara Norman of Magrane Associates to enhance the midcentury style. She totally understood the look we were after and designed the walkways, decks and plantings to incorporate the landscape and the architecture. We also reduced the size of the asphalt driveway to allow additional plantings at the front of the house, which is integrated with the native Sonoma landscape of oak trees and shrubs.

As is often the case, what seems critically important in the process is not always at the end. It was helpful to live in the home for a couple of years before starting the remodel, as it provided a clearer understanding of what aspects of the architecture and landscape were most important to maintain or improve upon. We found the house lives very differently in the summer, when time is principally spent outdoors, yet the expanses of glass allow us to connect with the outdoors even in the dead of winter. As primarily city dwellers, we are very happy with how the midcentury style provides a strong connection to the rural Sonoma landscape. ✨

*David Gauger is the creative director of Gauger + Associates, an advertising and design firm in San Francisco.*

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## Books worth a look



The homeowners used these titles for design inspiration:

*Design for Living: Eichler Homes*  
by Jerry Ditto & Lanning Stern

*Eichler: Modernism Rebuilds the American Dream*  
by Paul Adamson & Marty Arbutich

*Little Boxes: The Architecture of a Classic Midcentury Suburb\**  
by Rob Keil

*Western Ranch Houses* by Cliff May

\*available at [atomic-ranch.com](http://atomic-ranch.com)





# Movie Star Digs

The interior design evolved from impulse buys of kitschy '50s knickknacks to upgraded lamps, tables and accessories with designer pedigrees. The family room is visible beyond the black bullet planter from Hip Haven, one of the few modern-made pieces, along with the black Eames LCW, the low Eames wire base table and the Noguchi coffee table. Midcentury originals include reupholstered '50s club chairs, a generic dresser against the wall and the brass floor lamp, likely a Lightolier.







## An L.A. couple turns a Palm Springs wreck into a green desert oasis.

It's been 12 years since my husband, Ron Diliberto, a psychotherapist, and I purchased a 1958 three-bedroom house in Palm Springs. Over two and a half years, we restored the home, installed a swimming pool and landscaping, and renovated the interior.

Built on a corner lot in the Bel Desierto subdivision, a committee of world-renowned local modern architects and developers—including John Porter Clark, Albert Frey and Culver Nichols—oversaw the design of the tract's homes. Created on what was once the El Mirador Hotel's golf course, the area was called The Movie Colony since the early 1920s, when Hollywood stars came to the desert and built winter homes to escape the prying public eye.

*text* Andy Marcus

*photography* Christopher Watson



When we bought the house, it had a leaky roof, moldy carpeting, stray cats were using the fireplace as a litter box and there were hypodermic needles lying around. It was a pretty scary sight. We had to fill two dumpsters just to get rid of what the former owners left behind. The house was scrubbed from floor to ceiling, and then painted and reroofed. Once we had that done, we threw a mattress on the floor in the master bedroom and began with the basics—flooring and window coverings.

I'm a senior v.p. at MySpace and have done a variety of interior design projects at our West Hollywood condo and for friends, while Ron, prior to becoming a psychotherapist, had a home remodeling business. We brought pros in for the electrical and some plumbing, but most of the work—drywall, framing, flooring, tile work, etc.—was done by us on weekends.

The architect had originally designed the family room as an outdoor patio, but previous owners enclosed it to create a fourth bedroom and seating area off the living room. This made for small, dark spaces and restricted flow throughout the home.



Looking toward the dining room, a pair of Norman Cherner ribbon armchairs with white leather covers made by Plycraft flank an Eero Saarinen pedestal side table from Knoll and Danish modern candlesticks. A dining version of Saarinen's table came from my childhood kitchen, and the Saarinen No. 71 chairs surrounding it were found on eBay. The Nelson bubble lamp is by Modernica, while the rug underneath is from IKEA and the shag area rug was fashioned from Tuflex carpeting.

The fireplace surround was one of several tile projects. The biggest challenge was realizing after I started that I needed to fill in the mortar seams between the cinderblocks. I had to go back and do that in order to have a level surface for the new glass tile to adhere to. The vintage starburst Westclock timepiece was found on eBay, and the period wall scones are French.

I put the outdoor table on casters so we could move it inside if the weather was too hot or too cold, and framed it in stainless steel so it would be weatherproof, like the Emeco chairs from Modernica. The glass tile top shines in the sunlight, and sparkles under the IKEA holiday lights.

A linoleum floor, based on a pattern from a 1957 *Home and Garden* advertisement, completes the kitchen makeover.







