



The POWER of *Light*

Designed to celebrate both desert and sun, this Scottsdale gem was designed by one architect and inhabited by another

Written by David M. Brown

Photography by Bill Timmerman

The contemporary home in Desert Mountain — the north Scottsdale luxury golf community — so eloquently expresses clarity of design with sensitive site integration and honest materials that Oregon architect and developer Garth Brandaw, AIA, and his wife, Joan, a former teacher, purchased it two years ago as a desert retreat when the original owners moved back to Carmel, California.

Completed in 2009 by Andy Byrnes, AIA, Construction Zone in Phoenix, and designed two years before by San Antonio, Texas-based firm, Lake|Flato, the roughly 4,000-square-foot, one-level home includes a master bedroom; two casita suites separated from the main structure by a covered walkway; a two-car garage; an open kitchen/family room and an adjacent living/dining area. The open kitchen and living areas both have floor-to-ceiling pivoting doors, one to the negative-edge pool fitted into a weathered-steel enclosure, the second to a cactus garden courtyard with a fire pit for cool foothills nights.

This contemporary home in Desert Mountain, Scottsdale, eloquently celebrates luxury desert living through a minimalist vocabulary of steel, stone, concrete and wood.

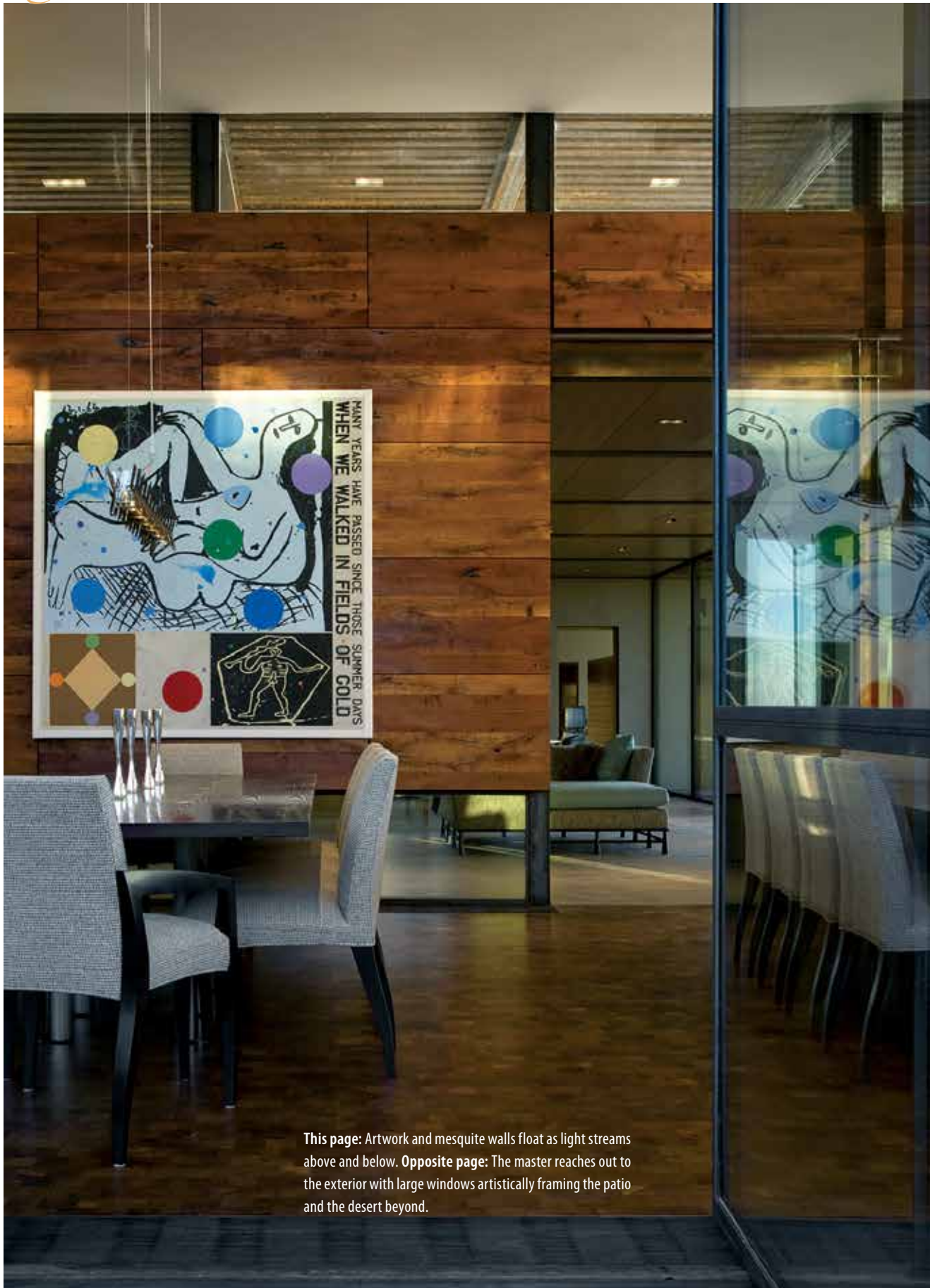
From the entry, the hallway opens up to the home and then to the desert, appearing almost like revelations.



