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When a young entrepreneur decided to build a home on a narrow site in central Tucson, he turned to architect Rob Paulus to build the ultimate bachelor pad, dubbed the “007” house. By Judy Snyder. Photography by Liam Frederick



A BACHELOR IN HIS MID-30s, GREG PUHLER decided to sell his modest brick Tucson home and upgrade. Although Puhler didn’t want to settle for what was available, he didn’t want to break the bank either. “When I looked at buying another house, for the money they were asking I figured I could just build something.”

A two-year search yielded a lot on a busy neighborhood street in central Tucson with no design restrictions. But the site had its own problems. Just 50 feet wide and subject to substantial setback requirements, the lot contained only a 6-inch strip of buildable space. After securing variances from the city and the neighbor next door, the project to erect the 20-foot-wide structure was finally a go.

“I wanted to do something unique,” says Puhler, a South Dakota native and 25-year Tucson resident, and “get the biggest bang for the buck.” Enter Rob Paulus, an independent architect with whom Puhler ran cross-country in high school. For his part, Paulus was grateful to have a client who was willing to take a chance.

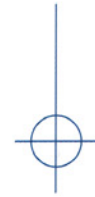
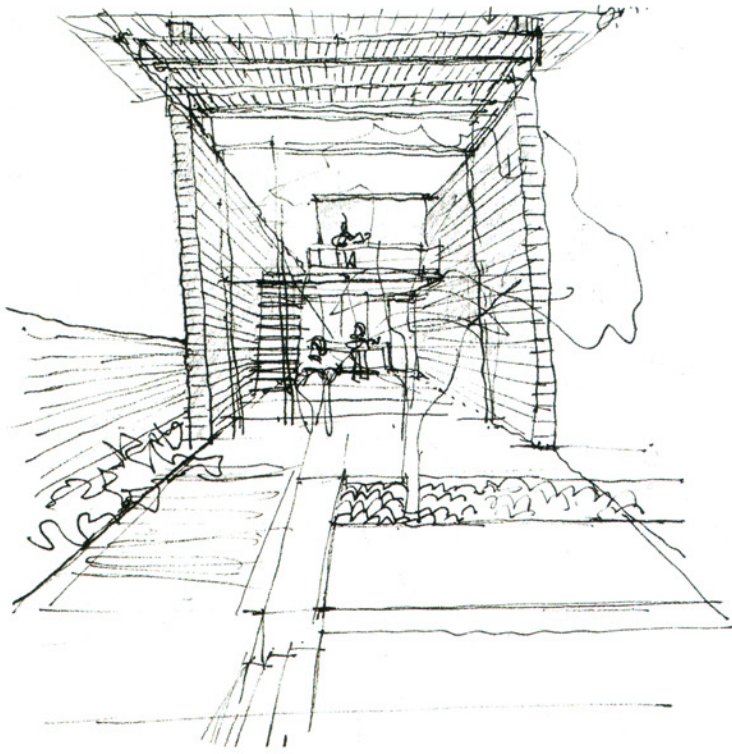
Due to the tight quarters and proximity to the road and neighbors, the ground floor was buried 2 feet below grade and the house was enclosed within a privacy wall. Behind the orange entry gate lies a serene front courtyard.

Sloping slightly downward, a wooden Japanese garden-style bridge leads over a pool of large tan rocks culminating in a Zen-like patio of smooth pebbles. Bright lime green planters wrap the patio’s left edge while the right edge is defined by a patch of greenery watered by a discreet rain pipe. Overhead, a sweeping canopy of parallel white fabric panels strung on tension cables provides shade.

Opposite page: Owner Greg Paulus wanted a simple, modern home to fit his lifestyle.

This page: (above, left) The home features eye-catching cantilevered steps. (above, right)

The upstairs loft features pieces from City Home Furnishings in Tucson.