We created one large, open living space of almost 1,400 square feet by removing walls and windows in the fourth bedroom and installing 12' sliding glass doors. They provide mountain views and created access to the kitchen from the family room. This public space has an open, circular flow that centers on a double-sided cinderblock fireplace, which I covered with glass mosaic tile one weekend as a surprise for Ron while he was out of town.

The previous owners remodeled the kitchen sometime in the 1970s. The cabinets were pickled green with black wrought iron pulls, and there were several layers of very unfortunate looking vinyl flooring to pull up. While the footprint was there and the cabinets were solid, the flooring, countertops and appliances had to go.

A closet-size dry bar original to the dining room was removed to create more usable space and square footage in the kitchen. We were able to put a bar-height countertop with vintage barstools from a diner in its place. New counters, appliances, flooring and tile were installed, and the cabinets were refinished.

We celebrate Christmas in Palm Springs, and a few years after we moved in, a new robe hanging above an electrical wall heater in the master bath caught fire; before we knew it, the entire bathroom was enveloped in flames. We grabbed the fire extinguisher and did our best to put it out before the fire department arrived.



Hakatai tile is the real star of the bathroom: it creates a colorful, yet relaxing retreat. A buffet from a local thrift store was refinished just like the master bedroom set, and outfitted to hold a vessel sink with a Kohler Stillness faucet. The original tub was retained and a custom mirror installed over the vanity.

In the master bedroom, a 1960s set was refinished in white lacquer, and its hardware replated in chrome, as were the bases of the pod lamps on the dresser. The pear-shaped George Nelson bubble lamp is from Modernica.

Opposite: In the corner of the master bedroom is an arm-chair reupholstered in aqua barkcloth, and the vintage-look curtain fabric is from Contemporarycloth.com. The Blenko glass is from Dazzles, here in Palm Springs.





I used  
home and garden magazines and  
furniture catalogs  
from 1955–1960  
as a reference guide

When it was over, the house was covered in white powder from the fire retardant, and every curtain and all of the upholstery and rugs had to be shampooed professionally. A new bath was now a priority.

I came up with the color scheme and design, which involved stealing the hallway linen closet footprint for the toilet and creating a large, open shower with a window in it. I used a refinished vintage buffet and a vessel sink for the vanity, and wall mounted the faucet.

I used home and garden magazines and furniture catalogs from 1955–1960 (i.e., Herman Miller, *The American Home*, *House and Garden*, *Better Homes and Gardens Decorating Book*) as a reference guide, and chose a palette of interior and exterior colors popular in 1958. For the furnishings, I have a ritual of visiting Palm Springs thrift stores, consignment shops, estate sales, antique malls and higher-end vintage collectors on a monthly basis—it's like a treasure hunt for me. I can go for months at a time and not find anything, and then walk into a thrift store and find a Dorothy Draper chest of drawers for \$60, knowing full well that it would sell on websites like 1stdibs.com for thousands of dollars; that makes all the months of looking worth it. I never get tired of finding vintage designer furnishings that people have discarded and don't realize what they're tossing away. We've mixed vintage Tommi Parzinger pieces with Murano glass lamps and Heywood-Wakefield end tables, and accented with IKEA cabinets customized with hairpin legs.

In 2005, we adopted a daughter, Charley Jean, and the family needed a larger dining area for holiday dinners. I designed a stainless steel Parsons table on casters and used glass mosaic tile left over from the





living room fireplace for the top. Now, an outdoor dining and living area adjacent to the family room accommodates our extended families for Thanksgiving and Mother's Day gatherings.

The home is on a 12,000-square-foot lot, with large front and back yards. In 1999, the most prominent feature of the landscaping was a pair of dead 50' pine trees flanking the front walkway. We removed dumpsters full of oleander bushes, tamarisk trees and dead shrubbery. Our new landscaping scheme integrated the front and back yards through the use of a combination of rolling sod, boulders and river rock, and mounds of packed desert sand, with a large variety of cacti, succulents and indigenous drought-tolerant shrubbery that blooms throughout the year.

We also designed a kidney-shaped swimming pool with 1950s bull-nose coping and aqua and black tile. A steel paneled fence with a strong, repetitive vertical line was used to enclose the pool area and back yard; the steel panels are repeated in the backyard patio cover as well.

