

SPECIAL EDITION 2017

PHOENIX HOME & GARDEN

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Southwest Design



LISTENING TO THE LAND

A CHALLENGING LOT GUIDES AN ARCHITECT IN CREATING AN UNCONVENTIONAL HOME THAT PAYS HOMAGE TO THE DESERT

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A rocky wash that runs through the property became one of the home's most unique architectural assets. An enclosed bridge connects the great room to the master suite. From this vantage point the homeowners can see rainwater—and occasional wildlife—traveling through.



With the vista of the Valley as a stunning backdrop, the curve of the house embraces the backyard pool. Natural exterior materials including copper with a "dirty penny" patina and stone were sourced in Arizona. In order not to obstruct the 180-degree desert panorama, architect Erik Peterson designed the overhang's support column of four thin columns of tube steel that visually create the impression of a larger column while still allowing a view through it.



As a lifelong disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright, architect and *Phoenix Home & Garden Masters of the Southwest* award winner Erik Peterson is a firm believer that a structure should be of the land, not on the land. His work champions Wright's iconic design principals: Outdoor spaces transition seamlessly into interiors. Organic materials create a sense of belonging. Buildings become an integral element of their environment and harmonize with their surroundings.

Peterson's style is not easily definable because each piece of land, as well as his clients' individuality, are integral to the design process. "Every house is different, because they're about the lot and the personalities of the people I'm building for," he says. "They become unique and very special."

When a couple began looking at lots on which to build a contemporary home in the Desert Mountain area, they sought Peterson's input. As they shared a collection of images that embodied the attributes they loved—natural stone, glass, abundant light and indoor/outdoor livability—they were surprised to discover that a number of the homes they were drawn to were, in fact, Peterson's creations.

The architect accompanied the husband and wife to a mountainside lot that had perplexed buyers and confounded other architects because of its idiosyncrasies. To the north, the property abuts the sweeping curve of a road. While the south boasts a jaw-dropping panorama that includes Pinnacle Peak, a prominent wash running through the land could not be ignored—or diverted. Although intrigued, the couple had trouble envisioning how a home that included everything they wanted could be integrated into such a complicated landscape.

"Numerous people had passed on the lot because they didn't know what to do with it," Peterson remembers. "But as you study it, the land starts to talk



The dwelling's front and rear elevations provide glimpses of the open livability found within. "This is the homiest contemporary home you will ever be in," raves the owner.



Ceiling soffits mirror the home's curvilinear footprint and help define individual living spaces. The dining area is marked by a trio of glass pendants suspended at varying heights. Their spherical silhouettes are echoed in the oval dining table. Dining chair upholstery subtly reflects the colors of the nearby desert landscape with brushstrokes of sky blue, rust and gold.



TOP LEFT: Throughout the home, clerestory windows add an additional view opportunity and source of natural light. Beyond the dining room, the fireplace's staggered limestone facade is bookended with shelves to display art pieces from the homeowners' collection.

BOTTOM LEFT: The kitchen's combination of finishes includes Macassar ebony and quartzite on the island, and plenty of glass and stainless steel. Hidden behind the wall that holds the appliance bank is a large pantry for everyday essentials.

of you. It guides you." Very quickly, he saw the solution: a single-story house designed on a reverse curve that would hug the wall and embrace the view. "I had seen a certain view across that could be considered a masterpiece, and if the clients had been looking for a straight line or a more formal design, that design would have worked. But once I saw the curve, it became a great opportunity."

The homeowners were eager to put design boundaries with the new clients. "We were thinking about this for the long term, especially the line house that we would own, and we were on board with Ed's vision right away," recalls the husband. The wife adds, "We had lived in the standard box kind of house for so many years. We wanted something unique, livable and sophisticated. We were open to seeing how we could get there."

The clerestory windows opening look the best a million of the house (and the interior) with natural light and give the eyes an unobstructed journey from the top of the hill in front of the house and down the canyon in the back. "The windows could be the alpha of design to come out and be a part of the house," says Petrucci.

In the living room, interior designers Dolie Woodard and Holly Wright chose low-profile, linear furnishings in neutral tones that do not compete with the incomparable view. A wall of a wall glass sliding doors stretch to welcome the outdoors in.

