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A Sonoran Chef's Board | Beauty and the Bar Cart







“There is a thread of the desert
all the way through the house.”

—NANCY KITCHELL, interior designer

A louvered black walnut divider separates the family room, which features a soothing neutral color palette, from the adjacent hallway. Carved stone tile adds texture and interest to the fireplace.

entertain and dine. He was also able to re-use the property's existing cacti and boojum trees, plus some large-scale boulders that were scattered on the site. "Overall, I tried to keep things open, simple and uncluttered so there were places for big parties," he says. "I also didn't want to block views of the mountain."

The couple desired an outdoor living room in the front courtyard, so Greey designed a seating area around a fire trough, and added a shallow, negative-edge fountain that imparts a soothing sound to the space. Two raised steel planter beds are filled with unusual cactus and

succulents, where neat labels identify specimens like the Argentine giant, crested blue flame (*Myrtillocactus geometrizans forma cristata*) and bishop's cap (*Mitella diphylla*). Greey also found a rare "nurse tree," an intertwined ironwood and saguaro from a salvage project, and had it placed in the courtyard as a focal point. "The courtyard is the couple's private botanical garden," says the landscape architect.

In the backyard, the pool was positioned on an axis with the home's entry. Greey surrounded it with large stretches of lawn for entertaining and used an ipe wood boardwalk to link house to pool. Desert



plantings were woven in between the entertaining areas. Greey specified Hercules aloes, more boojums and other desert plants for the wash that runs beneath the glass bridge. At the edge of the yard—which is an excellent vantage point to view Camelback Mountain—he created an “out in the desert” seating area with decomposed granite, a firepit and colorful native plantings, such as penstemons, desert marigolds, verbena and brittlebush.

Settled into their new residence, the homeowners are enjoying every aspect of the home. “Every day here is a treat,” says the husband.

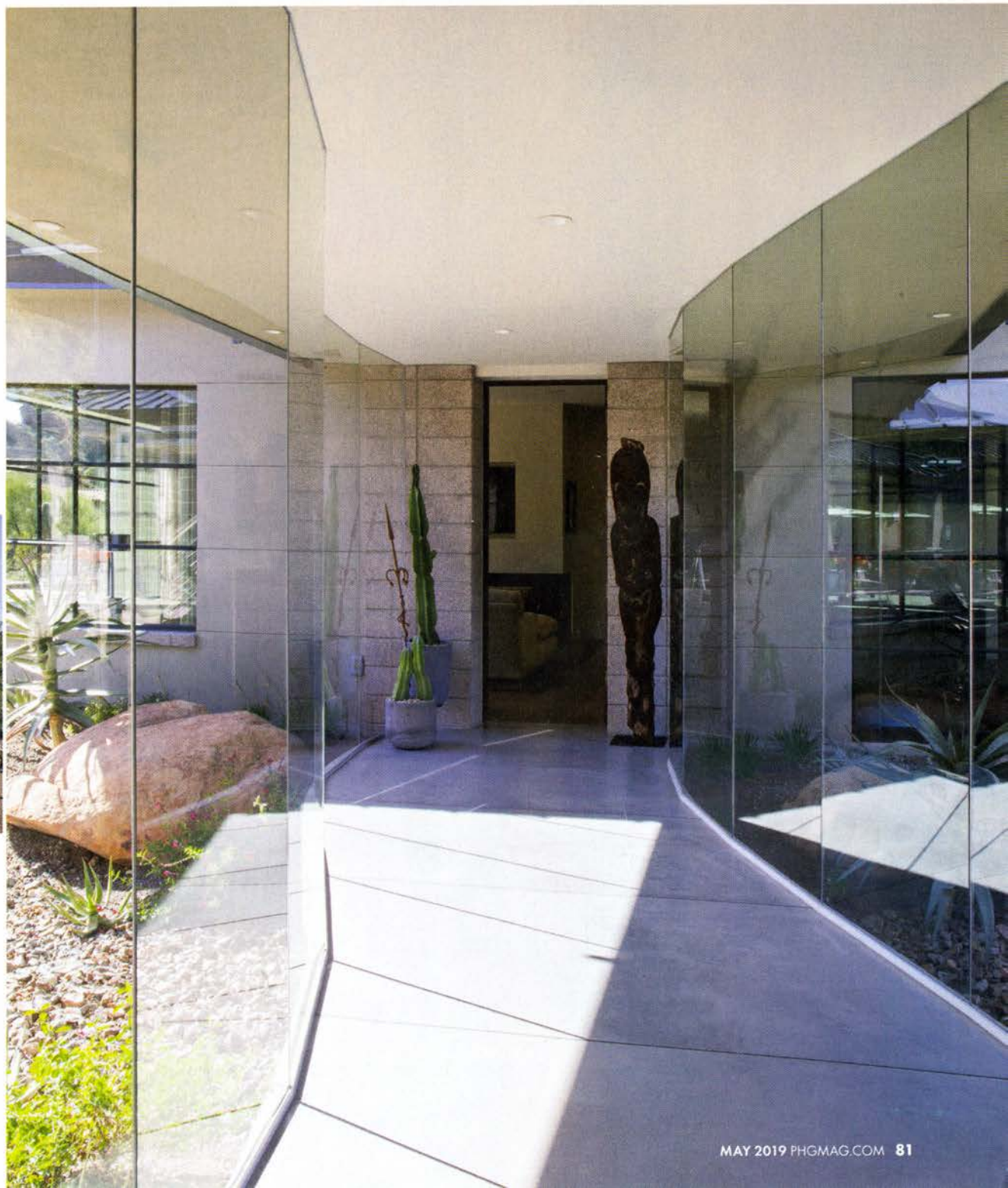
“I went outside the other morning, where I could see the moon setting and Jupiter over Camelback—from our backyard. It doesn’t get better than that.” □