Our weekends are as close to a resort retreat as you can get without checking into a hotel. We have two golden retrievers, sisters named Lola and Fannie, and many of our friends come and spend weekends with us with their families in tow. It's a great entertaining house, but also a place where we take long naps in the afternoons during the summer, and drink hot chocolate and read books by the fireplace in the winter. We just love it. ✨

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Turquoise is a recurring color on the front door, privacy screen, tile porch floor and in the kidney-shaped pool in the back. The pool area features yellow Gainey Ceramics pots and vintage Knoll butterfly chairs, along with more Hakatai tile installed on the wall.





Asher Hung





# modern masters for your ranch:



**Charles and Ray  
Eames**

*text* Timothy Sullivan

*photography* courtesy Herman Miller

**P**icture it: the year is 1956. Your family has gathered before the television to watch NBC unveil a revolutionary new invention. The orchestra begins to play. The spotlight beams from above. Could it be a flying car? A new rocket? The curtains lift to reveal ... a lounge chair.

And what a lounge chair it was. Made of materials that originated in the construction industry, like plywood and cast metal, it didn't look anything like the deeply upholstered traditional living room furniture most people owned at the time. Its ergonomically pleasing shape was comprised of plywood shells with cushions, proclaiming that even simple materials could be made elegant. There, celebrating the chair's television debut, was the revolutionary design duo behind it:







Charles and Ray Eames. The couple—he an architect/designer, she an artist—epitomized the optimism and inventive spirit of the '50s. Using innovative manufacturing processes they'd developed in the previous decade, they brought beautiful everyday objects, architecture and film to the masses. In the process, they would become household names.

Charles was born in 1907 in St. Louis, Ray five years later in Sacramento. Growing up in middle class families, they both excelled in school and showed an early interest in art. Charles's father died prematurely, so he had to work to support his family. After high school, Charles won engineering and architecture scholarships to Washington University. Despite being president of his freshman class and receiving first-place honors for his design work, he left after his sophomore year. Some say he was forced out for his advocacy of Frank Lloyd Wright, and that his taste was too modern. Never one



Opposite, Fiberglass Armchair (1950–53): The armchair came with a choice of six different bases, including birch rockers, and in a range of colors. It was followed by a side chair that was used worldwide in the '50s and '60s. Top, Aluminum Group Lounge & Ottoman (1958): Addressing the lack of quality outdoor furniture, Ray Eames designed a timeless line of home and office furniture that led to the later Soft Pad chairs.

LCW (1946): The comfortable and lightweight Eames plywood chairs were called "The Best Design of the 20th Century" by *Time* magazine.





Eames Elephant (1945): Though it never made it into mass production in the 1940s using the plywood molding techniques the Eameses pioneered, this plastic elephant toy is so sculptural it can even be used by grown-up children today.

Lounge Chair and Ottoman (1956): The Eames Lounge Chair is considered one of the most comfortable chairs of all time, though the handwork required to produce it made it more of a high-priced status symbol than a mass-produced chair for everyman. When preliminary designs for the chair were being worked on, Charles said his goal was to create the “warm, receptive look of a well-used first-baseball mitt.”



to be held back by adversity, Charles struck out on his own, forming an architectural firm whose work caught the attention of Eliel and Eero Saarinen at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan. They offered him a fellowship, which he accepted, and he later joined the faculty.

Ray, whose given name was Bernice, graduated from high school in 1931. After only a single semester at junior college, she relocated to New York to be closer to her brother at West Point and eventually studied painting under Hans Hoffman. In 1940, when Ray's mother died, a friend encouraged her to continue her art education at Cranbrook. It wasn't long before she met and fell in love with Charles Eames, whom she married a year later.

Cranbrook was fertile ground for the young couple. A hotbed of design genius during the 1940s and 1950s, their community of students, faculty and friends included midcentury greats Harry Bertoia and Florence Knoll. Their work was intense and collaborative; Charles and Eero Saarinen entered an organic design competition at the Museum of Modern Art, where they won a prize for an innovative molded chair design in 1940.

After Charles and Ray relocated to Los Angeles, he



worked for MGM and Ray designed covers for *California Art & Architecture* magazine. At night, they worked together to build a machine that would mold compound curves in plywood, something that had never before been done with a single mold. They called it the "Kazam!" machine, because raw material magically came out as a beautifully molded plywood seat. At the suggestion of a doctor friend, they used it to create a leg splint to help injured soldiers. Their invention caught the attention of the Navy, which placed an order. The influx of cash enabled them to open a studio in Los Angeles and to begin production on innovative furniture using their new molding technique.

