

# atomic ranch

MIDCENTURY MARVELS

lucky lustron 26

retro rules 36

texas two-step 60



Summer 2012



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# summer 2012

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### cover

Thrift store finds and overstock.com furnishings are quite at home in a ranch with a 1930s Streamline Moderne fireplace surround. Summer sunlight bathes the living room of the 1948 Portland, Ore., house, and the owner's background in visual merchandising is evident in the displays of kitschy collectibles throughout. But it was the original kitchen and baths that really sold the couple and fit their quirky personal aesthetic to a T. Story page 36.



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# meanwhile... back at the ranch

Avoiding cliches like a plague of tsunamis:  
my Andy Rooney moment.

There are lots of phrases and expressions that become overused and tired and I wish they would just go away because it indicates laziness on the writer's part. 'It's not rocket science' seems pretty popular—but does anyone appreciate how difficult and complex 'jet science' or even 'diesel engine science' can be? 'Thinking outside the box,' 'embedded in my DNA' and 'family friendly' have all lost their freshness and would be discarded if I were in charge. From the mass media, Brian Williams' nightly 'Thanks, as always' throw from each NBC correspondent seems so obligatory, predictable and repetitious. Did I say repetitious? And in the political world, could we please retire 'litmus test' and return litmus paper strips to chemistry class where they belong?

In the realm of home stories, 'good bones' was once fresh and exciting but now it's just a hackneyed way of saying the basic structure is sound and worth renovating. 'Bedecked,' 'festooned' and 'liberally sprinkled' are still employed despite the fact they were used up in 1970. 'Curb appeal' is newer, but quickly becoming hollow. I'm fine with regular civilians using these phrases as shorthand, but I would hope that writers and bloggers who actually intend their words to be read by others could aspire to greater originality.

There is a popular conceit I know you've heard many times and maybe even used to describe your own home improvements: "If X (insert your favorite architect/designer) were alive today, I'm pretty sure he/she would have chosen Y (insert the door knob/paint color/bamboo you just picked out) for this update." Oh, really? I might as well say that Shakespeare probably would have written a publisher's letter like this, if he were alive today and had nothing better to say. I don't think we can get inside the head of a dead architect/designer because, a) they're dead, and b) an innovator or genius by very definition thinks differently. And take it from me, we may be clever, but we're not geniuses.

I seriously doubt if professional home improvement journalists are going to read this and modify their ways, but it should engender some healthy skepticism in you, the reader. If you see too many of these phrases in someone's story, stop a moment and realize the writer really isn't putting in the effort and is not affording you any respect.

Have a nice day.

*Jim Brown, Publisher*

*This column is for your amusement only; no criticism of living individuals is implied or intended. Back away from your keyboard ...*



In 2005, near the end of my automotive photography career, I snagged the dream assignment to photograph Vic Edelbrock's 1968 & 1969 Trans Am racers. This image has nothing to do with ranch homes; sometimes I just like to remember my brushes with greatness. See if you can spot the car theme in this issue.





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# modernwisdom

**W**hen we are in Salt Lake City visiting family, we tend to sneak in a tour of some of the coveted neighborhoods—Olympus Cove, Foothill Terrace and The Avenues—to see the cool homes. That area developed along the same timeline that much of Southern California did, [and you see evidence of] the modern architectural movements. We thought you might enjoy

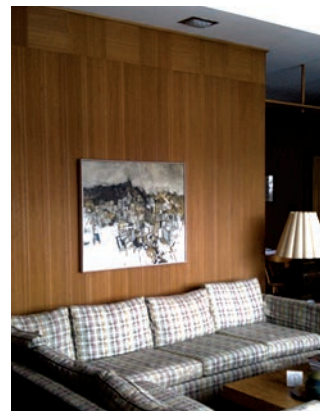
seeing some of these gems, including the street names.

**Chris & Diane Ingalls**  
*Portland, Ore.*



\* I've become a fan of, and subscriber to, your magazine, as it reminds me of the house I grew up in and the many little features (like the paper towel dispenser seen on page 42 of your Summer 2011 issue) that I took for granted. Local architect Harry Mallalieu designed that house, built in 1954 in Massillon, Ohio. Its exterior is stained California redwood, and the interior

has linoleum flooring, built-in furniture and plenty of custom woodwork, including 'corduroy' paneling in the living room. My parents lived in it until my dad's death in 2010, so it hasn't been renovated by owners with different aesthetic tastes.



It is now for sale, but I fear for it. The sluggish housing market is taking its toll, but just as frightening are the comments by prospective buyers about the 'need' to update. I'm afraid its original features will be obliterated. So before that happens, here is a photo to at least provide a record of its original looks. I hope it is good enough, since the interior shots can't be replicated.

Thanks for all you do to keep midcentury marvels going!

**Christine Wenderoth**  
*Chicago*

\* My husband and I were truly honored and flattered to see our Chautauqua Institution, N.Y., lake house in the AR Summer 2011 'Nick of Time' article on Paul R. Williams. The house is truly a testament to Mr. Williams' talent in designing for families.

Restoration/renovation continues at the house and we are fortunate to have nine pages of the original blueprints to help us along the way. What cannot be seen in the foyer photo in the article [page 28] is that the walls there and in the dining and living room are all clad in Weldtex, the striated wood paneling popular during the 1950s. Sadly, the 20"-24" Weldtex ceiling tiles were removed from the dining room during a prior renovation. If anyone knows of a source for these tiles or



# morewisdom

panels, I'd be overjoyed to have that information.

Congratulations on a well-written and much appreciated article on the work of Paul R. Williams. AR will always be a favorite source of midcentury architecture for us.

**Donna Kohl**

\* First, I just want to say that my husband and I are huge fans! We can't help but look around where we live and be thankful for all of the midcentury beauties in Madison. I wish more Madisonians would submit photos or stories of their homes. We are proud owners



of a 1956 ranch with beautiful cherry wood paneling and lots of original charm. Thanks to our neighbors, who are artists, we are even able to decorate with paintings done in the '60s.

Though we are still working on getting it just right, wanted to say thanks for all of the inspiration.

**Amanda & Jesse LaLonde**

*Madison, Wis.*

*It has been a while since Wisconsin was featured, issue no. 26, Summer 2010's 'Living a Five Star Life,' to be specific.*

—ar editor

\* I saw the letter to the editor from Stephanie Seyer regarding matching brick on her home in the Winter 2011 issue. I live in a 1953 ranch home in Georgetown, Texas, and my wife and I love your magazine.

I am employed with Acme Brick Company and I might be able to help Stephanie and others in the future if they need information on brick, clay pavers, glass block, etc. Acme Brick is a company based in Fort Worth, and we manufacture or have access to many different sizes of brick, including Roman and Norman sizes. Acme Brick also owns a glass block window company called Innovative Building Products—IBP for short.

Please keep my info so you can contact me if the need arises: [ahiggins@brick.com](mailto:ahiggins@brick.com) or [brick.com](http://brick.com).

**Allan Higgins**

\* Sometimes one needs to inform others of an exceptional contractor who will do what you ask them to do. In our case, we were trying to develop an MCM kitchen inspired by my years in architecture in the 1970s and experiences with other contractors.

The kitchen had rustic-type cabinets with ceramic tile countertops, and while charming, lacked functionality. We proceeded to design our new kitchen with the help of this magazine as well as *Design for Living: Eichler Homes*, the first Atomic Ranch book and some of my old architecture textbooks from college.

We worked with Terry Favello, who was very good at trying new construction techniques in order to give us what we wanted—horizontal grain and round corners for the cabinets, for example. All too often, I hear it the other way, that the contractor steers the owner toward his own vision.

The countertop is Eurostone, a Palm Springs-influenced

# even more wisdom

style, and the backsplash is Alys Edwards Cosmopolitan Glass placed horizontally to maximize the effect of the grain of the cabinets. The round corners on the cabinets are a detail that I designed as an homage to Streamline trailers. Fortunately, we were able to retain the original MusiCall intercom, which still works.

As you can see, we like the older modern style but we have the luxury of today's technology for cooking, baking and cleaning with our Thermador and Samsung appliances.



Thanks again for your fine publication.

**William & Ricka Heideman**  
Garden Grove, Calif.

*Our latest book, Atomic Ranch: Midcentury Interiors, has some great kitchens, from tweaked vintage beauties to contemporary interpretations of the modern postwar lifestyle. And readers will note similar Streamline Moderne touches in the kitchen and living room of this issue's cover house. The Heidemans' contractor, Favello & Son, has a site that features mostly traditional cabinetry, but does show an L-shaped bathroom vanity with midcentury slab doors; contact them at favelloandson.com.*

—ar editor

\* As midcentury modernism continues to mature as an important aspect of America's architectural heritage, it is important to raise national awareness of our incredible wealth of modernist structures. I wanted to



Dan Chavkin

let readers know that my steel Wexler house in Palm Springs (on the cover of no. 14, Summer 2007) has just been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Notably, this is the first midcentury structure in Palm Springs to be so recognized.

Architects Donald Wexler and Ric Harrison designed forward-looking, smart, stylish all-steel homes for the middle class that were low-maintenance and virtually indestructible 'machines for better living.' Seven were ultimately built, and mine was opened to the public as one of three model homes in early 1962. Today, the house appears much as it did 50 years ago—intact and unaltered—and symbolizes a very exciting and eventful time in U.S. history.

The NRHP application was somewhat involved, but the nomination was received with great interest and enthusiasm within the California Office of Historic Preservation. I was given much assistance and encouragement while I navigated through the process, which took a total of about six months.

I want to extend my sincere congratulations to Donald Wexler, who is enjoying his retirement in the Palm Springs area.

**Brian McGuire**  
Palm Springs

\* I totally agree with Mr. Grindstaff from Atlanta [Winter 2011, page 8] about the rising awareness of the beauty of MCM architecture, and the need to preserve that important asset of American culture. I also live in



the Atlanta area, in a slightly more recent 1970s ranch that I love nonetheless.

There is still quite a bit of this type of architecture in the suburbs around here, but alas, rapidly either disappearing altogether or remodeled to within an inch of their lives.

Through my background in historic preservation and a career as architectural historian, I am well aware of the damage that well-intentioned individuals sometimes inflict on our architectural heritage, so perhaps Mr. Grindstaff's suggestion to form a partnership between your magazine and HGTV may well be just the thing that could help save some of these jewels. AR, are you up to the challenge?

Let's not forget that the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 [potentially] protects all buildings 50 years or older, providing they retain their original characteristics. This would make a lot of MCM buildings—so far those built through 1961—eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, thus affording a modicum of protection.