ARCHITECT: Michael Higgins, Higgins Architects. **BUILDER:** Greg Hunt, GM Hunt Builders-Remodelers Inc. **INTERIOR DESIGNERS:** Nancy Kitchell and Chris Brusnighan, Kitchell Brusnighan Interior Design Associates. **LANDSCAPE** **ARCHITECT:** Russell Greey, Greey|Pickett.

For more information, see Sources on Page 134.

OPPOSITE A suspended black walnut and steel ceiling frames the kitchen, which is enriched with a variety of materials, such as the brass-and-pewter hood and the glass-and-copper cupboard on the right. In back, commercial walk-in cooler doors lead to the refrigerator and a pantry.

RIGHT A curving glass hallway links the master suite to the rest of the house and bridges a shallow wash planted with aloes, agaves and cactus. **BELOW** A rare “nurse tree,” an intertwined ironwood and saguaro, serves as a focal point in the front yard.





INSPIRED

A new Paradise Valley home takes its cue from local landmarks and the desert environment.

BY KATHERINE ADOMAITIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS LOOMIS





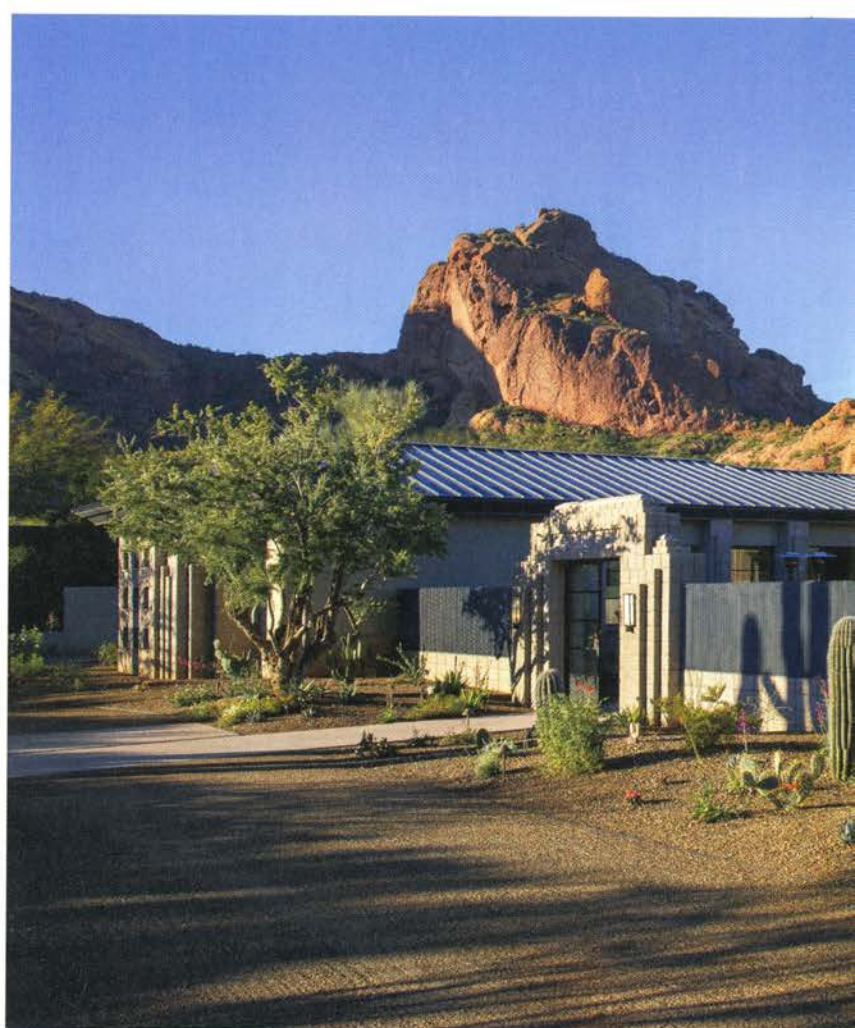
LEFT A stepped-back block gateway leads from the street to the home's courtyard and front entry, which aligns with a view of the pool. **RIGHT** An uplit, black walnut-clad ceiling adds warmth to the living room, where a Kevin Sloan painting is displayed above the fireplaces. Shelving, pedestals and other surfaces serve to display the owners' collection of Native American and African art.

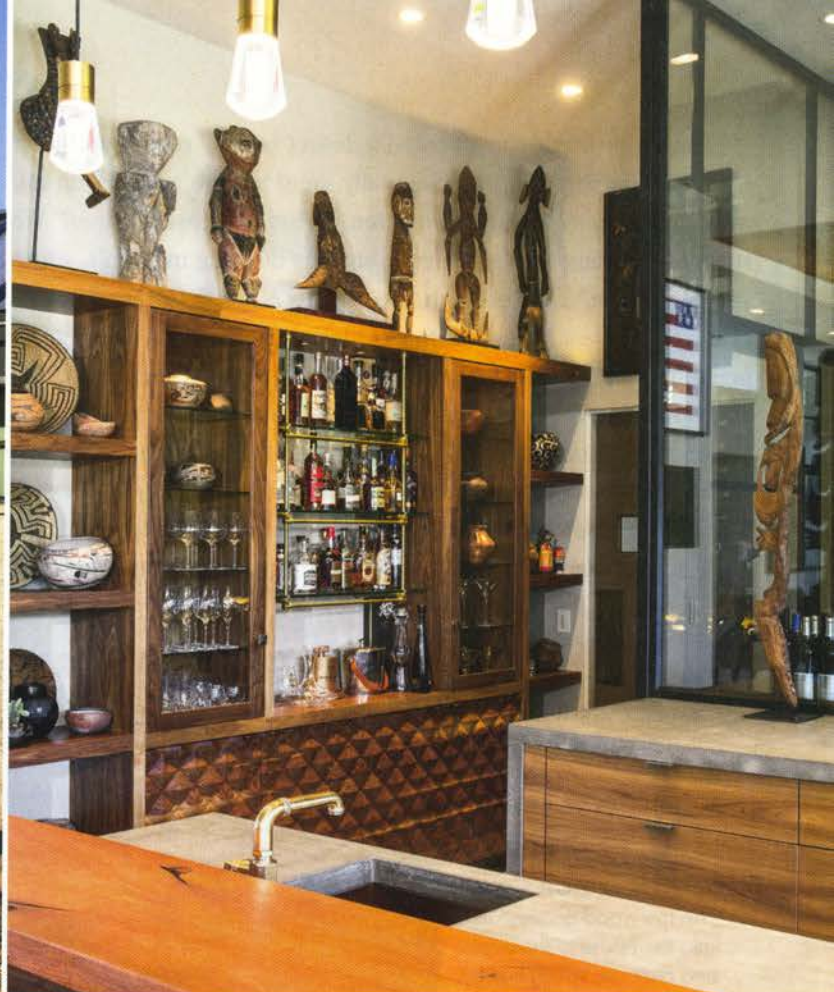
VISITORS TO A NEWLY BUILT residence near the base of Camelback Mountain might sense something familiar in its design. The stepped-back massing on its block columns seems to reference the Arizona Biltmore circa 1929; the labeled specimen cactus beds in the entry courtyard speak of Desert Botanical Garden; and the custom steel windows and doors echo those found in the Valley's historic adobes.