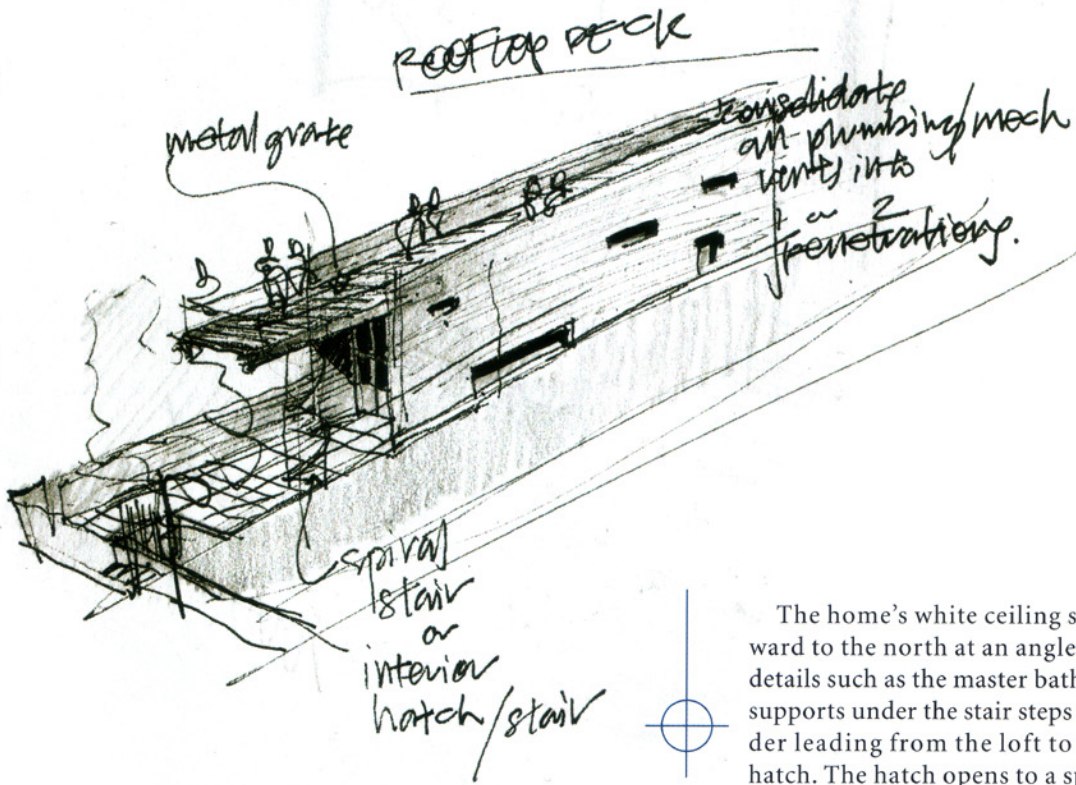


The east and west walls of the home are simple 20-foot-high Integra block stained a dark gray. The north and south façades are solid glass. Inside what Paulus calls the “007” house, in deference to Puhler’s love of gadgets and fast cars, you’ll find two bedrooms, two and a half baths and a total of 1,600 square feet of livable space. The project vibrates with angles, planes and contrasts. “It’s a simple shape, but it allows anything in the room to be that much more articulated,” says Paulus.

The first thing you notice upon entering is the key lime green wall straight ahead, dividing the house in two and defining the rear of the kitchen and the upstairs loft space. Underfoot, the concrete floor is stained a matte brown, echoing the rocks outside, the maple cabinets and eye-catching cantilevered steps climbing the west wall.

The stairs lead to an open loft that can be enclosed for a third bedroom. Behind the green wall, the master bedroom and bath shimmer in soothing northern light.





THE HATCH OPENS TO A SPRAWLING ROOFTOP DECK WITH SWEEPING 360 DEGREE VISTAS OF TUCSON AND THE SCENIC SANTA CATALINA MOUNTAINS.



The home's white ceiling slopes slightly upward to the north at an angle repeated in other details such as the master bath counter, the steel supports under the stair steps and the ship's ladder leading from the loft to an operable roof hatch. The hatch opens to a sprawling roof-top deck with sweeping 360 degree vistas of Tucson and the Santa Catalina mountains.

Back inside, the prominent "sock light" suspended from the 18-foot-high living room ceiling is also a Paulus original. Resembling an icicle, the white fabric tube stretched over circular hoops of varied diameters is weighted by a glass ball at the bottom and lit by a light bulb at the top. The sock light's hoops and glass ball are some of the few circles in the "007" house's angular structure.

A University of Arizona graduate, Paulus has worked in architecture since the day he graduated from high school. After working for firms in Tucson and Los Angeles, Paulus opened Rob Paulus Architect, Ltd. eight years ago. "Living in Los Angeles was fun," he says "but having grown up in the desert, it was great moving back."

As for the clean and minimal design aesthetic, Paulus says in some ways budget restrictions and sunlight considerations combined to make his job easier. "Much of this design is based on the extreme desert sun. It helped shape the building. Because there are fewer choices, it's easier to assemble what the shape is going to be." For example, "the walls go out to stop morning and afternoon sun," says Paulus of the block walls that extend beyond the north and south glass façades.

Having a like-minded client also helped. "It was fun to be on the same page," says Paulus, who compares the house's details to those of a car engine—beautiful because they are functional. The home's details also proved practical and economical. White curtains sewn by Paulus' sister hang on hardware store tension cables with binder rings from Office Depot. Simple double-pane vertical glass fins penetrate the west wall upstairs at regular intervals and glow green as the sun sets.

Puhler, who has lived in the house since it was completed in 2001, says "there's a lot you can do with a small budget if you're creative." Indeed.