The terrace level is a wealth of exciting amenities to relax, including a fire pit, outdoor kitchen, and life TV, along with an expansive edge garden. The home's overhang creates the interior flow down to the pool.

As you study it, the land starts to talk to you. It guides you.

—Eric Peterson, AIA/Arch



Headed by floor-to-ceiling glass, the master bedroom is open and airy. Warm wood ceiling detailing travels above the partition at the head of the bed, leading to the master bath. Hanging bedside partitions emphasize the room's height; a custom settee at the foot of the bed can be reconfigured as twin chairs.



This is an exceptional house in every way. Although its aesthetic is contemporary, it is soft and welcoming. It's a very livable style that feels good.

—Tory Sutton, interior designer

The home's floor plan is open from end to end, which maximizes the relatively modest floorplate. "This house has a great energy about it," says lead interior designer Tony Scarnia. "Trik created this fabulous canvas with curves and angles. We went through a metamorphosis process to create the contemporary experience the homeowners desired. It's like a custom suit. You tailor, trim and streamline it to find the perfect fit for your client."

For such a unique footprint, interior designers Elaine Alexander and Holly Wright balanced the rustic exterior—which includes cracked stone, granite, copper and glass—with interior surfaces that incorporate warm wood tones on ceilings, vertical surfaces and furnishings. "We didn't want to create a house that felt like a series of rooms and hallways," says Alexander. "We wanted the floor plan to seamlessly transition from space to space, with continuity flowing throughout the home so it wouldn't feel segmented."

The primary objective was to keep the views the main focus, Wright stresses. "One of the many unique aspects of this home is that there are striking exterior focal points in every room. From the front of the house you see a sequoia forest. The entire south side opens the Valley and Pinnack Peak.



ABOVE: The master bathroom's his-and-hers units are framed by an unobstructed view of the backyard and the valley beyond. The homeowners chose to forgo mirrors in this space. "Why do I need to look at myself while I'm brushing my teeth?" asks the wife. The cantilevered vanity conceals a delightfully playful, while maintaining a light, open feel.

RIGHT: The master bath is bright and spacious. Frosted glass reflects the space with reflected light. Like virtually every room in the house, the walk-in shower faces a floor-to-ceiling view of the outdoors.



The master bathroom's separate makeup area is steps away from the shower, but still provides privacy within the bath. Closetory windows are an additional light source, and glass doors slide open to welcome breezes during mild-weather months.

Passing through to the master bedroom you have the dramatic rocky incline of the wash, which you see from both sides. It's like a landscape gallery," she says.

The interior color palette and materials pay homage to the desert around it. "We wanted to keep everything light and bright but use elements that are organic in nature," explains Alexander. "Not too cold or overly modern." The color palette is subtle with pops of orange, rust, greens and blues. The neutral environment creates a gallerylike foil for the couple's collection of artwork, which gravitates toward vibrant hues.

The choice of furnishings is a direct juxtaposition of the structure's dramatic shape. "I think that's where some of the best designs are born—when you're given something that's not typical," says Wright. The design

team intentionally contradicted the home's arc with low-profile rectangular furnishings that provide a counterpoint to the curves and glorify the view. "The instinct may have been to echo the house's trajectory with rounded lines," says Alexander. "We deliberately went in the opposite direction."

