PHOENIX HOME & GARDEN
The Magazine of Southwest Living

EASYGOING ELEGANCE

COLOR TRENDS
both bold & sublime
The Elegance of Adobe

An evocative mix of finishes, furnishings and art brings timeless sophistication to a centuries-old building material.

Whether unfinished or covered, adobe bricks play a large role in a home’s look and feel. In this living room, a bright coating of plaster brightens the area while preserving the bricks’ undulating form. Heavy beams, though also decorative, are an essential part of the structure’s frame. A corbelled archway leads to a small room where the family’s piano is flanked by custom shelving. Reclaimed wood floors carry throughout the home.
Adobe is one of the earliest building materials, dating back thousands of years across many cultures. Nowhere in this country is it seen better illustrated than in the Southwest. While modern construction materials have given the sun-dried earthen element a run for its money, its popularity here continues to flourish. Perhaps it's adobe's deep-rooted ties to our region's Native American and Hispanic history that allow it to endure. Or maybe it's the material's ability to withstand the desert's harsh conditions. Whatever the reason, adobe remains a classic component of Arizona architecture.

So it's no wonder that when Julie and Jett Anderson decided to build their dream home in North Scottsdale, they were resolved that it would be an adobe structure. "I like that adobe is natural, that it's part of the earth," says Jett. "And we both love the feel of old Arizona, that 100-year-old, put-up-your-feet-and-relax Arizona." Julie concurs, adding, "It had always been important that when we could hire an architect and design our own home, I wanted it to be made of adobe brick."

Enter architect Clint Miller. "When I first met Clint, I told him that we were looking for something that was built the same way they used to make lodges in national parks 100 years ago," says Jett. It just so happens that Miller, a 2010 Phoenix Home & Garden Masters of the Southwest award winner, specializes in adobe architecture.

Across the driveway and on axis with the front door, a seating area offers an area for taking in the views as well as the home's unique adobe architecture. Native landscaping on each side of the driveway is bordered by a random-cut flagstone edge.
A mix of materials and textures gives the kitchen a refined yet rustic charm. The clay-colored tile backsplash, typical of Arts and Crafts design, says interior designer Janet Brooks, is highlighted by a large custom-made zinc range hood. The island counter is mesquite inlaid with bits of turquoise. Its steel frame is mirrored in the leather bar stools.
The Andersons like the feel of the adobe, but a lot of it we plastered just to lighten it up. When you see it all exposed on the exterior, you only need to bring in about a third of that in order to feel it. Any more can be too much of a good thing.

— Clint Miller, architect

winner, specializes in historic Southwest design, with an emphasis on adobe brick construction.

"The adobe is really the essence of this home," states Miller. "The character of the design is similar to an early Arizona ranch, so it really feels like an old home." The ageless quality is evident on first glance. The low, stretched facade is angled in the middle at 30 degrees—a shape typical of early 1950s California ranch homes, according to Miller—and fronted by an expansive Territorial-style porch. A patio wall, constructed of stone from northern Arizona, mimics the appearance of a foundation when viewed from the driveway. "For me, that was an important aesthetic," notes Miller, who incorporated the same stone on some of the home's chimneys. Double-glazed terra-cotta tiles, complete with oozing mortar, add "oomph," says Miller, while other elements create a subtle Arts and Crafts flavor. Among these are a substantial copper entrance door, art glass windows, elongated joint tails and a "copper bracelet"—a band of copper at the intersection of the joints and the walls that encircles the exterior of the home.

Inside, exposed adobe brick features prominently on several walls. On others, the bricks are covered with a thin layer of plaster, allowing their undulating shapes to come through. "The Andersons like the feel of the adobe, but a lot of it we plastered just to lighten it up," explains Miller. "When you see all of it exposed on the exterior, you only need to bring in about a third of that in order to feel it. Any more can be too much of a good thing." The foyer, kitchen, dining room, hallway, kids' bedrooms and Jett's office on the second level all feature exposed adobe walls.

Joining Miller on the build, beginning with the initial planning stages, was interior designer Janet Brooks, also a 2010 Phoenix Home & Garden Masters of the Southwest award winner. "My favorite part (of a project) is designing the shapes and the

OPPOSITE: Raw adobe brick dominates a hallway, giving the home the look and feel of an early park lodge. Architect Clint Miller's attention to detail is evident in such subtle touches as the exposed structural beams and the plastered staircase soffit.

ABOVE: Jett Anderson, seen here with his wife, Julie, is an avid motorcyclist. He stores his bikes in an auto court off the guest casita.
The adobe is the essence of this house. The character of the design is similar to an early Arizona ranch, so it really feels like an old home.

—Clint Miller, architect
copper details. It's an adobe, but it has some really clean, contemporary detailing," says Greer, who worked with Miller and the homeowners to create the landscape and outdoor amenities, which include a succulent garden organized within three steel rings, a sleek rectangular pool and decomposed granite walkways edged in steel. "We didn't want to take it to 'old-world adobe home,'" Greer says. "We wanted to contemporize it." Greer adds: Winters, another Phoenix Home & Garden Masters of the Southwest award winner, installed the desert vegetation.

From adobe to art to structured outdoor space, it all combines to create a home that's quintessential Arizona with European touches and modern-day flair. A home that's both eclectic and natural. A home for all ages. "I think this house is totally timeless," says Brooks. "There isn't anything trendy about it." And that's just what the homeowners wanted. As both Julie and Jeff say, this is their "100-year-old-brand-new home.

A reclaimed wood and limestone floor adds visual drama to the serene master bathroom. Hanging above the freestanding tub is a 1950s Murano glass chandelier that Julie picked up at an antique store in Paris.

"Everything is scaled so that it's not cavernous," says Julie. "We did not want a huge home." Miller created entrances between rooms, such as the one leading from the master bedroom to the master bath, that offer a bit of compression before opening. This Frank Lloyd Wright-influenced technique, "makes the rooms feel bigger than they are. It frames the space rather than exposing it all," he says. Coved ceilings add a restful touch, while an antique rug serves as the room's color inspiration. A raised hearth, which extends from a carved limestone fireplace, hides a pop-up TV. Artworks by Ed Mell and Jacqueline Rochester decorate the far wall.
Clint did such an interesting job on the home and the copper details. It's an adobe, but it has some really clean, contemporary detailing.

—Rusi Gray, landscape architect

Elongated joist tails and a covered walkway leading from the main house to a guest casita and auto court add an Arts and Crafts feel to the backyard. Opposite the home's back patio, a fire pit is flanked by comfortable seating, while concrete planters by Phoenix Home & Garden Masters of the Southwest award winner Larry Kornegay lend a contemporary touch. The homeowners added two small chairs near the outdoor kitchen. "We ended up turning them around, and we sit there a lot," says Jett.