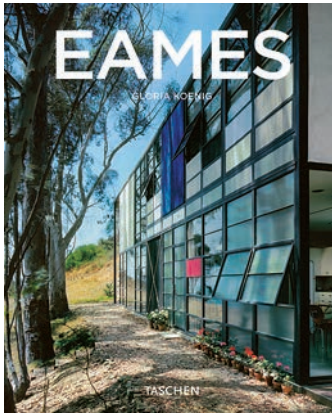
Early experiments in molded plywood produced a delightful series of animal toys for children, including an elephant that never reached mass production during the 1940s, but has been reissued today. About the same time, the Eameses began to manufacture the plywood chairs that would cement their reputations. Their LCW (lounge chair wood) and DCW (dining chair wood) were revolutionary, lightweight seats that conformed to



Top, DCM (1946): The dining-height plywood chair remains a classic, and is available today in different veneers and stains, and with chrome or wood legs.

Above, Sofa Compact (1954): The Eames Sofa Compact provides comfortable seating for three within an exceptionally tight footprint, making it practical and stylish in small rooms and offices.





Learn much more about the couple and their designs at the [eamesfoundation.org](http://eamesfoundation.org) and in *Charles & Ray Eames*, available at [atomic-ranch.com](http://atomic-ranch.com) for \$14; see page 33.

the body and could be mass-produced for affordable prices. Exhibited in New York, they came to the attention of Herman Miller, which was granted exclusive rights to market the Eameses' plywood furniture.

In 1949, the couple was given the opportunity to create the perfect setting for their new furniture. John Entenza of *Arts and Architecture* magazine commissioned them to create a "Case Study House" in Pacific Palisades, Calif., which was to become their own home. Intended as a model for low-cost modern housing, it used a steel grid structure and had sliding walls. Reminiscent of, and in the same spirit as, their house were the couple's designs for a desk and storage units, which used standardized parts, sliding doors and a



La Chaise (1948): Priced at nearly \$10,000, this is one of the Eameses' most ethereal designs, now being produced in small numbers by Vitra. Left, Rectangular Table (1964): The aluminum-base Eames tables are available with round, oval, square and rectangular tops in veneer or laminate, and at dining or coffee table height, making them highly flexible.





Elliptical Table or ETR

(1951): The Eameses used their recently developed technique for welding wire rod to create two lightweight bases for a large tabletop, nicknamed the surfboard table; that same wire base is used on the small LTR (Low Table Rod Base).

modular grid. Their house might also have inspired them to create a long, elliptical coffee table, which looks like the surfboards they would have seen locally.

Over the course of the '50s, their work expanded well beyond plywood into upholstered sofas, aluminum, fabrics, accessories and more. The Eameses even developed a special interest in other moldable materials, like plastic and fiberglass, which they encountered in war-surplus stores. Hoping to produce affordable, durable furnishings for the home, they used them in a range of fiberglass-reinforced plastic chairs that became immensely popular. Their elegant molded lounge, “La Chaise”—inspired by an organic sculpture by French artist Gaston Lachaise—finally reached commercial

production in the 1990s, but at a substantially higher price point than originally estimated.

Today, the Eames name has come to stand for mid-century modern. In fact, the keyword “Eames” has become a substitute search term for all midcentury artifacts on sites like eBay. While you cannot trust just any item labeled Eames to be by Charles and Ray, those seeking a touch of authenticity can check out the Eames Foundation, which preserves both their legacy and their house for visitors. If you can't make it to Pacific Palisades, however, you can also bring a bit of the Eameses into your own home. Their furniture continues to be produced by Herman Miller and Vitra, and can be ordered online. ✿



Desk and Storage Unit Line (1950): Much like their Case Study House in Pacific Palisades (see book cover), their practical desk and storage units (ESU for Eames Storage Unit) were built using commonly available industrial materials.



# ranchdressing

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

**q:** My parents bought our family's northern Wisconsin post and beam summer home from the original owner/builder's estate in the '80s. It was built in 1970 by a retired couple in a much earlier style and has never been updated. I am concerned because all the light fixtures have long, meandering cracks through the colored shades. In particular, the vibrant red/orange glass seems destined to shatter soon. The fixture is in need of serious cleaning, and I am too nervous to touch it. In addition to the dining room fixture, there are several matching yellow and red pendants throughout the home in a similar state. Do you know anything about my fixture? What are my options, if any, for replacement glass?

**Jennifer Ondrejka**



**a:** Our first thought was identifying the maker, then watching for a match on eBay; that proved elusive. Experienced collector Greg McKinney gave us this reply: "I would have thought they were Progress Lighting or EDS,



and maybe they are, but they're not in the catalogs I have. I asked one of my MCM sources, and he said likely Progress, which is my best guess, but that's all it is. Sorry."

