



ON THE ROCKS

SOARING CEILING HEIGHTS, SWEEPING WALLS OF GLASS AND AN OPEN EXpanse ALLOW FOR PANORAMIC VISTAS IN A HOUSE GENTLY NESTLED INTO A TUCSON HILLSIDE.

WRITTEN BY **KIMBERLY OLSON** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **WILLIAM LESCH**

When architect Kevin B. Howard first saw the plot of land that his clients, Dan and Susan Parker, wanted to build their new home on, he understood the appeal right away.

Nestled in the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains, the site afforded spectacular views of nearby Tucson and the valley below. Still, the location did pose some challenges. “The property had a big rocky outcropping smack-dab in the middle of it, and it looked impossible to build on,” Howard says. “But the more difficult the site, the more I love it. We weren’t going to fight the obstacles; we were going to work with them.”

Inspired by the site-specific design approach of Frank Lloyd Wright, who felt that a house should be of the natural environment, and the modernist styles of European architects Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius, Howard, along with project architect Joseph E. Brown, created for the Parkers a bold residence

ARCHITECTURE Kevin B. Howard, Kevin B. Howard Architects, Inc.

INTERIOR DESIGN John Lassila, John Lassila and Associates

HOME BUILDER Gregg Seaholm, Rainier Construction Inc.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN Tray Gers, The Garden Gate

BEDROOMS 4 | **BATHROOMS** 6 | **SQUARE FEET** 4,958



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that follows the landscape's rocky topography. "The house straddles the ridge and then cantilevers out on each side," he says. "It also steps down the mountain, so there's a fun relationship between the house and its location."

Howard brought in builder Gregg Seaholm, who now does consulting work, to bring his plans to life. "Logistically, it was tough," Seaholm says. "There were very tight confines, and the height on everything was super-critical, especially going up three stories and back over the earth. I've been doing this for 25 years, and that was the most complicated house I've ever built. But I loved driving up to it every day knowing that it was going to turn out amazing."



The dining room's Berman Rosetti table is paired with Pollack fabric-covered Christian Liaigre chairs. A modern Bocci chandelier from The Collection on 5 in Minneapolis offers a touch of glam. Artwork is by Fiona Pardington. *Left:* The entry features rows of golden barrel cacti and decorative rocks to complement the home's desert Zen design. The door was fabricated out of hardwood, structural steel and glass.



Surrounding desert hues are mimicked in the living room furnishings, such as the A. Rudin sofa from Scherping Westphal and upholstered chairs by Powell & Bonnell, purchased through Duxbury, Ltd. The circular Dakota Jackson coffee table, from Hoffsommer et Cie, echoes the pattern of the Lapchi rug. *Opposite:* Split face block walls fabricated by Kerr Masonry add visual interest to the stairway, crafted by Bovell Builders with carbon steel railings and stone treads.





A custom spiral artwork by Alan Bur Johnson, comprised of 596 discs made of such transparent organic material as butterfly wings, is pinned into a wall of the living room above a mahogany credenza from Joseph Jeup, purchased through Holly Hunt. A glass bowl by Andrew Madvin, purchased through Skyline Gallery, adds a dash of bold color.



The wife worked with Bulthaup to create her dream kitchen, outfitted with top-of-the-line appliances like a Thermidor double oven and a Gaggenau induction cooktop. McGuire's woven counter stools, from Baker Knapp & Tubbs, are upholstered in Pollack fabric. Glass panels visually separate the space from the adjacent dining room while allowing light to flow through.



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Inside, Howard created various rectilinear forms—as in the kitchen, dining area and living room—then overlapped them and dissolved the room's corners, allowing the volumes to flow into one another. The interior balances large, soaring areas that explode out to the views with small, cozy spaces for nestling in. “The house works really well with two people and two dogs, because you don’t feel like you’re wandering around in a huge space,” Susan says. “But when my brothers and sisters come with all of the kids, we don’t feel crowded.”

Soaring ceiling heights and large expanses of glass offer big swatches of the rocky hillside and sweeping views overlooking the city, while organic materials in rich, warm desert colors—split face blocks, rusted steel and limestone flooring—create warmth.

In the man cave, which serves as the husband's office and media room, custom bookshelves from Homeworks Cabinetry + Design offer both display and storage space. A chair from Donghia and a custom ottoman provide comfy lounging over a Masland rug. Stools upholstered in Rodolph fabric pull up to the countertop.

*“The whole premise was to make it look
like the house sprouted out of the desert.”*



