



Landscape and architecture

Poured-in-place concrete walls match the desert floor; large expanses of glass bring the outdoors in; and overhangs fitted with solar panels provide protection from the sun at architect David Hovey's Scottsdale residence. A long bridge spanning a natural wash leads to the front door.





Balancing Act

blend seamlessly in an innovative desert house

TEXT BY DAVID M. BROWN ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID FENTON



A narrow horizontal window relieves the heavy concrete wall mass. The water feature establishes a sense of tranquility and visually softens the approach to the house.



Uniquely conceived,

the Hovey home represents a negotiation between an avowedly Modernist architect and an ageless landscape, a merging of the synthetic and the natural. The result is a structure of glass, concrete and steel set in the rugged topography of primeval granite, saguaro spiked mountains, and deep slicing washes and ravines.

Called Sterling Ridge, the residence affirms David Hovey's position as an architect challenged and inspired by the complex terrain of the Sonoran Desert. The home, which steps down 200 feet on an expansive hillside lot, is one of four residences designed by Hovey in this north Scottsdale community. As with those houses, the architect integrated the five bedroom dwelling into the desert without massive excavation and disturbance to the existing landscape. Unlike the other houses, however, Hovey designed this one for his own family, which includes his wife, Eileen, their three children, and Nala, a playful yellow Labrador.

"I set out to find balance between landscape and architecture," says Hovey, whose Fellowship designation from the American Institute of Architects recognizes him for a lifetime of achievement. He adds: "The focus and challenge was to have the design of the house respond to the environment, to relate to the existing topography and appear to emerge naturally from the desert itself."

Glass walls make the distinction between desert and structure as transparent as possible. Outside and inside appear to merge. Views reveal the desert; materials and colors celebrate it. The concrete portions are the same monochromatic hue as the desert sand, and the horizontal steel framing is a stronger shade found in the occasional boulder outcroppings, Hovey says. Much like the desert in bloom, the residence displays splashes of color throughout: Its louvers are bright red, like ocotillo tips; the stairways reflect the desert's green; and the handrails are the orange of springtime poppies.

Beyond merely reflecting the beauty of the desert, the structure harnesses and preserves its natural resources. The architect specified 87 glass solar panels on the southern, eastern and western perimeters of the roof. These panels satisfy about 60 percent of the home's peak electric demand. They also shade the home and provide an aesthetic component as their shadows project patterns onto exterior walls.

Even the swimming pool,

Left: Garden areas featuring native vegetation blend with the desert surroundings.

Right: Interiors are punctuated with modern furnishings and fine contemporary art. Here, a painting by Robert Rauschenberg is suspended from the living room ceiling, where it divides space and conceals a wet bar.