I'd wonder if the bulbs are too high a wattage and heat is the culprit. But I don't have a good suggestion on where to go from here. Looking for a similar lamp to pirate shades from seems far-fetched, and I'm unaware of a modern source for appropriate replacement globes. Custom-blown globes: don't think so. Maybe one of our readers has solved this in the past...

**q:** We purchased this desk at a high-end midcentury shop in the Boston area five years ago. When we bought it, there was a tag attached with the maker's name, but when they delivered it, the tag was missing. We've looked online and at other shops and haven't seen anything like our desk.

There are three drawers on the other side and, if you open the front panel, the back is mirrored with a sort of geometric-floral pattern. Not only would we love to know more about the desk, we'd also like to know the value.

**Amy Santamaria**





**a:** Trena Danbrook and Greg James of *The Fabulous Find* in Victoria, B.C., had the bead on this one. “The desk in question was definitely designed by Peter Lovig Nielsen in the ‘50s and manufactured by Hedensted Mobelfabrik in Denmark; it is a true work of art. The value would vary depending on the city where it was sold: anywhere from \$1,500 to \$3,500 today.” If you Google the designer’s name you’ll find an assortment of links to his pieces, including a direct match at [midcenturymodernist.com](http://midcenturymodernist.com).

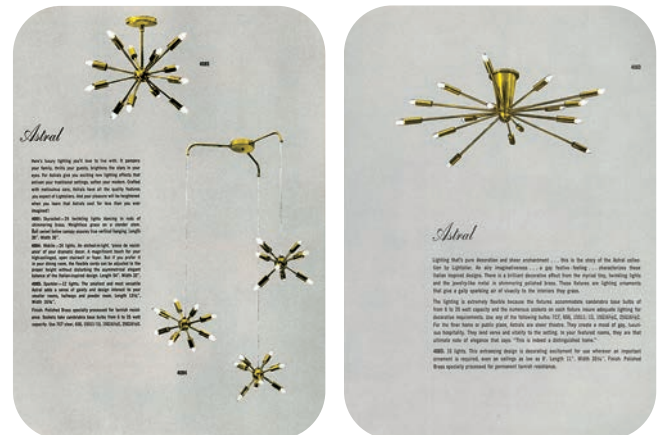
**q:** What did they call ‘sputnik’ light fixtures before 1957? Or did they not make them until after Sputnik launched?

**Ken Myers**

**a:** Mr. Wizard, AKA Bo Sullivan at Arcalus Period Design, came back with this lesson: “Sputnik means satellite, but I have yet to determine the true design origin of the sputnik-style fixtures. I believe Lightolier is responsible for their U.S. introduction in 1953–54 with

their Astral collection. They state in the catalog copy that these are ‘Italian inspired designs’ and their original model names, besides Astral for the 4083, were Skyrocket, Sparkler and Mobile. Pretty soon everybody was on the bandwagon.

“Several years ago, someone on eBay was selling a lighting catalog that they claimed had the first sputnik



fixtures in the U.S. in it, and it predated Lightolier. Much to my regret, I didn’t buy the catalog or save the information. I still don’t know what to make of it, but I think it was Lightolier, with their industry-leading modern design panache, that really launched it.”

**q:** Having recently moved from an Albert Frey–designed condo to a 1959 Meiselman (both in Palm Springs), we are still getting the place put together furniture-wise. Our quandary: where to best put the flat screen TV? Page 18 of the Fall 2010 issue has a terrific example of TV placement, and we would love some further advice on how to integrate this necessary evil into our midcentury abode.

**Richard Vaughn & Neil Gussardo**



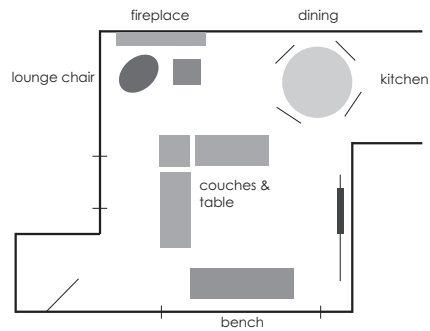
# more ranchdressing



Page 18 of the Fall 2010 issue

**a:** We put our heads together with Erin Marshall of Kismet Design and came up with this long-distance advice: Your TV is fighting with the window wall. Try reorienting the

room so that it lives on the blue wall, which might mean adding outlets or floor plugs. That wall would look more proportional with long, floating bookshelves or art and an additional lamp. Since you're drawn to the credenza



for the room, as an L with the shorter piece in its current orientation, but the longer portion facing the new TV wall. See if the two backless parts of the couch look best overlapped or just touching at the corner with the



arrangement shown in the fall issue, a piece like that would work well in your home. If you want the electronics to be less of a main focus, a vintage or modern-made wall unit like those from ISS allows you to display a TV with other decorative objects and books. And an area rug would add cohesion to the pieces that are floating on the white field tile and ground the floor; since you have a pet, you might look at FLOR's carpet squares for a practical approach.