**Monica Hayden**

*Covington, Ga.*

*We actually do have a premise for a home improvement show focused on ranches. But beyond the realities of none of us being on-air personalities and the insanity of television production, I doubt that the world in general would embrace the value of retaining original elements in their homes. Painting their brick exteriors and mahogany paneling, and ripping out that 'gross' old kitchen or bath is still very much the norm. Yes, we could educate people, but don't they prefer to ogle stainless steel appliances and polished granite counters and be entertained?*

—ar editor

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



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By siting the addition perpendicular to the street, its mass is minimized, while the repetition of the original sandstone cladding on the new garage wall makes it blend into the postwar neighborhood setting.





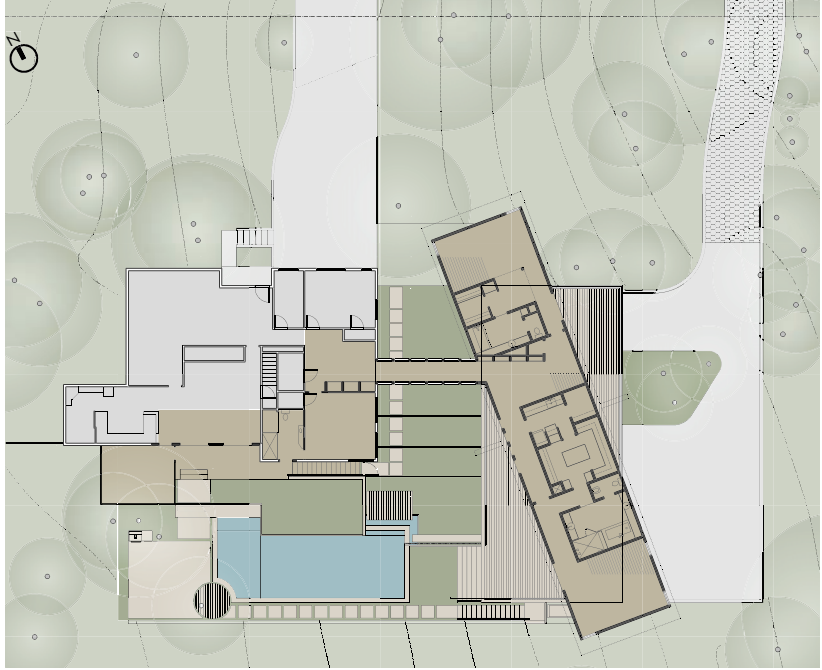


# Twist & Shout

*text* Michelle Gringeri-Brown

*photography* Paul Bardagjy





Courtesy Dick Clark Architecture





# Music, midcentury and custom cars coalesce in Austin.

## Stats

Original square footage: 2,100

Second-story addition: 1,800

Garage addition: 1,900

If you Google 'big' and 'Texas,' you get some amusing links: The Big Texan Steak Ranch—home of the free 72 oz. steak dinner; a big Texas cinnamon roll—not all that big and just a vending machine 'pastry'; and Style Network's 'Big, Rich Texas' reality show—'elite' country club moms and their entitled daughters. It also might lead to an Austin ranch house with a big addition that still speaks the midcentury lexicon.

Gabby and Steve Wertheimer bought their house nine years ago. In the town of Rollingwood, a suburb five minutes from downtown Austin, the neighborhood was developed during the '50s, '60s and '70s. The couple renovated the interior of their 1956 ranch, adding a tomato-red kitchen and terrazzo and bamboo flooring in the three bedroom/two-bath home. There was a two-car garage and a makeshift carport, but because Steve Wertheimer is a serious car guy, that wasn't nearly enough room for his hobby.

"Steve runs the Continental Club here, a very famous rhythm and blues live club, and he's a car collector and hot rodder," says architect Dick Clark, whose eponymous firm was responsible for a 2008 addition. "He and Gabby got married a little later in life and now have a child; that's what spurred the addition. They wanted a [larger] bedroom for themselves and more room for their daughter and Steve's car collection. Instead of driving to where he had a car in storage to work on it, he wanted it at home and Gabby wanted a pool."

"I was born and raised in Palm Springs and always loved the clean lines and open feeling of most homes there," says Gabby. "When I go back and visit, I am always amazed at how many wonderful original midcentury homes remain. Everybody in Palm Springs has a pool in their backyard, so I couldn't wait to put in ours."

"They knew what they wanted but they didn't know how to get it," comments Clark. "They had this big lot and the original house was a little gem of a '50s house. I suggested an enclosed walkway bridge so the new could be totally new and the old could stay what it is, though we changed some rooms up a little bit. That way we didn't mess with all the work they did on the previous remodel."

Clark's concept was for a stand-alone six-car garage with a new bedroom wing above. What sets it apart from a hulking bunker is the angle the top floor

Homeowner Steve Wertheimer (in white shirt) chats with architect Dick Clark outside the new addition. With creative parking, the garage can house six to eight vintage cars plus motorcycles. Current residents include '41, '50 and '51 Mercuries; a 1957 Coupe de Ville customized by Gary Howard; a '29 Model A roadster; a '27 Ford T roadster and wife Gabby's '63 Rambler American 440 convertible.











sits atop the garage, coupled with its light-hearted butterfly roofline and the postwar exterior detailing.

"The addition is referential to midcentury architecture and modernism in the way we tried to keep the simple shapes but play with the way they were organized," explains project manager Francisco Arredondo, who was responsible for the details, materials and finishes, as well as coordinating with the structural engineers and contractors. "We tried to keep the same language and detailing that you have on the original house—the same type of railing, the same colors and materials, and even the butterfly roof that was very popular back in the '50s."

"The clients came to us with a modest budget, so that's one of the reasons that the bottom floor is a simple garage," Clark says. "It's painted sheetrock and stucco and used stone, with fixed windows and some operators, and the simplest trim in the world. It's the twist and the bridge that set it apart. That's very much our style, but we also knew Steve and Gabby had a bunch of cool furniture and art and wanted to give it the least cluttered [setting], so it would show well. There's nothing custom, it's all off-the-shelf stuff."

The butterfly roof allowed the bedrooms, which are at either end, to have higher ceilings than the baths and the laundry room in the center of the addition. By selecting relatively inexpensive exterior finishes, Arredondo says the Wertheimers' budget stretched to include wood ceilings and a higher-end master bath.

Gabby chose cement flooring from the Dominican Republic, penny tile and the fixtures for the bathrooms, while Steve was involved in the design of the outdoor railing and the new garage, working closely with Ed Walston, the same contractor they'd used on their earlier remodel. The couple furnished the new spaces and selected all of the artwork and accessories.

The two structures were tied together stylistically with the exterior paint color and vintage stone. "The sandstone was salvaged from the rear of the

Both Wertheimers had grown up in homes with terrazzo floors and chose Fritztile resilient terrazzo for the entry, living, dining and kitchen of the original house. The Isamu Noguchi Cyclone table is vintage and the George Nelson bench is a reissue from Design Within Reach. Reeded glass was added to the original front door to match the new sidelight, and the lamp overhead came from an elementary school.

Opposite, top: Their vintage living room furniture includes two Adrian Pearsall chairs, a Plycraft lounge chair and a platform sofa with built-in marble table-tops that they believe is also a Pearsall design. The Moroccan Beni Ourain rug is from Anthropologie, and the buffet is a former gun cabinet found at Uncommon Objects in Austin. In the dining room, a Florence Knoll table found in the attic of the Houston Continental Club is surround by high-back chrome chairs and a copper Danish lamp bought on eBay.

The red kitchen, with its custom cabinets and laminate counters, was part of a renovation done by Ed Walston several years ago. Around the Burke pedestal table are vintage Herman Miller shell chairs with new bases; the pull-down lamp was found in the basement. Sliding glass doors to the back yard were added during the most recent remodel.

Clark's concept was for a stand-alone six-car garage with a new bedroom wing above.

One-inch ceramic tile clads much of the new master bath, including the turquoise Kohler Tea for Two tub.

Opposite, top: The former master bedroom is now set up for guests, with bamboo floors, IKEA furnishings and gallery white walls. Thrift store art and an IKEA lamp on the table are accessorized with a midcentury floor lamp, luggage and a '70s chair from Room Service Vintage in Austin, likely a Rybo Siesta 302 model.

The new master bedroom has Chinese-style furniture from Austin's Mercury Design Studio, a teak bedroom set by Copenhagen with a colorful Anthropologie quilt, waxed yellow pine ceilings and bamboo on the floor. The windows throughout the new addition are from Marvin.









The bridge spans the path friends take to the back yard and functions as a covered breezeway between the new and old garages. The railing around the pool is a riff on midcentury designs Gabby and Steve had grown up with, and now those decorative metal panels are repeated on the balcony over the garage and at the stairs leading to the front door.

original house,” Clark explains. “In the dream world of architecture, whenever you do something like this you want to make it look like it’s always been that size. Stone and stucco still thrive in Texas; it’s the Hispanic community where we get most of the great stonemasons and stucco people.”

“It would have been more affordable for the Wertheimers to go and get new stone instead of trying to reuse the existing, but it was important to them to have that same palette of materials,” Arredondo adds.

A few changes to the original house were undertaken, too. One of the former bedrooms is now a playroom and another was annexed for a corridor connected to the bridge. New doors in the kitchen and in an original bath lead to the pool area, and a screened porch was added for grilling sans insects. Clark says most friends—himself included—take the terraced steps under the





## Meanwhile, elsewhere in Austin ...

On a five-plus acre development in East Austin, architect Chris Krager and builder Russell Becker are crafting another kind of midcentury dream. Their goal is sustainably built modern homes with the potential for net-zero-energy usage in a tract they've dubbed SOL (Solutions Oriented Living). The tanking of the U.S. housing market meant drilling geothermal wells had to be put on hold in 2008, and only one buyer has invested the roughly \$24,000 it costs for photovoltaic arrays sufficient to support a household's energy needs. But the models Krager has developed are relatively small, advance many MCM ideas and welcome both market-rate and low-income buyers and renters.



Of the planned 40 homes, 16 are designated for low-income households, 11 market-rate residences have been sold and 13 more are awaiting construction. Prices start at \$200,000 and square footage ranges from a hair over 1,000 to 1,800. Carports, shed and butterfly roofs, concrete floors, clerestory windows and open floor plans give them an updated midcentury vibe.