“Joan and I had a long interest in an Arizona home and lifestyle to escape the dreary Oregon winters,” says Brandaw, founder of CB Two Architects in Salem, Oregon. “We wanted our home to be very well crafted with simple, honest materials,” he says. “We wanted quality over quantity



From far left: Desert light suffuses an open hallway, highlighting the steel-on-glass pivoting door, integrally colored concrete floor, mesquite panels and vibrant artwork. | Sky, water and glass suggest desert transparency, lightness and expansiveness, while earth-tone walls remove the community street and neighboring homes. | Above-wall windows, like transoms, connect the dining and living rooms while expressing the structural materials, and floor-to-ceiling windows reveal the desert, golf course mountains and sky.



This page: Artwork and mesquite walls float as light streams above and below. **Opposite page:** The master reaches out to the exterior with large windows artistically framing the patio and the desert beyond.

and were not interested in a large trophy home with a 'labeled' style."

"Our original clients wanted a simple, modern, minimalist residence that would feature outdoor living spaces, including a pool, as well as provide ample space inside for their art," says the architect of record, Ted Flato, FAIA. "They requested sunset views to the golf course, the desert and landmark Pinnacle Peak, while at the same time blocking views of neighboring homes."

He adds: "Our first challenge, then, was to design the home to celebrate, on the one hand, the beauty of the Arizona desert — the sun, the desert, the mountains — while ensuring that the owners wouldn't notice their neighbors and vice versa."

To do this, the exterior walls on three sides are blinders, editing out the street and adjacent homes. Approaching the front entry, for example, you pass through a gate



to a courtyard, created by the home and garage masses. With its native trees and other flora, this welcoming prelude leads to either the glass front door or down to another of the home's xeriscaped

courtyards next to the dining room.

From the entry, the hallway opens up to the home and then to the desert, appearing almost like revelations. "Here you are immersed in the beauty of the desert through the glass pivoting doors," Flato says.

The design shifts as you move from the outside in. Inside, the structure doesn't eliminate details but focuses on the beauty of the environment, as if looking through a Donald Judd sculpture, Flato explains. The living room and dining room, for example, are designed as "pavilions in the desert," he says.

The walls, with openings top and bottom, float beneath the exposed steel-deck ceiling, circulating desert light from

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The entry approach steps down past the garage walls to a private xeriscaped courtyard, offering privacy and serenity for the dining room.

room to room. On these walls are mesquite panels — a regionally appropriate backdrop for the original owners' and, now, for the Brandaws' colorful artworks.

The mesquite, which is also on the living-room floor, is one element of an understated materials palette, including rift-cut Northwest white oak for the cabinetry and family room ceiling, integrally colored concrete, Venetian plaster, stucco, glass and structural as well as hot-rolled steel on side and roof latticework. "Inside, the diverse materials, light and delicate in appearance, are coordinated to contrast with the exterior masses, which are intended to keep the outside out," Flato says.

"Acquiring this property was unusual for us since we have enjoyed living in several homes that we have designed

and built," Brandaw says. "However, we enjoy the sculptural way in which the indoor and outdoor rooms occupy the site and we are proud to be the caretakers of this desert gem."

For Flato, the couple's appreciation of the design speaks to his perpetual motivation as an architect. "Wherever we go as a firm, we connect a home with the climate and the weather, taking advantage of what an area has to offer. In the Arizona desert, sun and desert are always conspiring for your attention — and this home showcases their remarkable power." ■

David M. Brown (www.azwriter.com) is an Arizona-based freelancer.

A photographer in the Southwest for more than 25 years, **Bill Timmerman** has a passion for the desert and appreciates living in a place known for its architectural tradition. "My best rewards are the relationships I have made with the many individuals that create and build the urban landscape here under the Sonoran sun," he says.