And a suggestion or two on the furniture arrangement: Try your sectional facing the blue wall as one long piece with the arms on either end, or, if that's too long

void behind them filled with a low table. The black tufted bench would work in front of the window, or the Eames lounge chair and ottoman could go there, too. Either piece might also fit in front of your dining area fireplace, allowing you to make an asset of its unusual location. Let us know how it goes!

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



# resources

## open to possibilities, pp. 14–23

Contractor/designer: Brad Lackey, Lackey Construction, Portland, Ore., 503.318.0012, [lackeyconstruction.com](http://lackeyconstruction.com)

✦ Kitchen cabinetry: Neel Briggs, Big Branch Woodworking, Portland, Ore., 503.453.4271, [bigbranchwoodworking.com](http://bigbranchwoodworking.com) ✦ Appliances: Stove, DCS by Fisher & Paykel, [dcsappliances.com](http://dcsappliances.com) ✦ Refrigerator, [jennair.com](http://jennair.com) ✦ Dishwasher, [bosch-home.com](http://bosch-home.com) ✦ Counters: [Caesarstoneus.com](http://Caesarstoneus.com) ✦ Faucets: [blancoamerica.com](http://blancoamerica.com) ✦ Kohler.com ✦ Doors: Metal frame sliders, [andersenwindows.com](http://andersenwindows.com) ✦ Wood frame, [simpsondoor.com](http://simpsondoor.com) ✦ Hardware: Baldwin Images line, [baldwinbrasshardware.com](http://baldwinbrasshardware.com) ✦ Fireplace insert: Scan, [scan.dk](http://scan.dk) ✦ Fireplace surround: [annsacks.com](http://annsacks.com) ✦ Skylights: [veluxusa.com](http://veluxusa.com) ✦ Landscape: Barbara Hilty Landscape Design, Portland, Ore., 503.224.3947, [hiltylandscapedesign.com](http://hiltylandscapedesign.com) ✦ Living room furnishings: Castellano Custom Furniture, [castellanofurniture.com](http://castellanofurniture.com) ✦ Artwork: Drawing on green wall, Christine Bourdette, [christinebourdette.com](http://christinebourdette.com) ✦ Bedroom, Rachel Sanders, [rachellorasanders.com](http://rachellorasanders.com)

## mission accomplished, pp. 46–53

Architect: Daniel Nichols AIA Architects, Sonoma, Calif., 707.996.0164, [nicholsarchitects.com](http://nicholsarchitects.com) ✦

Landscape architecture firm: Magrane Associates, San Francisco, 415.821.0233, [magrane.com](http://magrane.com) ✦ General contractor: Kevin Kearney, Kearney & O'Banion, Sebastopol, Calif., 415.824.1069, [kearneyobanion.com](http://kearneyobanion.com) ✦ Furniture: Den sofa, Ligne Roset Multy, [ligne-roset-usa.com](http://ligne-roset-usa.com) ✦ Breakfast bar, LEM Piston stools, [dwr.com](http://dwr.com) and other sites ✦ Master bedroom: Zola bed and nightstand, [dwr.com](http://dwr.com) ✦ Giulio bench, [dwr.com](http://dwr.com) ✦ Bottoni Slim Single Seater, [yliving.com](http://yliving.com) ✦ Artwork, Lisa Kristine Photography, [lisakristine.com](http://lisakristine.com) ✦ Master bath: Kohler Man's Lav sinks, [kohler.com](http://kohler.com) ✦ Dornbracht Tara faucets, [dornbracht.com](http://dornbracht.com) ✦ Counter and floor, Bisazza Logos tile; shower, Bisazza Codex tile, [bisazzausa.com](http://bisazzausa.com)