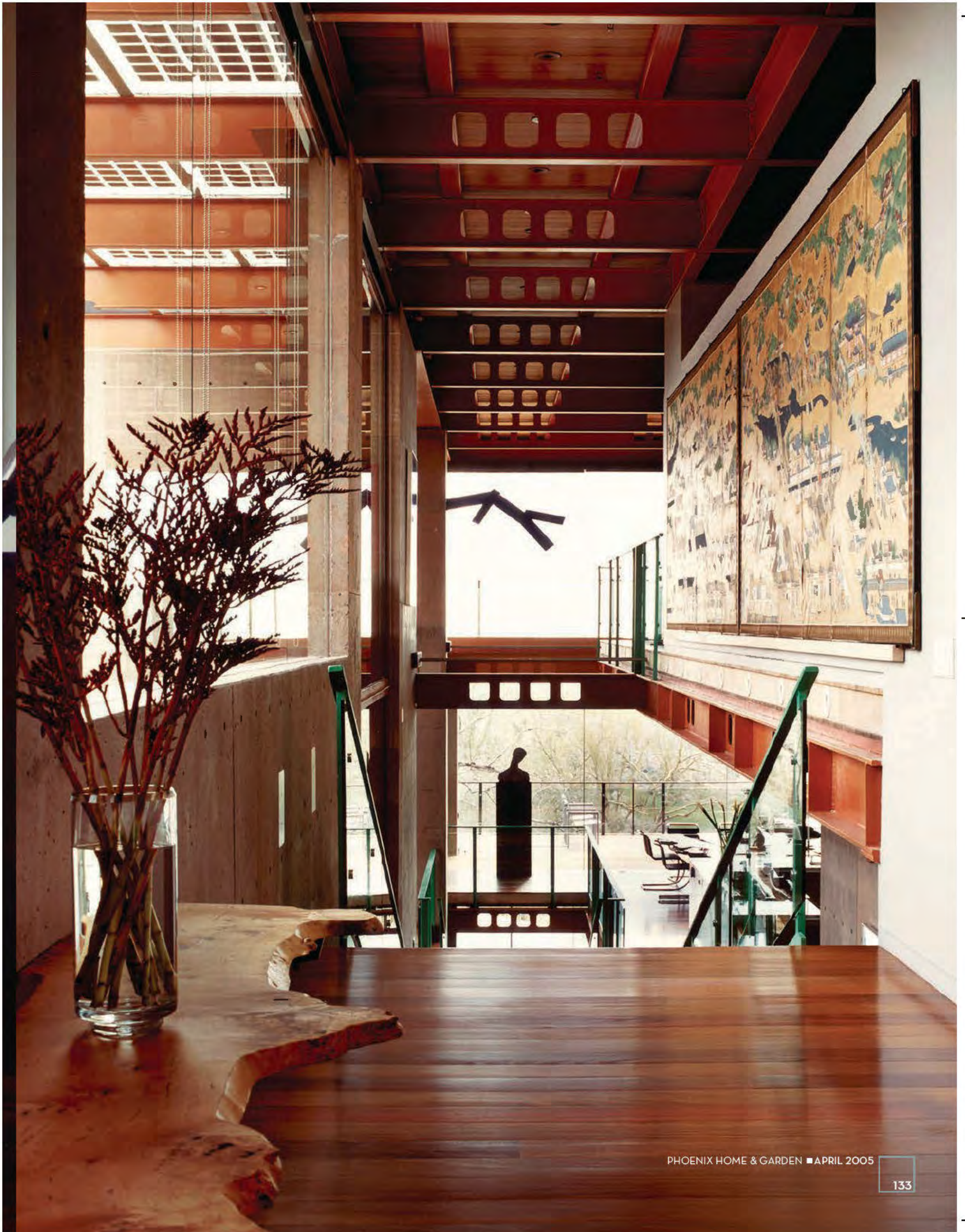






This page: In this hallway, as in other areas of the home, wood floors appear to blend into exterior decks, and large windows frame desert views. **Opposite:** Interior spaces flow from room to room and level to level, establishing an open and fluid environment. Steel beams are perforated in a rhythmic pattern, lightening their visual impact. Artwork here includes a free-form bench by George Nakashima (foreground) and a 17th-century Japanese screen (right).







which seems to dive into the wash below, serves a green purpose: Natural evaporation and breezes cool it, and a heat exchanger allows it to absorb hot water generated by the home's heat pump cooling system.

Inside, simple rectangular rooms seamlessly transition to one another. They are long and spacious and high some three stories so.

In the master bedroom, green translucent glass sliders subtly separate the sleeping and office portions, providing privacy with out isolation. The kitchen opens to the expansive great room, where one of the home's five identical fireplaces features a window, enabling views out through the flames.

Visually warming the home are floors, ceilings and exterior wood decks of Brazilian Ipe walnut. Hard as steel, Ipe is also dark, with elegant tones and a rich grain. Hovey notes: "We coated the interior floors with a protective sealant that retains the natural color of the wood; outside, we're allowing the decks to weather to what will be, over time, a fantastic silver gray."

Similarly, Hovey splashes color against expanses, generating the electrifying effect of Mexican architects Luis Barragán and Ricardo Legoretta, whose influences he admires. Artwork throughout the home, suspended from the ceiling, floating in space, and installed on



Opposite: In the master bedroom, a sliding translucent-glass panel separates the sleeping area from a study that overlooks the home's middle level. At the foot of the bed is a bench by George Nakashima.

Above left: A lithograph by Ellsworth Kelly brings a jolt of color to the family room.

Above right: A steel staircase painted green and a large aluminum painting by Frank Stella vie for attention in the entry.

Right: On the lower level is a recreation area complete with billiards table and, of course, more stellar views.



Both functional and aesthetic, solar panels extending from the roof shade an upper deck and create visual impact with their dynamic grid pattern. The panels, directly connected to a power grid, produce 13 kilowatts of energy and offset two-thirds of the home's peak performance cost, notes the architect/homeowner in *The Nature of Dwellings, The Architecture of David Hovey* (Rizzoli). He says the textures resulting from the use of photovoltaic cells for shading "have been a surprising addition to the richness of the exterior and interior spaces."

walls, is more than static accessory. Canvases, mobiles and sculptures emphasize the open floor plan and create focal points.

A bright orange Joel Shapiro sculpture, for example, draws the eye from the entrance to the open second level. And, in the main floor gallery corridor, a long free form bench by George Nakashima extends along the hallway to a right angle, where it, too, turns. "I actually designed the space to fit the Nakashima," says Hovey, a longtime collector of the master wood craftsman's work.

Other artworks range from a 20th century Alexander Calder mobile sculpture, to a first century Roman marble sculpture of a Venus torso, to fifth and sixth century B.C. Greek pottery. Clearly, high art and architecture are at home here.

"Our entire family absolutely loves the house," Hovey says. "It is incredibly comfortable, and the light, shadows and reflections provide ever changing nuance and joy." ■

See Resource Guide.