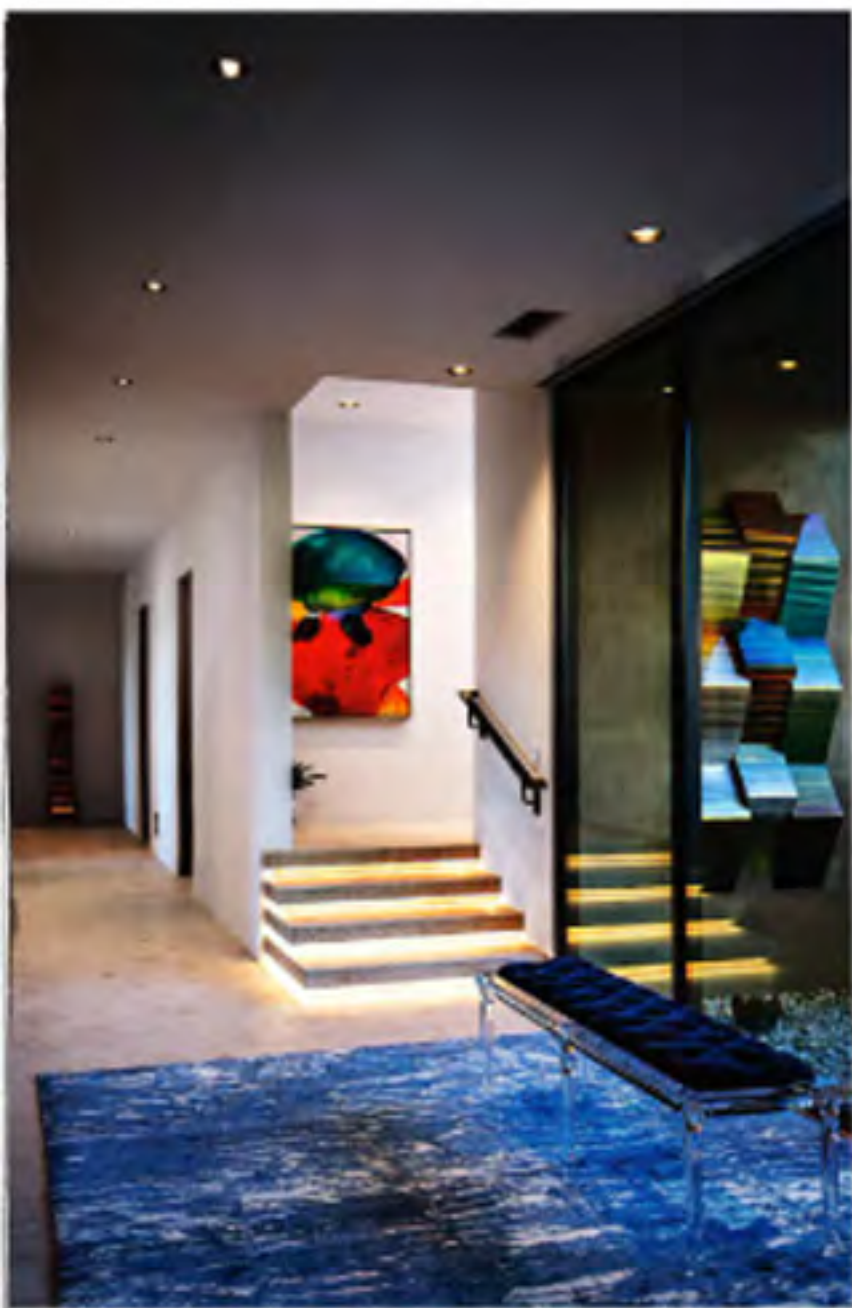
The home's exteriors also honor its environment. Landscape architect and *Plants & Gardens* Masters of the Southwest award winner Russ Greer supplemented the existing terrain with native plant material that would logically be found in the area. "This whole project was about naturalizing the yard back into the desert. Around the front entry, we created a desert garden with more color, form and variety, but at the perimeter you really want to blend into the adjacent natural desert," he says.



"This is the design team's painting.
And we get to live in it."

—The homeowner

"When you have a strong architectural form, you should embrace it rather than try to make it into something that it's not," says landscape architect Russ Greig, who echoed the home's distinctive curves, angles and roofline when designing the fan-shaped pool, terracing and backyard living spaces.



The hallway leading to the garage and guest rooms contains the home's most surprising pops of color. A cerulean area rug, too vibrant for use in a bedroom, was repurposed here. Appearing to float before the window, a Lucite bench with a plush sapphire-tinted tufted cushion is an unexpected touch and picks up the blues found in the interior and exterior artwork.

Peterson stresses that every detail of the house—inside and out—was thought through artistically. "This home is one of a kind. It could not exist elsewhere," he says. The homeowners gave the design team their complete trust, knowing they were in good hands. "It would be like fixing with a Monet painting. Don't go in there with your own brushes and paints. Ask Mr. Monet what he wants to do," the wife says. "This is their painting. And we get to live in it." ■

See Source.



Two guest rooms with private patios and pool access are located at the opposite end of the house from the master suite, providing privacy for guests and the homeowners.