## movie star digs, pp. 56–63

Tile: [hakatai.com](http://hakatai.com) ✦ Furnishings: Cherner chairs, [chernerchair.com](http://chernerchair.com) ✦ Saarinen table, [knoll.com](http://knoll.com) ✦ Bullet planter, [hiphaven.com](http://hiphaven.com) ✦ Emeco chairs, [emeco.com](http://emeco.com) ✦ Nelson bubble lamp, [modernica.net](http://modernica.net) ✦ Vintage-look fabric: [contemporarycloth.com](http://contemporarycloth.com) ✦ Vintage store: Dazzles, Palm Springs, 760.327.1446 ✦ Poolside pots: [gaineyceramics.com](http://gaineyceramics.com) ✦ Reproduction butterfly chairs: [circa50.com](http://circa50.com)

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# atomicevents

## February 26–27 Cincinnati

### 20th Century Cincinnati

Queen City Shows returns to the Sharonville Convention Center for their annual midcentury event. Fifty dealers specializing in furnishings, lighting, art, textiles, pottery, art glass and vintage clothing from “investment quality to fun and funky.” Show hours are 11:00–5:00, with a preview on Saturday; a special exhibit will feature vintage signs from Cincinnati’s Sign Museum. [20thcenturycincinnati.com](http://20thcenturycincinnati.com)

## Through February 27 Palm Springs

### Modernism Week & Show and Sale

It’s not too late to attend the expanded week and a half of festivities, which include home and neighborhood tours, lectures, films, parties and special exhibits. A four-day show (February 18–21) at the Palm Springs Convention Center features 80 dealers of modernist furniture, collectibles and artwork. Visit [palmspringsmodernism.com](http://palmspringsmodernism.com) and [modernismweek.com](http://modernismweek.com) for details.

## March 3–6 Miami

### Mod Miami

If a cocktail coach crawl of historic Biscayne Blvd., vintage fashions, theme parties, music and a modern marketplace float your boat, plan to head south for this event. Who wants to miss the beach blanket bikini show or entertainment by Fred Schneider of the B-52s, the chimp-masked DisasterNauts or Marina the Fire-Eating Mermaid? Not you; [modmiami.com](http://modmiami.com)

## March 11–12 Miami

### Meet MiMo in Miami

Bus, walking and VIP tours of iconic MCM homes and historic districts; [dadeheritagetrust.org](http://dadeheritagetrust.org).

## Through March 13 Dearborn, Mich.

### Hawaii’s Alfred Shaheen: Fabric to Fashion

Shaheen’s early garments are highly collectible, and the show includes examples of textiles and aloha wear, along with archival photos and advertising. [arabamericanmuseum.org](http://arabamericanmuseum.org).

## March 19 Decatur, Ga.

### Decatur Old House Fair

A lecture on Georgia ranch houses and a seminar on interior design for the midcentury home are among the



offerings at this preservation-oriented fair, which includes resources for rehabbing, maintaining and furnishing your home. [decaturoldhousefair.com](http://decaturoldhousefair.com)

## Through April 3 Louisville, Ky.

### Modern in the Making: Design 1900–2000

Encompassing Bauhaus and MCM design movements, as well as those that came before and after, the Speed Art Museum on the University of Louisville campus takes on the diverse definitions of what ‘modern’ meant in the 20th century. From a 1945–50 beech and jute chaise by Bruno Mathsson to a sculptural ‘60s Floris chair by Gunter Beltzig, this exhibit will expand your modern horizons. Free admission; [speedmuseum.org](http://speedmuseum.org).

## April 8–10 Dallas

### Dallas Design Fair/Art Fair

The first annual design fair featuring furniture, lighting and decorative arts dealers, in conjunction with the third Dallas fine art fair; [dallasartfair.com](http://dallasartfair.com)

## April 8–10 Houston

### Houston Modern Market

Eighty artists and vendors, lectures and architectural tours are all part of the 2011 event at the Winter Street Studios. Tickets and more info at 281.463.8300 or [info@houstonmodernmarket.com](mailto:info@houstonmodernmarket.com).

## April 16–17 Phoenix & Scottsdale

### Modern Phoenix Expo + Home Tour

Sunnyslope in North Phoenix is the mountainside locale for the tour of approximately a dozen restored or remod-



eled midcentury homes. And slide shows, workshops and more are part of Modern Phoenix Week, April 9–15, in partnership with Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art. Topics include “How to Research Your Midcentury Modern Home” and “Modern Scottsdale.” House tour tickets always sell out; call 480.994.ARTS (2787) in February and visit [modernphoenixweek.com](http://modernphoenixweek.com) for updates.

**April 16–17 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, benefitting Hexter Elementary school; info at [whiterockhometour.org](http://whiterockhometour.org).