"I see SOL as coming from the same lineage as the Case

Study program, the Eichler homes and the general enthusiasm for modern design that blossomed in the '40s and '50s," says Krager. "The legacy of modern design for 'everyman' was intrinsic to the philosophy of modern architecture from its earliest days, starting with Frank Lloyd Wright and the Bauhaus, but has rarely been realized in a meaningful way. This is our platform." [solaustin.com](http://solaustin.com)

—mgb





Penny tile covers the second bath in the new addition, which has a circles theme that can be easily updated as their daughter grows up.


The Texas-centric bedroom has all the toys, room and light Lulu, age 6 now, could ask for.



bridge to the back yard instead of climbing the cantilevered stairs to the front door, since so much entertaining happens outside in Austin.

How smoothly did such an extensive project go, we asked. Running into large deposits of limestone where they needed to nestle the garage into the slope was the only challenge that Arredondo recalls, a common enough occurrence when building in Austin. Some boulders were salvaged for landscape specimens, but the homeowners' experience was, of course, a bit more intense than the pros' perceptions.

"Construction lasted approximately one year and involved the Mother of All Jackhammers going for weeks, excavating the native limestone to level the property," recalls Gabby. "Eighty dump trucks of rock were hauled off. Our daughter, Lulu, who was a year old at the time, slept through most of it right next door."

Her advice is to "get involved in the process, from the design to the construction as much as you can. And it definitely pays to hire a great architect who understands your needs and vision." 

Resources page 75

*Austin photographer Paul Bardagjy's work has appeared in numerous publications, including Architectural Digest, Travel & Leisure, This Old House and Texas Monthly. His website is [bardagjyphoto.com](http://bardagjyphoto.com). Former neighbor Marti Brom (see page 36) still performs at the Austin Continental Club from time to time.*



**In 1948,** Carl G. Strandlund—creator of the all-steel, prefab Lustron Home—answered a letter from a little girl named Terry who wanted a house because, what with the postwar housing shortage, she and her parents were all living in one room.

“Little children need a feeling of security—an anchor—which through the years ties up the strings of happiness, stability and character,” Strandlund wrote to the girl, whose parents must have been angling for a house when they “helped” their 2-year-old write the letter in the first place.

“Terry, I want you to tell Mommy and Daddy over your prayers tonight that you are going to have one of the first Lustron Homes,” the builder continued. A routine PR exercise on Strandlund’s part, perhaps, coming just when his grand project was beginning to take off after years of planning, struggle and politics, but it played well. For all practical purposes, this was “Yes, Virginia, there *is* a Lustron Home.”

And there was a Lustron Home, but not for long. The company went belly-up in 1950, done in by a combination of timing, taste and politics after cranking out fewer than 3,000 houses in all. The target had been 30,000 per year.

But did the little children who grew up in Lustrons get the feeling of security promised by Strandlund? Better question: Did whatever feeling of security they may have enjoyed make up for the feeling of social insecurity that came with living in a metal house?

As one of those Lustron kids, I can answer both questions with a resounding “Maybe.”



# A Lustron looks at 65

*A midcentury kid shows  
you can go home again.*

text Glenn Richter

photography Dave Kooi





On the one hand, I remember feeling vaguely unsafe when staying over at my aunt's house, because it was made of mere wood, which everybody knows is dangerously flammable. And at school, when we'd get under our desks for a Cold War drill (the teacher would close the venetian blinds, venetian blinds being a well-known defense against Soviet atom bombs), I remember thinking that I'd be better off at home, because Russian radiation probably couldn't penetrate the steel walls of the Lustron.

On the other hand, people didn't know what to think of a Lustron, except that it was sort of weird. And they always asked the same questions (yes, you can sometimes put things up on the wall with magnets; yes, the radiant ceiling panels do heat the house; no, it has never been painted, inside or out), so it was impossible for us not to be "the people who live in the metal house," and that made me feel like maybe we were sort of weird.

Which, if true, could help explain why, all these years later, I'm living in Lustron Home No. 591, the house I grew

up in, built—or should I say delivered?—in June 1949, about six months after I was delivered. So we're about the same age, but the house is in much better shape.

And now I'm back. My parents having passed on, I've kept the best of their furnishings: some modern furniture they bought as newlyweds in 1937; custom-made drapes from the 1940s, '50s and '60s; a big collection of Russel Wright American Modern dinnerware; even a Chinese-red, free-standing fireplace that would have looked right at home in Dean Martin's ski chalet. And I added my own pieces to the mix: a Thaden-Jordan bent-plywood dining set, a \$10 sputnik lamp from an Atlanta flea market and new pieces from here, there and IKEA.

The whole idea—my whole idea, anyway—was not to do a restoration, not to try to take the place back to the way things were in 1949, but to bring a substantially compromised midcentury house gracefully into the 21st century, to better suit the way we live today. Which is simply to face the fact that this Lustron, like most I've seen, has lost some of its original features over the years.



## The whole idea was not to do a restoration, but to bring a substantially compromised midcentury house gracefully into the 21st century

For instance:

- At some point, my father closed in the front porch with jalousie windows. Not something I would have done, but all that glass and aluminum doesn't look so unLustronic after all, and the extra protection from Connecticut winters is appreciated.
- The original floor tiles were pretty much shot, so I tore out the wall-to-wall carpeting, patched the tiles as needed and did the whole living area in black and gray rubber Flexi-Tile from Lowe's. It's great stuff, easy to work with (once you get the hang of it) and, if anything, looks more original than the original flooring.
- The supposedly ugly steel doors on the kitchen cabinets were replaced with allegedly attractive veneered plywood. Fortunately, I've still got the original doors, so the kitchen project is on the back burner, so to speak.
- The joints between the 24" panels in the bathroom had been filled with Spackle, sanded smooth and then the walls were papered and the ceiling was dropped to allow for an exhaust fan. I think that was done in the late '60s, and to undo all of it was beyond my energy level and would have left ugly screw holes in the steel. So I created a new 18" grid, which is

more in scale for such a small room and did a six-color checkerboard paint job (black, three shades of gray, plus two colors that were laser-matched from my Russel Wright dishes) that consumed hundreds of feet of blue tape and untold hours of labor. Add a vessel sink bought online, lighting fixtures from The Home Depot and—voila!—it's like being inside an op-art painting.

There's plenty more to do, of course, (the kitchen, for starters, and then the two bedrooms) because sometimes you run out of steam and sometimes you find more pressing uses for money. Like when the garage needed a new roof, or when the boiler my father installed in 1960 to replace the radiant heat with a baseboard hot water system finally conked out.

So there's a backlog of projects, but that just means there's always something to do.

Which, in itself, can make for a feeling of security. ✨

*Glenn Richter works for a daily newspaper and lives in central Connecticut. Dave Kooi is a visual artist and marketer living and working in Southern California; his website is [kooi.org](http://kooi.org). Learn more about Lustrons at [lustronconnection.org](http://lustronconnection.org) and [lustronpreservation.org](http://lustronpreservation.org).*

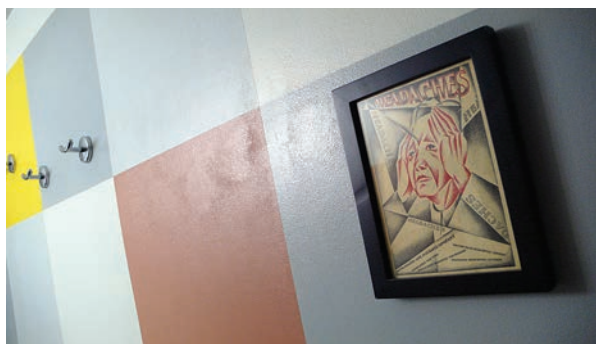


The original porcelain-finished-steel wall panels have been touched up over the years where they chipped, but never overpainted. The porch was closed in with jalousie windows in the 1970s; before that, we called it "the terrace." The stainless steel mailbox is a recent acquisition.



For more on Wright, we recommend *Guide to Easier Living*, page 32.



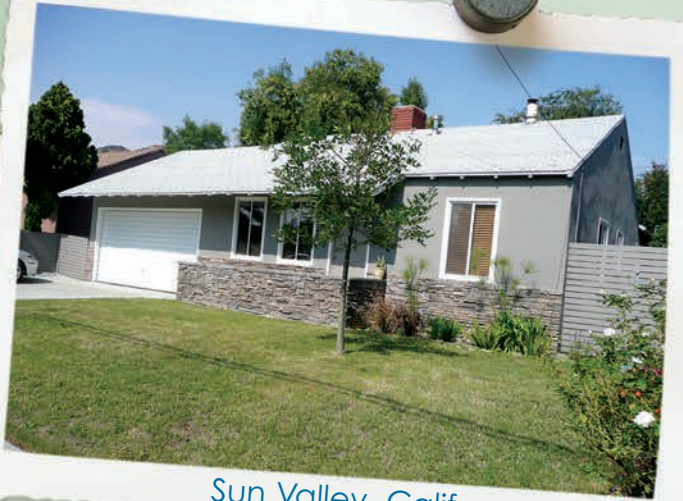


Clockwise, from top left: The gray porcelain wall panels set off the 1960s porcelain stove. Looking past the Thaden-Jordan bent-plywood chairs, a gobo is casting the patterned shadow on the wall. Some of my Russel Wright collection. These unmarked orangeware pitchers are almost certainly Sevilla by Cronin China, circa the '30s or '40s. In the dinette, a fake-Nelson clock from Indonesia and the Thaden-Jordan buffet with more Wright dinnerware. The colors for the bath's checkerboard paint came from scanning the glossy Wright plates; this may result in off colors—the glaze throws the scanner off—but I like the shades that came out anyway.





Walla Walla, Wash.



Sun Valley, Calif.



Brecksville, Ohio







# home page

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## Walla Walla, Wash.

A house designed by Mithun & Nesland in the Bellevue neighborhood of Surrey Downs was a featured “5-Star Home” in the September 1958 issue of *Better Homes & Gardens*. My house was completed to these same plans in 1959, and until late 2009 was occupied by the original owner. I purchased the house two years ago. Although suffering from considerable deferred maintenance, it had never been drastically remuddled and still retained almost all of its original features, such as a floating kitchen cabinet suspended by steel pipes from the canted ceiling. The essentially original condition of the house has facilitated its ongoing restoration to recapture an image of 1950s suburban living.

**Stephen Wilen**

## Sun Valley, Calif.

Our home was built in 1942 as part of a tract for employees of the former Lockheed Martin plant that operated nearby. If one looks closely at the facades of many of the homes in our neighborhood, they will notice that at one time, all of these houses looked identical. Today, they take on the personal design elements of their current owners. When we purchased our home in 2006, the exterior was basically unchanged from its original design. We added the stonework that now includes a semi-enclosed front porch and that matches the stone on the peninsula fireplace inside, which warms our living room and kitchen.

