

RD

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN



FOR ARCHITECTS AND BUILDERS
OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES

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Shape Shifter



Vroom With A View

If the Case Study modernists were alive today, how would they have felt about the ancient Japanese concept of wabi-sabi? Perhaps, they might have embraced the idea. The acceptance and celebration of imperfection rises to an art form when all that surrounds it is carefully considered and executed. And it may be at its most beautiful when the objects allowed to weather and age are manmade, nature reasserting her dominion over them.

Surveying this house in the Catalina foothills of the Sonoran Desert in Tucson, you can track the bread crumbs back to the midcentury masters—but the landscape left wild and the steel structure left untreated trace back even further in time and distance.

Architect Rob Paulus, AIA, referred to the houses of Neutra and Schindler when he started thinking about this project. His assignment was liberal, but had some built-in constraints. The client's budget was very tight, the program somewhat unusual, and the site required a gentle touch. Even more intimidating, the client's father was an architect of some local renown; his heyday was the midcentury period.

"The client didn't have any preconceived notions of what the house should look like, but he did give us a six-page document of things he wanted," says Rob. "He gave us a crack at the concept, and his father took a crack at it, too. Our concepts were very similar. He was very modern."

The major twist to the program was that it should accommodate more cars

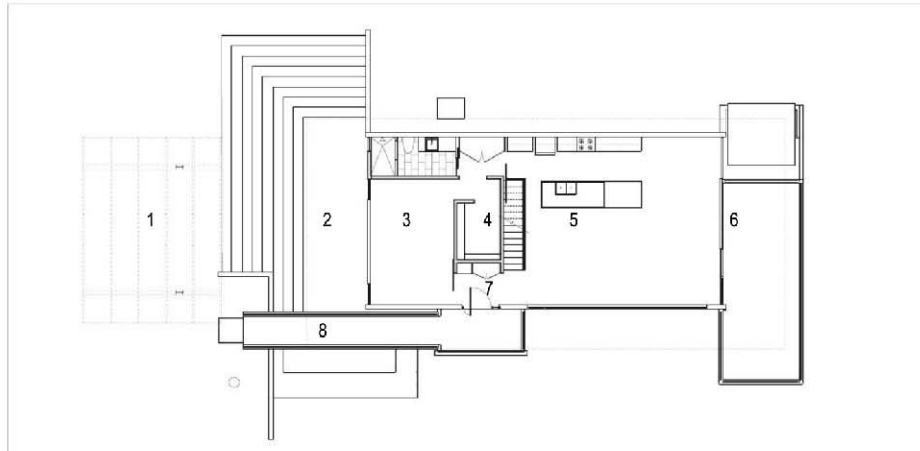
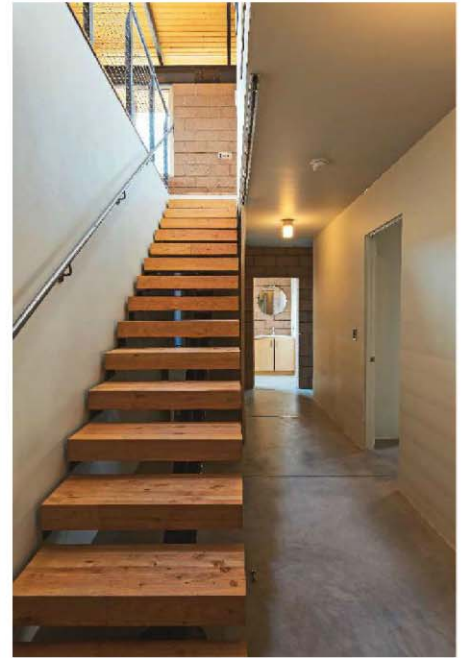
than human occupants. The client, an electrical engineer ("the most sought-after in the area," says Rob) and a bachelor, collects muscle cars and wanted them housed, well, in the house. He also wanted his bedroom on the main floor and room for an office and guests. There were views to harness as well, and ones to edit, according to Rob.