That design familiarity, as well as the home's indoor-outdoor ambiance, are exactly what the owners sought when they set out to build what they call "the perfect Arizona house." The husband and wife, who have deep roots in the state and a blended family that includes adult children and many grandchildren, wanted a bright, light home that embraced living in the desert—and was well-suited for the large-scale parties they enjoy hosting. But the property they found, with a past-its-prime domicile and an overgrown landscape, was ripe for rebirth.

RIGHT The front courtyard was designed to be the home's outdoor living room, with a seating area around a fire trough, a low fountain, window access to the bar and beds filled with specimen cactus.

BELOW Signage identifies the various species of cacti in the front yard.





TOP LEFT Stacked-bond masonry block walls, a standing seam metal roof and steel-framed windows mark the exterior of the home, located near Camelback Mountain. **LEFT** The dining room, illuminated by a suspension light made from a gear, links the bar and living room, and opens to the front courtyard. **TOP RIGHT** The bar includes a custom cabinet for spirits and barware—and more of the homeowners' collection of artifacts—as well as a walk-in, glass wine cellar.

"The owners said they wanted a desert home," recalls architect Michael Higgins, who, coincidentally, went to high school with the wife. "That really begs the question, 'What is a desert home?' We started exploring those elements, such as building materials, siting and floor plans." The research, the *Phoenix Home & Garden Masters* of the Southwest award winner explains, evolved into the home's present form—a 6,000-square-foot, three-bedroom main house and a 2,000-square-foot, two-bedroom guest house that wrap around a capacious front entry court and open onto the spacious back yard, which has views of Camelback Mountain and its Praying Monk rock formation. A poolside cabana, complete with a bar, bathroom and roof deck, anchors the backyard. Taking cues from the Arizona Biltmore's

Wrightian architecture, Higgins used ground-face block walls and columns for the home. He designed a pitched, standing-seam metal roof with generous overhangs that shade the numerous view-grabbing window walls, many of which fully open to connect indoor spaces to the courtyard and backyard. Indoors, scored concrete provides traditional Arizona-style flooring, while black walnut ceiling details soften the setting. Higgins' architectural pièce de résistance is a curving glass bridge that leads to the home's master suite. "I call this the 'terrarium hallway' because it crosses a small wash planted with cacti," he says. "With floor-to-ceiling glass, the space makes the owners feel like they are outside when they walk to their bedroom. The bridge structure also supports a second roof deck."