**Dean & Christina Peratsakis**

## Brecksville, Ohio

We bought our 1959 MCM ranch two years ago and we have been in love with it ever since. Anton George Nosek Jr. was a local architect who designed many buildings in the area, including Look About Lodge, which is on the National Register. There have been updates to the house, such as a new kitchen and modern master bath, but most details are original. This includes the see-through stone fireplace, wood plank vaulted ceilings and the original windows, which cover every wall and make our house the best place to relax and enjoy both the outdoors and indoors.

**Sharon O'Brien & John Adamski**

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

## JUST OUT!

### Atomic Ranch: Midcentury Interiors

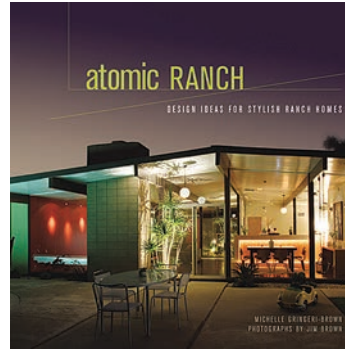
Explore eight fantastic ranch interiors in depth—from warm moderns and split-levels to tract homes and retro traditionals—in our newest book. The homeowners share their experiences with economical finishes and furnishings to adding on a master suite and reworking a tight floor plan. Gringeri-Brown/Brown, hardcover, 200 color photos, 192 pp., \$40



## AUTOGRAPHED!

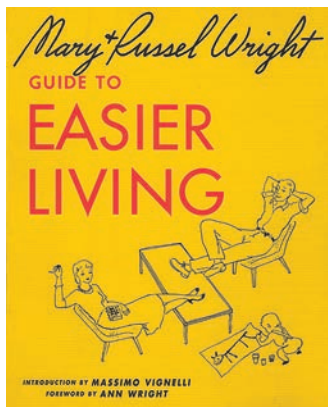
### Atomic Ranch: Design Ideas for Stylish Ranch Homes

Plenty of ranches from our early issues to inspire you: modern kitchens and baths, DIY landscaping and tips on pulling together a retro interior. Resources, history, decorating on a dime—it's got it all. Gringeri-Brown/Brown, hardcover, color and b&w photos, 192 pp., \$40



### Guide to Easier Living

Russel and Mary Wright personified modern design, and this reprinted vintage book shares their approach to informal living. The floor plans and advice about household chores and setting the dining table—with American Modern of course—still resonates today. Softcover, b&w illus., 202 pp., \$19



### Little Boxes: The Architecture of a Classic Midcentury Suburb

Westlake is home to the houses that inspired the 'boxes made of ticky-tacky' song. Resident Rob Keil takes you through his neighborhood and shows what makes this tract so appealing. Contemporary color and b&w vintage photos, hardcover, 144 pp., \$35



## NEW!

### Palm Springs Mid-Century Modern

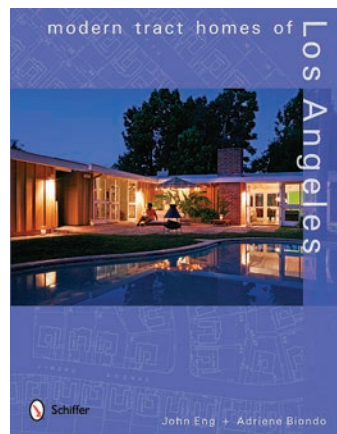
If you've wondered what you'd see on a driving tour of Palm Springs, this book delivers. Covering both iconic homes and typical modernist tracts in b&w and color photos, Dolly Faibyshev keeps the text super minimal in her picture book of the desert city today. Hardcover, 112 pp., \$30



## NEW!

### Modern Tract Homes of Los Angeles

Take a tour of Eichler's Balboa Highlands, May's Lakewood Rancho Estates, Palmer & Krisel's Northridge homes, the Ain Mar Vista tract and more through vintage marketing materials and contemporary color interiors and exteriors. John Eng & Adriene Biondo, hardcover, 144 pp., \$40





# &backs&more

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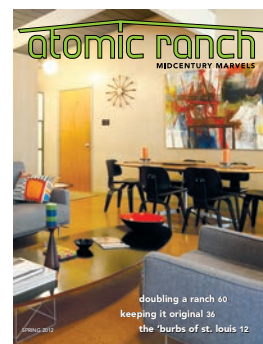
no. 30 Summer 2011



no. 31 Fall 2011



no. 32 Winter 2011



no. 33 Spring 2012

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All you see here is vintage—from the Marlite on the ceiling and the scallop over the sink to the inlaid linoleum on the floor. The original cupboard is topped with a wood-laminate surface and aluminum edging. The sink and dishwasher are all one metal unit, and over the sink is the only window in the room that opens.







# *all over retro*

*text Michelle Gringeri-Brown*

*photography Jim Brown*







*Imagine* getting a knock on your door the first Sunday after you move cross country, when you're camping out waiting for the moving truck and barely know where the nearest fair market coffee roaster and vegan bakery is. That was Bobby and Marti Brom's wakeup call in February 2011, when they were settling into their 1948 ranch in Portland, Ore.

The rapper was Karla Pearlstein, a restoration consultant there to cajole the couple into opening their house for the coming kitchen tour put on by Portland's Architectural Heritage Center. Although they had no living room furniture, the Broms were flattered enough to quickly pull the interior together for the 250-some people who toured the ground floor in mid-April.

"Not only was the kitchen totally original, but all of Marti's decorative arts and furniture were perfect for the house," recalls Pearlstein. "It was the best MCM house we have ever had on the tour and, even though it was a ways out from the other homes, the Broms' house was mobbed with attendees."

"Karla is a heroine; I've since learned she has personally averted many remodeling disasters," says Bobby Brom. "With us, she saw that we'd purchased an intact home and came by to pitch that we consider the current 'atomic' charms before we had a chance to alter it. I must admire her strategy: nothing wakes up an otherwise oblivious civilian to [those] charms as does a day's worth of people willing to pay to line up and admire them."

## it's so us

That kitchen is what sold the Broms on the house as well. It's a pleasant-looking white clapboard ranch from the street, but inside the two original baths and the kitchen have unusual details. The ceilings, walls and doors are covered with metal trimmed Marlite (a Masonite product with a shiny finish that never needed painting), the floor is inlaid linoleum and the appliances are all circa 1948. There's a roomy banquette, original cabinetry and big picture windows that look out on the treed back yard.

The original owner was a navy physician, and Bobby sees the influence of a maritime aesthetic in the Marlite wall treatment and in the Streamline shapes in the kitchen and the

The home's appliances were all GE electric models, and only the dishwasher remains. "The fact that the original owner died fairly early and his wife didn't want to change anything preserved the house," says homeowner Bobby Brom. "Most ads for early dishwashers show stand-alone models, not built-in ones with a combined sink like ours." Both the gas Wedgewood stove, and the replacement GE fridge date from 1948. While the dishwasher does work, it has some issues including rust and a deteriorating seal, so the Broms hand wash and use it as a drainer. There are videos on YouTube that show they're not the only enthusiasts devoted to babying old appliances like this.











Marti Brom, seen here with poodle Eartha, fell for the shape of the leopard print chairs and bought them and the rug before escrow closed; she discovered the room was larger than she recalled once they were installed. The 8'-long Jar Designs Maxim sofa came from overstock.com, where she cautions it's cheap to order and ship but expensive to return. She chose the couch for its proportions, including a seat height and depth that works with her petite stature. The thrift store coffee table is a "for now" piece and she's looking for the right book display case to go in the corner near the fireplace.

living room fireplace surround. This Brentwood neighborhood location was developed on the site of a former golf course, and the house was obviously designed for an upper-middle-class buyer, with its large bedrooms, sunken living room and lavish baths.

Moving from D.C., the Broms actually lost the house to another buyer and were reluctantly settling on a different one when Realtor Alyssa Starelli got a call. "All the other homes paled in comparison, so although we looked at easily 15 in person, nothing really satisfied," she recounts. "We found one that would suffice, and the moment I called the listing agent to acknowledge acceptance of the verbal offer, my other line rang, only to find out that the Brentwood house was BOM [back on market]. It was too perfect, and we dropped everything and jumped on it."







## don't change a thing

The '50s table and chairs were bought for this house because they worked with the Broms' existing blond hutch. That piece holds Hawaiian-theme plates, Trader Vic's collectibles and a fraction of Marti's vintage ceramic figurines.

The large flea market tropical painting has miraculously fit into all of their homes, while the vintage brass lamp overhead is French. The cocktail collectibles in the ornate English display piece (opposite, top) substitute for a formal bar.

The listing agent's photos—including a computer rendering of the kitchen updated with stainless steel appliances, Nelson bubble lamps and gray upholstery on the banquette—garnered online chatter when posted on [retrorenovation.com](#). "I was really happy to be able to share that the right buyer had, indeed, purchased the home and would absolutely maintain it, maybe even better it," Starelli says.

The Broms had lived in Saint Louis, in Austin (coincidentally, down the street from the Rollingwood house on page 12) for 15 years, and in a '30s home in Washington, D.C., moves dictated by Bobby's Air Force career. But Marti, an Americana recording artist, had embraced retro from the time she worked in a vintage clothing shop 35 years ago.

"When I was a teenager, I honestly thought there was nobody else on earth who liked this stuff," she says. "Fast forward all these years, I'm thrust into the world of rockabilly, and I'm like, Wait a minute; all these girls have vintage clothes and they like the stuff I like!

"My taste then was the same as it is now," she continues with a laugh. "I'm very eclectic; I try to rein it in a little bit, especially in this house. It was such a particular style that it made me edit a lot of my stuff."

For many years Marti worked as a department store visual merchandiser—designing window displays and furniture vignettes, dressing mannequins—and she annually visits Austin, where she decorates clients' homes for the holidays. But she still loves best working with and repurposing found retro objects. "I always have jungle-y living rooms. The house we rented in D.C. was built in the '30s and it looked like a big lodge inside. There, I kind of went with 'African Lodge,' and it worked," she says.





The front bedroom is used as an office and guestroom. There, Marti and Bobby merged their record collections; she bought them mostly for the cover graphics but found they've also influenced her musical career. The vintage luggage serves triple duty—a place to stash belts and sweaters, as the base of a table, and grounding vignettes throughout the house. The sofa bed is from overstock.com and the paneling is original.







Above: Even though it seemed out of reach, between the movie star vanity in the master bath and the vintage kitchen, Marti told her husband, "We have to buy this house..."