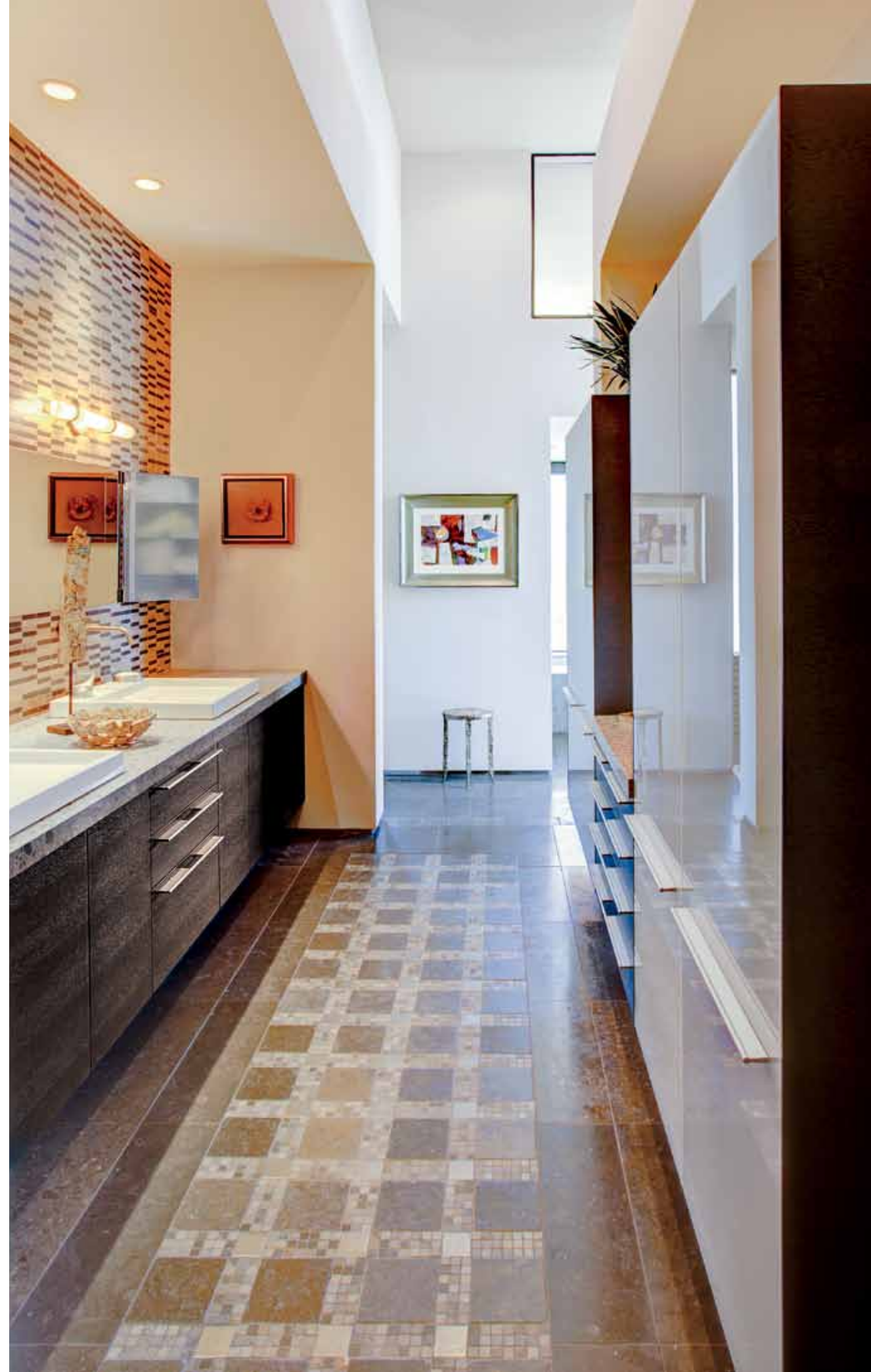
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Landscape designer Tray Gers installed desert plants and decorative rocks near the entrance, along the driveway and in other spots around the home. “The whole premise was to make it look like the house sprouted out of the desert,” he says.

Minneapolis-based designer John Lassila, who had fashioned the owners’ homes in Minnesota and New Orleans, also chose to play off the desert palette when outfitting the rooms, incorporating orange, red and green tones evocative of the outside landscape. Using the architecture as inspiration, Lassila set out to create a modern interior that would depart from the expected Southwest motif. Because the home’s lines are so linear, the designer brought in clean-lined furnishings that would honor it, mixed with organic forms here and there, to add a bit of softness. “There are a number of spaces where a spiral or starburst motif appears—the foyer pendant fixture, the cocktail table, an art sculpture,” he says.

Nestled into the site’s rocky topography, the house is a mix of stucco, masonry, wood and structural steel that creates a striking exterior as it steps down the hillside. The home is outfitted with solar panels and tinted windows to help save energy.

The airy master bath is sleek with kicks of pattern from mosaic wall tiles and Nova Blue limestone floors, both from Fractured Earth Tile & Stone. The Caesarstone countertop is fitted with Kohler's Antilia Wading Pool basins from Ferguson. Custom cabinetry is from Bulthaup.



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"These play against the straight walls that Kevin incorporated throughout the house." The couple also acquired several fine art pieces for the home, mostly from the Lisa Sette Gallery. "They were sourced almost completely from Arizona artists who all work in very contemporary styles," Lassila says.

Striking and modern, the house stands proudly on its hilly perch. What started as an obstacle became the muse of the entire residence and, now, the homeowners and their guests can enjoy perfectly framed views of the rugged mountains and valley. As Susan says, "The house just has a very uplifting feeling." **L**

Natural elements abound in the master suite, from the split face block walls to the flames from the modern fireplace. The Troscan bed and custom bedding, made from fabric by Jim Thompson, were both purchased through Holly Hunt. The artwork, from Hespe Gallery in San Francisco, is by Erin Cone.