TOP RIGHT The poolside cabana, which features a playful eclectic contemporary industrial decor scheme, includes a bar and a sectional for conversation and TV watching. **BOTTOM RIGHT** An ipe wood boardwalk links the house to the pool and cabana, which has a roof terrace.





LEFT Two modern rocking chairs on the master suite terrace offer a calming place from which to view the mountain. On the opposite side of the pool, a pair of shaded lounge chairs and a barbecue/dining area offer the perfect spot for après-swim relaxation.

BOTTOM LEFT Wood flooring, an upholstered bed and luxurious linens create a serene sanctuary for the master bedroom.

BOTTOM RIGHT In the master bath, a custom settee and a deep soaking tub overlook a private patio with an outdoor shower.



“I tried to keep things open, simple and uncluttered so there were places for big parties.”

—RUSSELL GREEY, landscape architect



ABOVE The back of the main house and the guest quarters, on the right, have large window walls designed to capture mountain views. The stairs on the left lead to a second roof deck. **LEFT** In the shadow of Camelback Mountain, a movable metal pavilion shelters a furniture grouping on the lawn.



Builder Greg Hunt, who has collaborated with Higgins on numerous projects, was tasked with making the design come to life. “I knew this would be a great house,” recalls Hunt. “Before we started construction, I noticed that the original property was overgrown, and you couldn’t see much. But when I climbed up on the roof, Camelback views were as clear as a bell.”

The material choices were ideal for the homeowners’ desire for a low-upkeep home. “The block walls are the finished product,” Hunt says. “You never have to paint them. The metal roof is maintenance-free, and steel windows last forever.”

Hunt also viewed Higgins’ glass bridge design as a challenge to be met. “We used segmented, straight pieces of butt-glazed glass, not radius glass, to create the appearance of a curve,” he says. “It had to fit perfectly.”

The goal for interior designers Nancy Kitchell and Chris Brusnighan was to make the handsome home comfortable and practical. “This is one of the most livable Arizona houses we’ve done,” says Kitchell, a *Phoenix Home & Garden* Masters of the Southwest award winner. “There is a thread of the desert all the way through.”

Adds Brusnighan, “The owners have a significant collection of African and Native American art, and there were some pieces of furniture they wanted incorporated.”

The designers used a neutral palette to keep the emphasis on the art and views; chose durable fabrics for the upholstered pieces; and mixed stone, metal and wood finishes to imbue the interior with a natural grace.

Near the entry, two carved wood credenzas separate the dining room from the living room, where two deep, overscale sofas provide lounging spots in front of the onyx-clad fireplace. A circular wood table anchors the dining room, which is adjacent to a bar made of mesquite and backed by a dramatic glass wine cabinet. More storage is provided by custom shelving, which features three-dimensional, pyramid-patterned cabinet doors.

The large kitchen, complete with two islands, is detailed with custom, rift-sawn oak cabinetry, end-cut walnut and zinc countertops, a custom brass and pewter hood, and a stainless steel tile backsplash above the range. A walk-in cooler and a separate walk-in pantry both sport heavy, commercial cooler doors. “This is not a boring kitchen,” says Kitchell. “It’s designed for serious cooking.”

The master bedroom is a study in serenity, with lush draperies and a detailed upholstered headboard. The adjacent bath has a deep soaking tub with views of Camelback Mountain, as does the outdoor shower.

Brusnighan and Kitchell worked in the couple’s existing art collection, which includes paintings by Kevin Sloan, Native American textiles, pottery and basketry, and carved African figures. They also added works by Arizona artists such as Mark Klett and Jay Dusard. As a housewarming gift, Kitchell gave the homeowners a series of framed photographs—abstract images she’d taken during a visit to the husband’s manufacturing plant.

The outdoor spaces were also detailed with care. *Phoenix Home & Garden* Masters of the Southwest award-winning landscape architect Russell Greey created multiple zones where the owners could relax,