Marketed as a way to modernize your old walls and ceilings, the Marlite seen in the baths and kitchen came in planks or 16" blocks in 10 colors developed by Raymond Loewy Associates. Marlite is located in Dover, Ohio, while Mirawall, a similar prepainted aluminum product, is sold by Otefal, based in Italy.

Opposite: The basement and ground level are each roughly 1,770 square feet, with two large bedrooms, two baths, the living room, kitchen and dining room making up the top floor. Another bedroom, bath and a den were constructed in the basement by the previous owner. Their 1960 Thunderbird 'Squarebird' sits in the driveway.



# one [wo]man's treasure

“Our ’60s Stenger house in Austin was a place where we could showcase all of our collections. I had a circus room that had clown stuff, and my rattan furniture was in there. We had another room that was just records with big circus banners; we don’t have a place to hang those here. My kitchen was bright green with yellow cabinets and Day of the Dead collectibles. In this kitchen I had to tone it down, and I can’t hang anything on the walls,” Marti explains.

Pity the movers who had to pack up the couple’s copious LP records, comic books, pulp paperbacks, barware, vintage eyeglasses, Hawaiiana, Bakelite bracelets, housewares, old suitcases, midcentury figurines, knick-knacks and racks and racks of vintage clothing—18,000 pounds, Bobby mutters. (Today, Marti jokingly tells friends to slap her if they see her pick up a ceramic breakable and she looks like she’s going to buy it.)

And Bobby’s not much help, either: “I have a collector’s gene; when I was a kid I collected *Mad* magazine,” he says. “And it’s contagious: I catch on pretty quickly about what appeals to Marti’s aesthetic; suddenly I become more fanatical about [something] than she was to begin with.”

“I like looking for stuff—it’s not so much the having it,” Marti confesses. “It’s a sickness; I’ve seen it on ‘Hoarders.’ Every one of them has said it’s the hunt and once they get it home, it goes on a pile. I’m a few trips away from being on that show, except I’m a decorator and could never let it go that far—I’m too picky.”

The as-found house needed almost no changes—only a couple of unoriginal light fixtures were traded out. But while almost all of their decorative pieces and accessories are vintage, much of their furniture is not. The couch, area rug and love-’em-or-hate-’em leopard-print chairs in the living room were bought on overstock.com, and a blond bedroom suite came from a department store







in 1994. Since the Broms don't plan to move again, ever, Marti is more inclined to part with extraneous items that don't fit into this ranch aesthetic—hence a coming vintage shop in the basement, jokingly called “Marti's Velvet Cavern.”

“To me, the story of the house is that it was preserved in amber, so our focus is preservation as opposed to restoration,” says Bobby. “We were probably the best [ownership] fit for the house.”

“There were no pets and no children in the house previously,” Marti chimes in. (Their two children are high school and college age.) “I feel like we have to be more careful, so we're not the ones who wear out the house.”

“Appreciation of vintage homes is growing and, luckily, with the lull in sales over the last few years, seemingly fewer houses are getting the ‘Home Depot’ flip—whitewashed for general consumption,” observes Realtor Starelli. “However, there are enthusiasts, even, who speak of replacing vintage appliances for modern, widening tiled showers, covering VCT with carpet for warmth or removing period-correct finishes because, though they're cool, they don't meet their personal aesthetic. Although I understand that a house has to be made a home, if that had happened to this one, it would have been a travesty.”

Fear not, Marti functions as point guard: “When I go to Home Depot for paint, and the guy says, ‘I'd like to talk to you about your kitchen; have you considered remodeling?’ I tell them I have a kitchen from 1948, and it's pristine and I want to keep it exactly the way it is.” ☼

Resources page 75

When Marti was working at Dillard's she chose this bedroom suite for its vintage aesthetic and sound modern construction. The zebra-print slipper chair is contemporary and the collectibles include Bakelite and rhinestone bracelets, costume jewelry and Madonna statues.





# homework

## '50s Wall Mural







*text & photography* Scott White

**When my wife, Cheryl, and I first moved into** our 1951 brick ranch in Redford, Mich., we knew we wanted to do something special with the living room. The home has several arched doorways and a classic pink-and-black-tile bathroom. We started with the furniture, choosing a midcentury-inspired couch, a Nelson slatted bench and a cowhide rug. Later on, we added a starburst clock and several vintage cameras on minimal shelves. Everything looked great, but for some reason we just couldn't decide on what to do with the back wall.

We wanted something that quintessentially represented the '50s. One day we were tossing around the idea of doing a mural and our *Paint by Number* book was on the table. Flipping through the pages, we found a painting titled 'Indian Summer' and we were immediately drawn to it. After doing a bit of research, we found that the Palmer Paint Company, who created paint-by-number, was also located in Michigan and the original art director, Dan Robbins, was still in the area. And so our hunt began.

We started searching eBay for a suitable painting to base our mural on, if not Indian Summer, then something similar. Once we found a piece we both agreed captured the look and feel we were seeking, we bought it right away. We liked the fall scene with the multicolored leaves on the trees and an open sky, and felt it had a spacial feel that gave it depth. It also lent itself nicely to the horizontal space of the wall.

Our Petrie sofa is from Crate & Barrel and the Nelson bench and Eames plywood chair (page 53) are both modern versions. The daybed is from Innovation and the wall art is framed album covers.





I took a shot of it with my digital camera and printed it out on transparency film through a color laser printer, borrowed a friend's overhead projector and began tracing the painting on the primed wall in pencil. The next step was to create a map of all the colors in the painting, since we no longer had the original numbering system to go by. We came up with a total of 27 colors.

Instead of spending money on individual pints of wall paint, we went to Michael's and picked out the colors from 2 oz. bottles of acrylic craft paint. There was a bit of trial and error with a few of the colors, as some of the hues varied in opacity and some dried to a slightly different shade than expected. The longest part of the process was the actual painting. We're a pretty busy family, so it took a bit longer than we expected,

but it was nice to not have a deadline.

We painted on and off over a period of about eight months. My best guess is that it took us somewhere around 60 hours of actual work, give or take. All in all, it was a lot of work, but once we finished, the results were really quite amazing. We are always getting compliments from friends, and the room really takes you back in time. If we ever do it again, we'll definitely be inviting all of our friends over for a painting party! ✨

*Paint by Number, by William L. Bird, is available online at [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com) and other booksellers, and eBay sells vintage kits. The Smithsonian ran an exhibition on the 1950s phenomena; read about it at [americanhistory.si.edu/paint/introduction.html](http://americanhistory.si.edu/paint/introduction.html).*





Clockwise from opposite top: The eBay 'original' art lit by a vintage wall sconce. The finished mural, which we flopped so that the largest tree is on the left. Our Eames plywood chair. Our traditional brick rancher. Tracing the projected image. Four colors down, 23 to go ...



# home **page**

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## Ithaca, N.Y.

Our house was built in 1969, the Summer of Love and Woodstock. Surrounded by 2.5 acres of land with beautiful mature trees, one of our favorite features is the 29' x 29' great room that centers on a floor-to-ceiling double-sided stone fireplace. We were told that the original owner sent his children to collect these stones in the surrounding woods. Previous owners did some tasteful upgrades while keeping the original design intact. Although there have been some delayed maintenance issues since we moved in, we love it and are enjoying the fun of decorating. We built a stone path to the ground level ourselves and are planning a Japanese garden.

**Qi & Steven Wang**

## Phoenix, Ariz.

Our 1961 ranch is part of the Paradise Gardens neighborhood. Although architect Al Beadle disassociated himself with the project before completion, the majority of the neighborhood was built out with Beadle designs or similar style houses. Dedicated homeowners have spent considerable effort maintaining, or in some cases restoring, their homes. The houses have unique details like flat or slightly pitched roofs, block construction (which helps keep interiors cool during the summer and warmly insulated during cold winter nights), substantial roof overhangs, carports and desert landscaping. One of the benefits of having a 50-year-old Phoenix home is the mature desert landscaping: note the 25' saguaro cactus and Joshua tree in the front yard.

**Christine & Kevin Flaherty**

## Waterloo, Canada

Our 1957 post-and-beam home is located in the Westmount section, a unique 'garden' neighborhood designed in consultation with Frederick Law Olmsted. The first model of our house, designed by Minnesota architect Carl Graffunder, was built in Golden Valley, Minn., and was on the cover of the March 1955 issue of *Better Homes and Gardens*. Sadly, when we purchased ours in 2006 it was in a sorry state, having suffered from decades of neglect and unsympathetic alterations. But we have now happily hacked through the jungle of landscaping and restored the house. There are still a couple of missing original features we want to reinstate and we're sourcing additional MCM pieces for around the house.

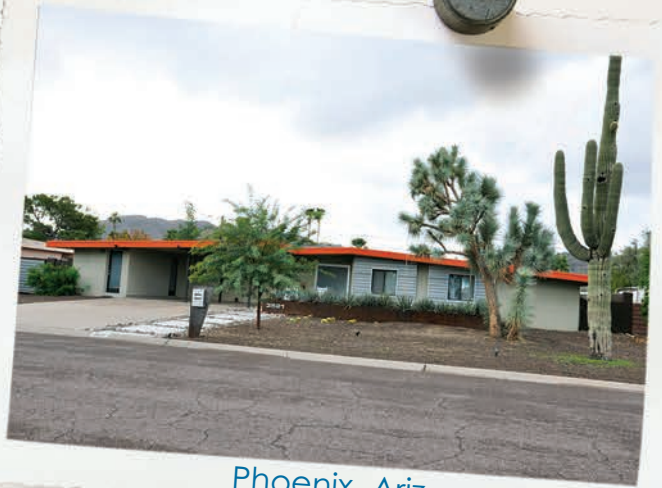
**Mary and RJ Stadus**

We can always use homes for 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 5.





Ithaca, N.Y.



Phoenix, Ariz.