**April 22–24 Southfield, Mich.**  
**The Michigan Modernism Exposition**

Twentieth-century design exposition and sale with 50 exhibitors at the Southfield Municipal Complex; [michiganmodernism.com](http://michiganmodernism.com)

**Through April 24 Long Island City, N.Y.**  
**On Becoming an Artist: Isamu Noguchi and his Contemporaries, 1922–1960**

The Noguchi Museum explores the relationships between Isamu Noguchi and 40 figures from the worlds of design, architecture and dance, including Alexander

Calder, Frida Kahlo, Buckminster Fuller, Louis Kahn, Richard Neutra, Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham. [noguchi.org](http://noguchi.org)

**April 29–May 1 Santa Monica**  
**Los Angeles Modernism Show & Sale**

Two days of 20th-century furniture and decorative arts dealers in the Barker Hangar at the Santa Monica Air Center, plus a preview Friday night to benefit SCI-Arc. [dolphinfairs.com/lamodernism](http://dolphinfairs.com/lamodernism)

**Through May 29 Palm Springs**  
**Steel and Shade: The Architecture of Donald Wexler**

Donald Wexler’s career included homes, condos, banks, schools and office parks built from the late ‘40s through the ‘70s. This exhibition at the Palm Springs Art Museum presents drawings, photographs and models, including a full-scale sectional steel model of his Palm Springs prefab metal houses. [psmuseum.org](http://psmuseum.org)

**June 9–12 Ft. Lauderdale**  
**The Hukilau**

Tiki, tiki, tiki all the time. An Elvis-movie themed room crawl (whatever that is), a ‘Rumposium’ from cocktail connoisseur Jeff ‘Beachbum’ Berry, a talk by Phillip Roberts on his Waikiki book and an Oceanic art gallery are just the tip of the kitsch iceberg. [Thehukilau.com](http://Thehukilau.com) has details.



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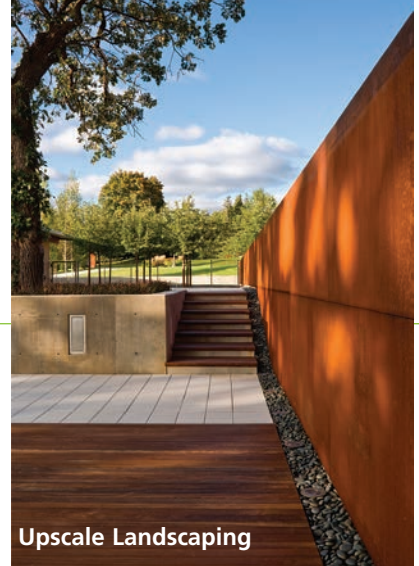
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<b>Iron Thread Design</b> ironthreaddesign.com	35
<b>nestliving</b> 866.905.8080 nest-living.com	28
<b>Omni+</b> 877.918.6868 omniplusfurniture.com	12
<b>Otto</b> 714.526.3142 shopotto.com	29
<b>Pearl + Guld Ltd</b> 505.474.7447 pngltd.com	70
<b>Spacify</b> 866.772.2040 spacify.com	71

<b>Urban Hardwoods</b> 888.766.8199 urbanhardwoods.com	ifc
<b>YLiving</b> YLiving.com	7
<u><b>other house stuff</b></u>	
<b>Big Chill</b> 877.842.3269 bigchillfridge.com	45
<b>Bradbury &amp; Bradbury Art Wallpapers</b> 707.746.1900 bradbury.com	29
<b>Crestview Doors</b> 866.454.6302 crestviewdoors.com	44
<b>Doors &amp; Company Inc.</b> 512.454.3303 doorsandcompany.com	78
<b>Elmira Stove Works</b> 800.295.8498 elmirastoveworks.com	44
<b>FLOR, Inc.</b> 866.682.5944 myflor.com	ibc
<b>Hairpinlegs.com</b> 614.949.6918	75
<b>Hip Haven</b> 512.445.6961 hiphaven.com	79
<b>Kerf Design, Inc.</b> 206.954.8677 kerfdesign.com	1
<b>Mod Walls</b> 877.439.9734 modwalls.com	34
<b>The Modern Fan Co.</b> 888.588.3267 modernfan.com	5
<b>Modern Mosaics</b> 760.322.4481 modernmosaictile.com	54
<b>ModPlexi</b> 832.640.4351 modplexi.com	54
<b>Neutra Box</b> 510.520.7747 neutrabox.com	44
<b>puremodern.com</b> 800.563.0593	54
<b>Sleep Modern</b> 770.934.4038 sleepmodern.com	71
<b>Spiral Cone Legs</b> spiralconelegs.com	70