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My House

When Roberto Silvestri designed a flat for his actor friend in Rome, he took cues from set designers, not to mention his client's artistic temperament.

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In the oppressive heat of Tucson, Arizona, a modern house that cools itself naturally is especially cool—in both senses of the term.

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What We Saw

Fast cars, slick cars, trick cars, rare cars, race cars, and even an airplane—all were on view at the 53rd annual Concours d'Elegance in Pebble Beach, California.

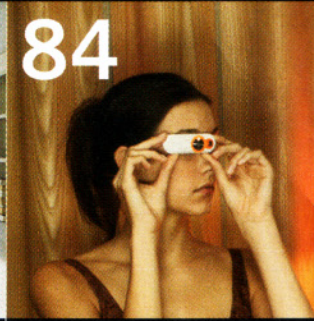
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Holiday Gift Guide

To give is better than to receive? After awhile, anyone fully human will question the question. After examining many of the gifts herein, we know we did.

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Down to every detail, mid-century Danish design seems frozen in time at the home of late architect Finn Juhl—and that is precisely how he wanted it.

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Some ways (sorry, we can't also provide the means) to satisfy any newfound desires for merchandise or the perfect architect to build your tech-savvy home.

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Houses We Love

Here's a tale of romance: When construction took longer than expected, this young couple exchanged vows amidst the sawdust in their future dream house.



Asked by a bachelor friend to build “something contemporary,” Tucson, Arizona, architect Rob Paulus thought about the kind of place that the ultimate bachelor—a certain British Secret Service agent—would want to live in. “I’m a big fan of James Bond and the high-tech stuff,” says Paulus. “But Greg’s not a rich guy, so the goal was to get as much cool stuff as possible for the money. This is 007 on a budget . . . 006.5,” he says with a laugh.

So for his client and friend Greg Puhler, Paulus designed a loft, the quintessential man-about-town quarters. Inspired by a 1950s storefront, the façade of this 1,600-square-foot house is floor-to-ceiling glass.

In cities like New York and Los Angeles, lofts have come to symbolize urban (and urbane) living. Here in the Arizona desert, the sleek pad ratchets up its industrial appeal by throwing sustainability into the mix. The house is passive solar in plan and section and it captures all rainwater from the roof in a sculptural steel pipe gutter that then spills into the courtyard, providing much-needed moisture for desert trees and wildflowers.

“Typically, green homes in Tucson are in the middle of nowhere and require large amounts of fossil fuel just to get to,” explains Paulus. “This house is different in that it is located in the center of town and seeks to marry sustainable features with modern design in an established community. In this sense, it rejects the historic and stylistic character of the neighborhood and forms a building concept more in tune with the desert.”

The design defers in other ways to the environment, where the sun shines 310 days a year and big glass windows can turn a house into a solar cooker. Shielding the glass to the south is a 16-foot overhang. A cloth-paneled canopy keeps the sun out in the summer but allows the lower rays of the winter sun in. The east and west walls are made from well-insulated Integra concrete block, which constitutes “the best low-budget masonry system,” says Paulus. A few horizontal slit windows provide visual contrast to the tall glass walls, while minimizing heat gain. In the spring and fall, Puhler cools the house naturally just by opening the sliding glass doors.

Puhler had spent two years looking for an infill lot for this simple box, partly for the convenience of living in ▶

Greening Arizona

“Sustainable features added a little to the overall cost, but it just makes sense in this climate,” says Paulus. Below: Cantilevered stairs of Baltic birch mounted on steel fins, and evidence of the bachelor in residence.





town but also to avoid dealing with the design review board of a suburban housing development. "My parents live in one, and they have to get permission to paint their gate a different color," he says.

The location of the 50-by-132.5-foot lot was such that setbacks and future right-of-way had to be considered. Once those were factored in, it would have allowed only a two-foot-wide house, and it also had a busy four-lane road bordering it. It's no wonder the lot had remained vacant for years and was jokingly referred to as a bus stop. Paulus had to apply for variances with the city of Tucson, which granted them and eased the setback issue. The resulting width of the house is 18 feet and 11 inches.

To create some privacy, Paulus sunk the building two feet below ground level and put in a walled courtyard. "We wanted to temper the sound a bit, but we didn't want the wall outside to be overbearing," he says. From the street, the wall is only six feet high. But inside, the eight feet of wall creates a sense of seclusion. It's a technique that Paulus got from modernist architect Paul Rudolph, who was fond of changing levels in his designs. "This house couldn't have a crazy floor plan, so changing things vertically helps create a sense of drama," he explains.

Bachelor-pad references aside, the space has been designed so that later it can be reconfigured into a more conventional three-bedroom home, for resale purposes—or for a larger household. But the only changes Puhler is planning on now are to get a proper catchment tank for rainwater, and possibly some spiffier duds. "I probably need to get new clothes to match the house," he jokes. ■

"So often it seems anything that is at all green ends up looking like some drunk cousins put it together," says Rob Paulus.

Above: Chartreuse walls punch up the gray masonry walls and concrete floor. The kitchen countertop is plastic laminate;

the range and refrigerator are by GE Monogram. The black leather chaise longue is by Le Corbusier. **E** p.150



This Garden Rocks

The minimalist garden in the courtyard fits the architecture, but also the desert climate and the client's carefree lifestyle.

"We assumed that Greg wouldn't want to take care of stuff," says Paulus, "so we went with the rocks."

Inside Puhler's courtyard, a raised gravel deck creates a Zen garden effect. Next to the deck is a moat of boulders (at left); when it rains, water flows from the rooftop pipe into the moat. There has been enough water for desert wildflowers, which bloom among the boulders. A native mesquite tree, selected for its fast growth and shading properties, also lives in the courtyard.

Originally, the distinctive rocks had come

from the Tucson Mountains just west of town, a range known for its beautiful, multi-colored, and sharp-edged rock. They were reclaimed from a job site that had required a lot of digging and would have ended up being dumped somewhere, but, as Paulus explains, "we were fortunate to get it from our contractor, have it delivered for free, and then use it to great effect as the feature of the landscape. In some ways, it put the ruggedness and texture of the desert back into the city."

Puhler, who tends his rugged landscape with a watering can during the hot summer, concurs. "It's just a really peaceful and relaxing place." —L.L.