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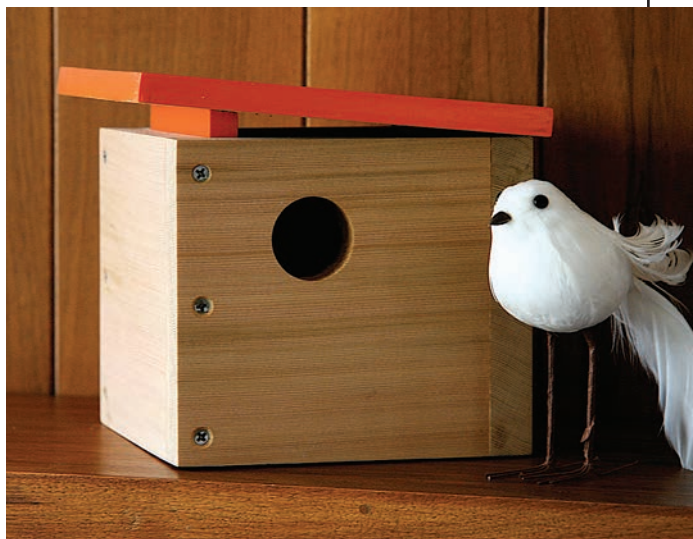
Waterloo, Canada



# cool|stuff



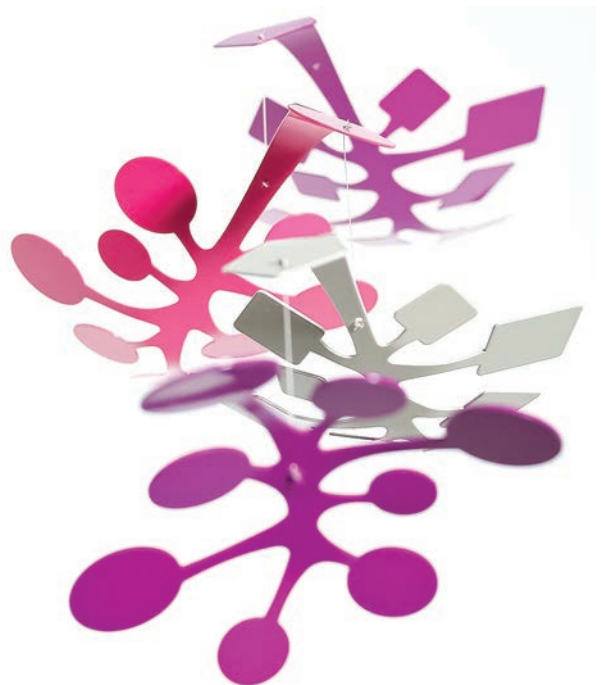
Tiny houses for seasonal visitors, Nathan Danials has used modern lines to offer shelter to our feathered friends. Materials are a mix of birch and salvaged redwood, with some special limited-edition offerings sporting rosewood or pine. With bold shapes and quirky colors, you may find yourself wishing there was a human-scale offering as well. Starting at \$69 from [etsy.com/shop/nathandaniels](https://www.etsy.com/shop/nathandaniels).







Originally inspired by strips of leftover bamboo veneer, Sacramento designer Brian Schmitt has created a line of mobiles, lighting and clocks that are both sophisticated and made from environmentally sustainable materials. The mobiles are organic in shape, while the clocks add a bit of updated midcentury style to the line. Need a jolt of color at your house? Both the Camber Pop and Sprig designs come in bright powder-coated metal. Mobiles from \$89, lighting from \$218, clocks \$92 & up, available at [schmittdesign.com](http://schmittdesign.com).





# my favorite space

*Welcome to a new series highlighting*



Most of the items are unsigned generic midcentury pieces, such as the hanging ashtray, the table lamp and the floor lamp from Daddy Katz in Dayton, Ohio. Similar lampshades are available from Moon Shine Lamp and Shade.

## readers' cherry-picked spots.

While we do not have a midcentury home, we have brought a bit of the style into the house we have. I entered into my appreciation for MCM through the world of tiki, seeing friends' homes with not only great tiki bars in them, but also fabulous '50s and '60s furnishings that made me think of my grandmother's ranch in Kalamazoo, Mich. So I started picking up midcentury pieces I liked along the way wherever I found them—in thrift and vintage stores, on eBay and at flea markets—enjoying the thrill of the hunt.

One of the first furniture pieces was the mosaic boomerang-shaped table, which led to the overall color scheme in the room. Then, when I found the turquoise sectional, blue chairs (one is still in storage) and the round pillows at an estate sale, I knew I finally had the right pieces to bring it all together. Once the couches were in place, I began bringing decorative items up from the basement.

On a side note, the reason I was keeping all of this furniture in the basement was because we plan to build our own MCM-style home when we move from Wisconsin to Austin, so I was buying with that new home in mind. But the sectional would have pushed us over to needing to rent a storage space, so we decided to sell off the existing furniture and start decorating and enjoying our MCM dream home a little in advance.

I had already purchased all of the artwork and other furniture you see, including the Witco world map, the Stinchcombe '60s fish art and an unsigned mosaic from the Boomerang Room in Columbus, Ohio. We hauled it all up from the basement, and the only thing that remained to be found was a rug, which I sourced on Amazon to pull it all together. ☼

**Caroline Roe**  
**Racine, Wis.**

Resources page 75

*Interested in sharing your own space? Be it a Naugahyde reading nook, bitchin' Pepto-pink bathroom or basement tiki bar, share it with us at [editor@atomic-ranch.com](mailto:editor@atomic-ranch.com). One or two images, 250KB–1MB in size (hint: iPhone) and tell us the details.*



The cat wall hanging and magazine holder are both Witco, the three-tier table under the framed mosaic was bought online from Germany and the floor pillow ottoman is unmarked.





*text Jimmy Garner*  
*photography Dat Mai*





# Richardson, Texas



I've been drawn to midcentury design my entire life; I suppose growing up in a house full of Danish mod furniture helped. Dallas is my hometown and, while it may not be a mecca for MCM design, jewels can be found all over the city, e.g. on the 'Disney Streets.' My criteria for a home was tough: a pier-and-beam foundation (relatively rare in Dallas), an original owner with a home in original condition, lots of windows and, ideally, sunken rooms.

In late 2001 I began my search. I looked and looked and looked within the main loop, but no luck. Every potential house had some issue: structural problems, too many bad modifications, creepy location, etc. My luck changed when a friend stumbled upon a house while running an errand in Richardson, one of Dallas' older 'burbs that boomed in the 1950s, just 10 miles north of downtown. It's full of custom ranch

In the foyer, the floor is original terrazzo and four vintage ball lamps soften some of the home's hard lines. The red lounge chair was \$25 at an estate sale, the Selig sofa and armchairs were reupholstered and the Noguchi-look table is a modern knockoff. A sputnik light fixture hangs over the Broyhill Brasilia dining set, which includes the table, six chairs, a room divider/china hutch and a server.





Left: Decorative details in the living room include a painting over the fireplace of a kitschy street scene that lights up; it's marked 'Ashbrook,' a Garden Grove, Calif., importing company. The vases on the orange wall and stereo in the corner are California Pottery, and near the windows are tile mosaics by Harris Strong.

I looked  
and  
looked  
and  
looked



The den is where everyone seems to gather when they're not in the pool. I hated to get rid of the original brick veneer flooring in this room, but I wanted a unified flooring to tie the kitchen, the den and the formal dining room together, since they are all connected. There's a '60s Chromcraft dinette set, and the other furniture is from Macy's—comfy and it can take the abuse of many guests. The window panels are from Smith+Noble.



homes from the Atomic Age, and while I had not even considered Richardson, my friend talked me into coming to see it.

A 1963 contemporary atomic ranch was being sold by the original owner, Doris, nicknamed Kit. Walking through the double front doors was like stepping back in time; I was in heaven! According to Kit, she had the house professionally decorated in 1963 and her husband would never let her update or remodel it, as she said he was an infamous penny-pincher. The wall-to-wall carpeting in the formal rooms and bedrooms that was once white had yellowed and rotted (yet was still white under the furniture that had been in place for 40 years). The drapes were shot, too, while both bathrooms and the kitchen were still untouched and had their original cinnamon-colored appliances.

Kit was downsizing to a retirement condo in the D.C. area to be closer to her son, and she could not take all her furniture with her. If there was anything I wanted, I was to let her know. The three things I had my eye on—a pair of Selig Z-chairs and a long, low Selig sofa—were sitting in the formal sunken living room when I got my keys! Kit also left me an architecture book from Scholz Homes, where I learned that my new house was the ‘Mark 58 model.’

Since purchasing the home, my friend Kevin McInnes (who found the house and lives in it with me) and I have done many things to update it, while keeping it true to its origins:

- New floors: cork in the sunken living room, teak in the bedrooms and black slate in the den, kitchen and formal dining room
- New kitchen: replaced old orange laminate with new orange Formica, added black appliances, glass tile backsplash and new cabinets with stainless steel

Housemate Kevin and brother-in-law Steve Melton and I did the kitchen remodel ourselves. I didn’t change the footprint because I was happy with the original layout, but we removed the soffit above the cabinets to open up the ceiling and installed cherry wood flat panel models from Thomasville. The custom-mix glass tile mosaic backsplash came from Susan Jablon Mosaics.

Resources page 75





All of the patio furniture around the new pool is original Homecrest, an outdoor furniture company founded in the '50s.

hardware. I think the new kitchen still looks very period and retro, since we kept the same footprint and layout.

- New salt-water pool
- New flagstone patio connecting the side and back patios
- New planter beds at the front door
- And the fun stuff—new HVAC, roof, electrical, etc.

Next on the to-do list are the bathrooms and windows. The guest/hall bath is used the most, especially during pool season and, while we love the blue fixtures, the toilet is on its last legs and the room is microscopic, dark and without any venting. The master bath, while original, has stained, cracked laminate countertops, a shower/tub combo that is falling apart and a funky layout with wasted space. I'm planning to update and move walls to maximize the space of both bathrooms since they back up to one another. The goal is to keep the aesthetic of the house and period, but with modern amenities, kind of a resto-mod approach, which seems to be very hot in the automobile market lately.

The homeowner had kept the house purely original, except for the light fixtures, which were a bit formal for the house. The hallway and entry had crystal chandeliers, while the kitchen dinette area had one of those pull-down lights that was stuck in the down position, and the den fixture had been replaced with a ceiling fan. Like accent tables, I view light fixtures as the jewelry of the house—things that can be changed every now and then for a bit of variety. All of the current fixtures are vintage, including the globe lights we installed on the wing walls on each side of the house, at the front porch, in the foyer and on the back patio.

Can you tell I love, love, love my atomic ranch? ✨

*Jimmy Garner, an executive for a national department store chain, cruises around town in his 1966 Thunderbird convertible. Roommate Kevin McInnes, an estate manager, prefers his Harley Davidson Road King Classic.*



# ranchdressing

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

**q:** Can you help me identify a Danish modern desk that I purchased used a few years back? It is beautifully made and I only see a handwritten name on the back of one of the small drawers, 'Benno Thatt Jensen,' which seems to be a common name in Denmark; two smaller drawers have numbers only. The woodworking on this piece is



Debra Montalbano's desk



amazing, and I am curious if it was handmade by someone who only made this one—or perhaps this was from a plan for the home enthusiast? Any knowledge you can pass along to me would be greatly appreciated.

