ON THE EDGE

THE RUGGED DESERT LANDSCAPE FORMS THE IDEAL BACKDROP FOR AN ESTANCIA HOME DISTINGUISHED BY ITS MODERNIST LINES.

WRITTEN BY LAURA LEDER KAISER PHOTOGRAPHY BY INNOCENT SOBOTA
Some people call it kihei—that elusive moment when things come together as if they were just meant to be. Such was the case for a real estate developer and his wife, a retired special education teacher, when they interviewed David Michael Miller as the potential interior designer for a residence they planned to build in the Scottsdale golf resort community of Fronterra. "This house, right through a sheet of magazine clippings, had been collected, and we just had to laugh because half of the projects come right out of our studio," recalls Miller. "We innocently had a sense that it would be easy to find an alignment architecturally between their tastes and mine and the natural beauty of the building site."

"The couple had been living in Arizona to escape. Maricopa winters for years and were ready to make a major shift. Their previous Mediterranean-style house, with its classic Southwestern decor, was already in the same community and had served themselves and their two boys well, but they felt always been tinkered with the idea of building a home that was a little more modern," says the husband. "When we learned that there was a wonderful lot nearby for sale, we decided to buy it and move forward with designing a contemporary home," says the husband.

This home was then brought on architect CJR. Dowey, who realize the floor plan through the landscape so that it hugged the desert southwest that lay up from the desert floor. With the 3,199-foot high granite outcrop of Pinnacle Peak towering to the southwest and the San Tan Mountains towering out in every direction, the home orchestrated itself to celebrate the site's distinctive loca. "CJR placed it just right," says the wife. "He took advantage of the views from every room."

This contemporary 2,500-square-foot design consists of a series of stacked boxes with cantilevered flat roofs. Among the many cool custom pieces he designed was the incredible steel roof beams into which were a challenge to bring in a large crane for the 35-foot-long beams," says the wife. "So we had to use a small lift, which was kind of tricky."

But what really gives the house its modernist edge is the play of light here. "Sometimes in complement to the large vertical windows, with the large panels of light elements of Italian travertine, we integrated geode stone. With the line of travertine we brought in a sense of the luxurious stone to an open environment," everyone agreed it would be the perfect walk-up, not only for the elegance but for..."
The transition worked so well that it marked the beginning of a new chapter for the house. The homeowners, inspired by the design process, decided to embark on a series of renovation projects that would transform the space into a modern, sophisticated sanctuary.

The dining room, with its expansive windows and high ceiling, serves as the hub of the house. A custom table designed by the couple features a sleek, geometric design that complements the minimalist aesthetic. The chairs, upholstered in a soft, neutral fabric, add a touch of comfort to the space.

A large, contemporary chandelier hangs from the ceiling, casting a warm glow over the area. The walls are clad in a textured, metallic wallpaper that reflects the light, creating a cozy ambiance. The rug, a rich, dark brown, adds a sense of depth and warmth to the room.

Nearby, a cozy sitting area is arranged with plush, comfortable furniture. A large, floor-to-ceiling bookshelf filled with an array of books and decorative items adds a personal touch to the space. The homeowners have curated a collection of art and antiques that reflect their personal style and interests.

The kitchen, located just off the dining room, features a modern, stainless steel appliances and sleek, white cabinetry. The countertops are made of a durable, low-maintenance material that is easy to clean and maintain. A large island provides additional counter space and seating for informal meals.

Overall, the renovation has transformed the house into a modern, elegant space that reflects the homeowners' taste and lifestyle. The design process was not just about creating a beautiful home, but also about creating a place that feels like home.
“THE PALETTE SPUN OFF THE TRAVERTINE’S SILVERY GREIGE COLOR, WHICH IS BOTH WARM AND SERENE.”
—DAVID MICHAEL MILLER
The modern stucco home's style is a combination of rustic and minimal elements that blend seamlessly into the natural surroundings. The architects designed this house to incorporate a 90-foot-long infinity pool, which offers a serene and picturesque view.

The pool is not just a feature; it's a central part of the home's design, connecting the indoor and outdoor spaces and providing a space for relaxation and entertainment. The use of natural materials and the integration of the surrounding landscape create a harmonious environment that feels both grounded and elevated.

This home is a testament to modern design principles, where functionality and aesthetics come together to create a luxurious, yet comfortable living space. The infinity pool and the overall design reflect a deep understanding of the natural setting, making the home a true extension of the landscape.
The interior, as well. The travertine forms one continuous surface when the glassed wall of windows in the rear is retracted to create a large indoor-outdoor room for entertaining. "We kept the interior and exterior finishes the same as much as possible," says Miller. "The color palette stems from the travertine's silvery grey color, which is both warm and serene." For the floors both inside and out, Miller used pieces of honed grey travertine and then smaller pieces for the bathrooms. "The floors needed to be static, not competing with the vertical travertine ceiling," he says. "The lighter toned interior pieces were cut from the exterior's grey travertine, and the hues of the custom-etched mirror frames further play off the travertine's grey travertine. In addition, milky textures cut in the doors and dressers, as well as the wood clad underside of the cantilevered roof, is grey-stained European white oak.

The covered patio lends to a fire pit and a 15 by 40-foot swimming pool. The couple had intended to build only a water feature, but Drown persuaded them to go bigger. "I love the pool's shape," he says. "It's an infinity pool that ties in tightly to the house that helps create this microclimate." With great sculptural value, as the house pulls away from the desert, he explains.

After overseeing the overall design, landscape architect Reed Greer began saving and relocating about 20 native specimens, including palm trees and pine trees, as well as saguaros, mesquite and cactus. In the rear, he planted a garden containing many native and desert succulents. The stars of the landscape, however, are several mature specimens salvaged from a resort that was being demolished—cactus, jamul yucca and a Joshua tree—all of which were placed along the driveway leading to the front door to look as if they've been there forever. "The plants survived hand with care," says Greer. The ages on the palms have so much character that they appear to be sculpture when lit up at night.

Inside, there is no clutter—not even a television—to detract from the views, and every table, chair, and table is thoughtfully designed and arranged to enhance the main purpose of the house, which is to be enjoying casual entertaining. "The owners are very cerebral people who love golf and good conversation; the house was meant for them to engage with their friends," says Drown, who designed the building to embrace its inhabitants despite its strong lines. "Modern architecture can resonate to many, if not all, but this house is warm and inviting."