**Debra Montalbano**

**a:** Lorin Hesse, of *Danskmoderne.com*, who is fluent in Danish and buys her vintage pieces in Denmark, has the scoop: "Debra's desk is a '60s to early-'70s Danish design by the Dyrlund furniture company. According to Christian Jørgensen at Dyrlund, hers is a model that has been out of production for a very long time. Christian asked the old-timers at the still thriving furniture company, but no one can remember the



Jane Connor's desk

designer, and the records have unfortunately long since been lost.

"The company, which began in 1960, is known more for exceptionally high quality craftsmanship than for iconic designs. A sideboard and a china cabinet (models 7865 and 7896) that match Debra's desk are still in production today ([dyrlund.com/?page\\_id=904](http://dyrlund.com/?page_id=904)). The handwritten name on the back of the drawer is most likely the craftsman who finished the piece in the factory.

"I confess, when I looked at her photos, I could not remember ever having seen such a desk for sale anywhere in Denmark, or for that matter, in America. And research through my Danish furniture index was





A Wexler home in Palm Springs with a white-on-white palette

unfruitful. It did, however, spark a memory of a desk I saw while delivering items to one of my favorite clients here in Boston. I emailed collector Jane Connor and asked her to send me a photo of her desk. Eureka! It was the very same one. So, we can thank Jane for steering us in the right direction!”

**q:** My wife and I have toyed over the years with painting one or more rooms in our house in pure white, top-to-bottom. We love this look, so often associated with MCM, but have been afraid to give it a try. Until now, we’ve merely painted baseboards, door/window trim and ceilings in white. For baseboards/trim, we have used Benjamin Moore CC40, also known as Cloud White; for ceilings, we have used standard ceiling white paint.

My question is, if we opt for painting our walls white as well, what specific white colour do you recommend? Should it be the same white for walls, baseboards/trim and ceilings? Or different for each? Stick with semi-gloss for baseboards/trim and matte or eggshell for walls? How is this look best done?

**Robert MacNeil**

Ottawa, Ontario

**a:** Portland, Ore., interior designer Erin Marshall ([kismet-design.com](http://kismet-design.com)) replies: “When you find yourself pining for the clean, simple elegance of all-white rooms, consider these factors. Lifestyle: Do you have pets or kids? Cats and dogs tend to rub up against walls and moldings so their body oils and fur can make for a lot of extra work. If your kids are small, little handprints, not to mention toys with wheels that scuff, bang and chip paint can make for a less than easy-care existence.

“If all those warnings leave you undeterred or you are past worrying about such things, other considerations should be the orientation of your rooms—are they south facing? East facing? How big are your windows? White

rooms shift color hugely, depending on the kind of light that suffuses a room. If your room receives soft morning light or bright sunlight, certain lamp-lit rooms can feel pink, gray, blue or yellow depending on surrounding elements. White is highly reflective, so the carpet or flooring, even the colors outside will inform your color perception.

“Next consideration, wall and trim condition: Are they smooth? Textured? Dented or scarred? That will drive sheen choices. The more distressed the surface is, the flatter one should go. Typically I like semi-gloss woodwork, flat or eggshell walls and flat ceilings, depending on condition. But to add a glow to the walls, consider a slightly higher sheen like semi-gloss and then use a low-luster, washable trim instead.

“If you are doing white trim, walls and ceilings, I think it is a good idea to mix your whites. Cool white walls like Benjamin Moore’s Affinity Frosthine AF-5 with a warm white trim in Mascarpone AF-20 is nice. Paint the ceiling the same as the walls, as the two planes will make the paint read differently anyway. I like the Affinity line because it is tough, washable and easily retouched. The application takes a bit of getting used to, though, as it dries fast and it tends to be a heavy paint, so watch the drips.

“For a true painterly experience, try the Donald Kaufman line ([donaldkaufmancolor.com](http://donaldkaufmancolor.com)), a small proprietary palette developed by the colorist for the Getty Center and other public works. Kaufman is a fine artist who mixes custom colors so that the result feels very much more alive with depth and subtle shifts than standard paints that are mixed with the same four dyes no matter what. Those paints run quite a bit more per gallon but the results can be spectacular!”

**q:** In the ‘Mission Accomplished’ article from your Spring 2011 issue, there is a picture of the homeowners’ den.

# more ranchdressing

I am interested in knowing where they purchased the large painting of red circles and/or who the artist is.

I have been trying to source it online with no luck. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

**Judith Halliday**



David Gauger

**a:** Homeowner Lisa Jear replied: "In answer to your reader's question, the wall piece is not a painting, but a classic Marimekko textile stretched over a frame. The series came in solid red, blue and yellow. The fabric was purchased at Crate & Barrel in Berkeley in 2002, I believe."

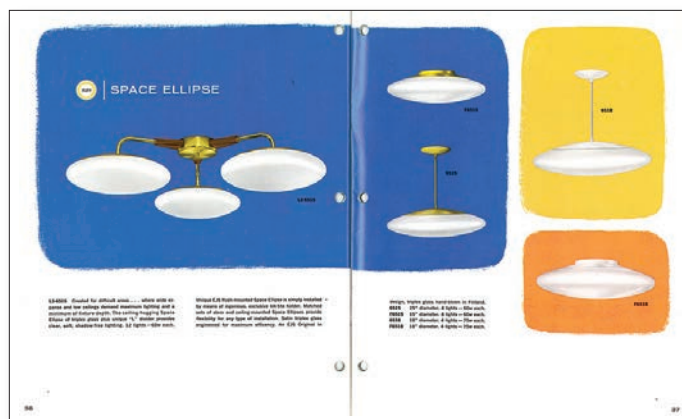


Company. I'd like to know when these were made.

**Phil McNear**

**a:** Our go-to lighting guy, Bo Sullivan of Arcalus (arcalus.com) in Portland, Ore., tapped his archive: "This spread from a 1962 EJS catalog shows their Space Ellipse series, which looks tantalizingly close to the ones in the photo. However, the details aren't an exact match, so all I can say is that it could be this Los Angeles

**q:** I received three midcentury modern lamps as a gift. I have been able to ID the mushroom lamp, but two saucer-shaped pendants are identified only by their manufacturer, the EJS Lighting



company. EJS fixtures do often have a sticker in the canopy identifying them.

"The small truncated cone detail at the canopy and shade cap are typical of EJS fixtures, as shown in the catalog images, but the shape of the shade cap itself doesn't seem to exactly match—it doesn't quite follow the lines of the elliptical glass as elegantly, with a slight shoulder where it meets the glass. The catalog also does not show the vent holes in the cap. A double-check of the overall diameter and bulb count of the fixtures in the photo against the EJS specs might help (they offered four sockets in a 15" and an 18" diameter). Everybody was knocking off everybody else, so if it doesn't match a catalog image exactly, it could have been any of dozens of different manufacturers."

**q:** In your Winter 2011 issue, the photo on page 36–37 shows stone flooring against the fireplace at the base of the brick wall. It looks very much like the entry flooring in our 1957 midcentury in Boise, Idaho. Over the years I've asked several people what it is to no avail. If possible, I'd like to replace the floor in our dining room with the same stone, since the space was originally an outdoor patio. Any ideas? Cost? Availability?

**Theresa Ryden**

**a:** The homeowners confirmed that their hearth is the same terra cotta-colored material as the fireplace surround, so our guess was it's man-made, not natural stone. The cover photo best shows its size and texture.

Natural stone popular during the postwar years included limestone, flagstone, slate and other





regional varieties, since shipping a heavy product made less sense than using what was readily at hand. Entryways, fireplaces, accent walls and patios were where the material was usually used, as opposed to interior flooring.

You could take your photos to a local stone yard and show them what you're trying to match. But it won't do you too much good to ID the original material only to find out that it's no longer available or only from a distant source that would be cost prohibitive.

Instead of focusing just on matching the original stone, think about such realities as dining chairs on an uneven floor, whether a large expanse of cool stone would be a plus or minus in your climate, and the nature of the underlying floor—is it a cement slab or brick patio

with several layers of later material? If the underlayment is suitable for stone on top, would that create a step up from surrounding rooms? As you may have read, the floor of the Winter 2011 cover house had expensive issues with cracking that added significantly to their budget. Sometimes finding out what's possible and how much it would cost from a reputable installer can keep one from jumping into a project with unanticipated challenges down the road.

—ar editor

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

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# atomicevents



Robert Rummer's home

Jack Bockwaller

**June 2–3** **Portland, Ore.**

## **Mid-Century Marvelous Home Tour**

The Historic Preservation League of Oregon hosts a Saturday tour of eight Rummer homes, including the house built by Robert Rummer for his own family, in the Bohmann Park neighborhood. On Sunday, Charles Phoenix will present one of his retro-theme slide lectures at the Hollywood Theatre. Tickets and info at [historicpreservationleague.org](http://historicpreservationleague.org).



Paul Seide, Radio Light, 1985

©Paul Seide

**June 13–September 9** **Toledo**

## **Color Ignited: Glass 1962–2012**

The Toledo Museum of Art takes a look at the American studio art glass movement by focusing on the role of color—from the conceptual to the political to the metaphoric—in artistic expression. Approximately 80 objects, including works by Harvey Littleton, Dominick Labino, Marvin Lipofsky, Dale Chihuly, Dan Dailey, Paul Seide, Judith Schaechter, Ginny Ruffner and Klaus Moje are on display at the free exhibition. [toledomuseum.org](http://toledomuseum.org)



Philbin residence, 1959–1960, Cliff May

**Through June 17** **Santa Barbara, Calif.**

## **Carefree California: Cliff May and the Romance of the Ranch, 1920–1960**

The University Art Museum at UC Santa Barbara exhibition explores May's influential ranch houses through drawings, photographs, scale models, marketing materials, periodicals and film and TV clips. [pacificstandardtime.org](http://pacificstandardtime.org)

**June 21–24** **Lake George, N.Y.**

## **Ohana Luau at the Lake**

A tiki event at a vintage Polynesian-themed motor inn—what could be better? Vendors, a cocktail contest, live music, dinner on a steamboat, miniature golf, a traditional luau, a live Polynesian show and more. [luauatthelake.com](http://luauatthelake.com)

**August 11** **Vancouver, B.C.**

## **Mid-Century Modern Tour**

Vancouver's popular MCM event always sells out, but maybe this is the year you'll join their annual bus tour of Canadian West Coast regional modernist homes. [vancouverheritagefoundation.org](http://vancouverheritagefoundation.org)

**August 16–19** **San Diego**

## **Tiki Oasis 0012**

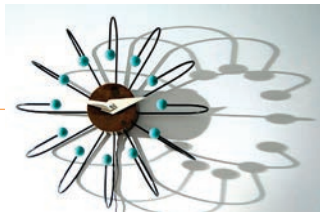
Anything tiki-esque, Polynesian or Hawaiiana you can think of will be at this year's music-, rum- and kitsch-driven marketplace. [tikioasis.com](http://tikioasis.com)

**August 24–26** **Denver**

## **Denver Modernism Show**

Vintage and modern vendors fill the 50,000-square-foot National Western Complex. There are always extras





for visitors, like car shows, beauty contests, art exhibitions and a dedicated tiki lounge with swinging music. [denvermodernism.com](http://denvermodernism.com)

**September 13–16 San Francisco**  
**20th Century Modernism Show & Sale**

Thirty exhibitors of decorative and fine arts at the Herbst Pavillion at Fort Mason Center. [sf20.net](http://sf20.net)



Diana Painter

**October 31–November 3 Spokane, Wash.**  
**National Preservation Conference: Beyond Boundaries**

Events and educational sessions were still being finalized at press time, so check the site for updates on topics of interest to midcentury enthusiasts at the 66th annual conference put on by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. [preservationnation.org](http://preservationnation.org)

# resources

**Twist & Shout, pp. 12–22**

Architecture firm: Dick Clark Architecture, Austin, 512.472.4980, [dcarch.com](http://dcarch.com) ✖ Contractor: Ed Walston Inc., Austin, 512.402.9343 ✖ Terrazzo tile: Fritztile by Expanko, [fritztile.com](http://fritztile.com) ✖ Windows: [marvin.com](http://marvin.com) ✖ Vintage furnishings: [uncommonobjects.com](http://uncommonobjects.com) ✖ City-Wide Garage Sale, [cwgs.com](http://cwgs.com) ✖ [mercurydesignstudio.com](http://mercurydesignstudio.com) ✖ [roomservicevintage.com](http://roomservicevintage.com) ✖ Bed & nightstand: [copenhagenliving.com](http://copenhagenliving.com) ✖ Noguchi Cyclone table, Nelson bench: [yliving.com](http://yliving.com), [dwr.com](http://dwr.com) ✖ Area rug, quilt: [anthropologie.com](http://anthropologie.com) ✖ Tub: [kohler.com](http://kohler.com)

**All Over Retro, pp. 36–46**

Blog link: [retrorenovation.com/2011/01/12/1948-streamline-moderne-time-capsule-house-portland-oregon](http://retrorenovation.com/2011/01/12/1948-streamline-moderne-time-capsule-house-portland-oregon) ✖ Vintage wall/ceiling material: Marlite, [marlite.com](http://marlite.com) ✖ Mirawall, [mirawall.it/en/index.php](http://mirawall.it/en/index.php) ✖ Sofa: Jar Designs Maxim, [overstock.com](http://overstock.com) ✖ Sofa bed, living room chairs: [overstock.com](http://overstock.com)

**Home Work, pp. 50–53**

Mural paint: [michaels.com](http://michaels.com) ✖ Sofa: [crateandbarrel.com](http://crateandbarrel.com) ✖ Nelson bench, Eames plywood lounge chair: [yliving.com](http://yliving.com)

**My Favorite Space, pp. 60–61**

Vintage shops: The Boomerang Room, Columbus, Ohio, [boomerangroom.com](http://boomerangroom.com) ✖ Daddy Katz, Dayton, Ohio, [daddykatz.com](http://daddykatz.com) ✖ Vintage-look lampshades: Moon Shine Lamp and Shade, [moonshineshades.com](http://moonshineshades.com)

**Open House, pp. 62–66**

Kitchen backsplash tile: [susanjablon.com](http://susanjablon.com) ✖ Kitchen cabinets: [thomasvillecabinetry.com](http://thomasvillecabinetry.com) ✖ Window coverings: [smithandnoble.com](http://smithandnoble.com)



# retailers

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Atomic Ranch is also sold at Barnes & Noble, Hastings, Books-A-Million and Chapters/Indigo bookstores, as well as numerous independent newsstands, gourmet markets and mass merchandisers. If you don't see it, ask your local store to order it!

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Googie Time  
916.779.6252

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Atomicblond Mid-Century  
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## KENTUCKY

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**Monument Beach**  
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V-Male Detroit Vintage  
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## NEW YORK

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718.222.1820

## NORTH CAROLINA

**Raleigh**  
Father & Son  
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**Wake Forest**  
GC5 Vintage  
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## OHIO

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## Seattle

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## WEST VIRGINIA

**Charleston**  
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304.345.0123

## WISCONSIN

**Milwaukee**  
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## CANADA

**Calgary**  
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**Edmonton**  
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<b>Fendershirts Vintage</b> 903.357.5499 fendershirtsvintage.com	75
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<b>J Schatz</b> 866.344.5267 jschatz.com	76
<b>Marti Brom</b> martibrom.com	47
<b>ModernRuby.com</b>	73
<b>TONEAudio Magazine</b> 800.432.4569 tonepublications.com	49

## architectural design

<b>Design DCA</b> designdca.com	78
<b>Dick Clark Architecture</b> 512.472.4980 dcarch.com	24
<b>Lindal Cedar Homes</b> 888.4LINDAL lindal.com/MAF	ibc

## artwork

<b>ARTBYLT</b> 877.278.2581 artbylt.com	48
<b>Brian Tull</b> 615.945.5807 briantull.com	49
<b>fabpats.com</b>	77
<b>Fat Free Comics, Inc.</b> johnmurasky.com	72
<b>Jetsetretrodesign.com</b>	76
<b>Moda Industria</b> 812.606.7185 modaindustria.com	34

## lighting

<b>Caravan Pacific, designer Shannon Guirl</b> 646.391.2573 caravan-pacific.com	47
<b>Lumens</b> lumens.com	ifc

<b>Moon Shine Lamp and Shade</b> 830.935.2350 moonshinesthades.com	58
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<b>YLighting.com</b> 866.428.9289	bc
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## midcentury events & accommodations

<b>Denver Modernism Show</b> 303.347.8252 denvermodernism.com	59
<b>House on Barbara Worth</b> 520.261.3361 houseonbarbaraworth.com	59
<b>The Hideaway</b> 760.323.3585 orbitin.com	76
<b>Ohana Luau at the Lake</b> 262.853.1682 LuauAtTheLake.com	72
<b>Orbit In Hotel</b> 760.323.3585 orbitin.com	48

## midcentury housing

<b>ASK Real Estate</b> 760.333.2228 ASKPalmSprings.com	48
<b>Cincinnati Modern/Keller Williams Advisors Realty</b> <b>Susan &amp; Arlen Rissover, Realtors</b> 513.886.7841 cincinnati.modern.com	77
<b>Deasy Penner &amp; Partners</b> 818.312.3930 818.917.6690 ValleyModern.com	48
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<b>EveryPortlandHome.com</b> <b>Tom Cotter + Doug Beebe</b> 503.260.7876 503.260.7808	47
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<b>The Marye Company</b> 512.444.7171 themaryecompany.com	24
<b>Robert Malina, Prime Lending</b> 512.736.6215 robertmalina.com	77

## midcentury vintage

<b>Archive</b> 949.494.0079 archive.1stdibs.com	35
<b>DanskModerne.com</b> 978.395.1350	72

<b>Déjà Vu</b> 562.439.4539 dejavulongbeach.com	23
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<b>Long Beach Antique Mall II</b> 562.498.3500 longbeachantiquemall.com	23
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<b>Mid Century Möbler</b> 415.497.6626 midcenturymobler.com	73
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<b>The Mod Fix</b> 360.943.9883 themodfix.com	35
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<b>A Modern Line</b> 813.234.4500 amodernline.com	73
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<b>Out of Vogue</b> 714.879.6647 outofvogue.com	24
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<b>Vince Bravo</b> 650.483.2100 vincebravo.com	77
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<b>West Coast Modern</b> westcoast-modern.com	72
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<b>Xcape</b> 562.433.9911 xcapemodern.com	23
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## modern furnishings

<b>Atomic Living Design by Detschermitsch</b> 720.496.5762 atomiclivingdesign.com	72
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<b>BDI</b> 800.428.2881 bdiusa.com	9
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<b>Cherner Chair</b> 866.243.7637 chernerchair.com	71
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<b>Coating Concepts/The Metal Pad</b> 717.240.0010 themetallpad.com	73
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<b>Copeland Furniture</b> 802.222.9282 copelandfurniture.com	7
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<b>Infinite Storage Solutions</b> 949.366.0780 issdesigns.com	58
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<b>Modology Furniture</b> 513.871.7000 mod-ology.com	58
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<b>Otto</b> 714.526.3142 shopotto.com	24
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<b>puremodern.com</b> 800.563.0593	67
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<b>Retro Metal Chairs</b> 888.229.2421 retrometalchairs.com	73
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<b>Rex Kelly Mid-Century</b> 888.789.4956 rexkelly.com	77
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<b>Thrive Home Furnishings</b> 888.338.1445 ThriveFurniture.com	25
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<b>YLiving.com</b> 800.236.9100	bc
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## other house stuff

<b>Big Chill</b> 877.842.3269 bigchillfridge.com	49
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<b>Bradbury &amp; Bradbury Art Wallpapers</b> 707.746.1900 bradbury.com	34
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<b>Crestview Doors</b> 866.454.6302 crestviewdoors.com	34
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<b>Doors &amp; Company Inc.</b> 512.454.3303 doorsandcompany.com	77
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<b>Elmira Stove Works</b> 800.295.8498 elmirstoveworks.com	34
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<b>FOS Design</b> 888.591.0751 radius-design-usa.com boxdesignusa.com	49
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<b>Hairpinlegs.com</b> hairpinlegs.com@gmail.com	72
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<b>Hip Haven</b> 512.445.6961 hiphaven.com	73
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<b>Kerf Design</b> 206.954.8677 kerfdesign.com	1
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<b>LatticeStix</b> 888.528.7849 latticestix.com	58
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<b>The Modern Fan Co.</b> 888.528.7849 modernfan.com	5
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<b>modwalls</b> 877.439.9734 modwalls.com	47
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<b>A Moment in Time Retro Design</b> 315.363.7726 heffrons.com	76
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<b>Raydoor, Inc.</b> 212.421.0641 raydoor.com	11
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<b>Sleep Modern</b> 770.934.1028 sleepmodern.com	76
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<b>Spore</b> 206.624.9573 sporedoorbells.com	35
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<b>Susan Jablon Mosaics</b> susanjablon.com	59
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