The budget drove the choice of materials—block walls, standard wood framing for interior walls, laminate kitchen counters, concrete floors in the lower level, and mini-splits for heating and cooling. There's lots of beautiful steel, but it's uncoated against the elements. "Initially we were going to paint the steel, but the cost precluded it," says Rob. "That was fortuitous. Over time it will rust out, but here it's so dry that

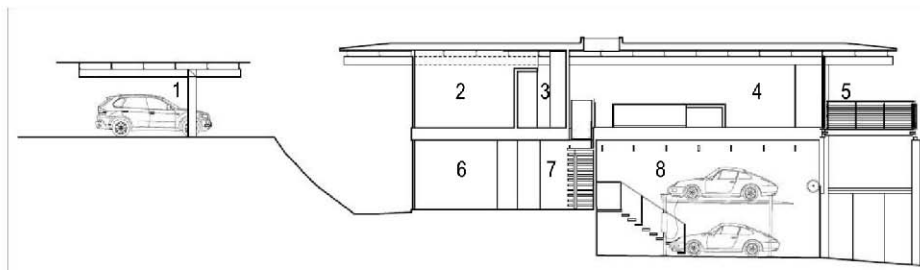


Opposite: DWC house is a glowing beacon atop its craggy site, like a ranger tower keeping watch. Left and below left: The open plan makes the most of its square footage. Bachelor-pad-style, the master bedroom opens to the great room with sliding doors. Views to the three surrounding mountain ranges are best *al fresco* on the balconies.





MAIN LEVEL | 1. Carport | 2. Lower Courtyard | 3. Master Bedroom | 4. Closet | 5. Living/Kitchen/Dining
6. Deck | 7. Foyer | 8. Entry Bridge



SECTION | 1. Carport | 2. Bedroom | 3. Closet | 4. Living/Kitchen | 5. Deck | 6. Bedroom/Office
7. Stair/Utility | 8. Garage

Above left and opposite: The double-height garage can hold up to four cars with a lift. But the owner uses the carport, entering the house across a steel bridge. Earth removed for site work was reused on another project; rocks were saved, screened, and returned. *Above:* An oculus window lights the floating stair from above.



it will last at least 40 to 50 years, and is thick enough not to compromise structure. Sometimes if you have too much money, it gets spent on stuff you don't really need. Here, we stuck with three or four kinds of materials.

It takes a special builder who can make that limited palette sing; Ted Kline of Mega Trend Construction is such a builder. "That's just the way it is in Tucson. We have these teeny budgets to make art with," says Rob. "We work hard to find the aspect that will get builders charged up about the work, and then we get a better product. The beauty comes from the precision of typical building materials." It's obvious Kline rose to the occasion.

Strategic Outlets

Precision of everything was required on this job. The client's six-page wish list included minute details about outlet heights. But that's what you get when you work with an electrical engineer—or an engineer of any variety. He was also concerned about energy efficiency and making good use of the views his acre-lot offered. There are vistas of three mountain ranges available. But the surrounding housing is less than picturesque: "There's only a small measure of quality to the houses in the neighborhood," says Rob delicately. So, just opening the house to all the views and Tucson's hot climate was not going to work well.

A deep overhanging roof and local, custom-made windows and sliding doors were part of the solution. "It's a commercial window company that was not afraid of silicone joints," Rob quips. Where the views are not optimal, "gun-slit" windows bring in highly curated slivers of light and scenery. And an oculus skylight beams light into the stair hall.

But the tour de force is the roof system that appears to float above the solid structure. "It's essentially two walls and then beams that cantilever out to support the structure," Rob explains. "The secondary structure and the channels it creates become the clerestory. There are 2-by-10s that are ripped. And a spray foam roof that



Above: The carport echoes the materials and shapes of the main house, but with a wabi-sabi, rustic flare. The green stucco, inspired by the work of the client's architect father, is more wasabi than anything else.

DWC House

Tucson, Ariz.

ARCHITECT/INTERIOR DESIGN: Rob Paulus, AIA, LEED AP, Rob Paulus Architects, Tucson, Ariz.

BUILDER: Ted Kline, Mega Trend Construction, Tucson

BUILDING AREA: 1,837 square feet

DECK AREA: 375 square feet

DOUBLE-HEIGHT GARAGE: 670 square feet

SITE SIZE: 1.06 acres

PHOTOGRAPHER: Liam Frederick

KEY PRODUCTS

WINDOWS/DOORS: Arcadia

SKYLIGHT: Bristolite

STRUCTURE: Trus Joist

HVAC: Mitsubishi

INSULATION: Icynene

WATERPROOFING: DuPont Tyvek

DECKING: Cali Bamboo

APPLIANCES: Whirlpool, Kenmore

COUNTERS: Wilsonart

FAUCETS/FITTINGS: Delta

KITCHEN SINK: Elkay

BATHROOM LAVS: Ronbow

TOILETS: TOTO

TILE: Daltile

LIGHTING: Lightolier, Artemide Tolomeo, Gotham, WAC Lighting

PAINT: Dunn Edwards

insulates, but then the slope is perfectly flat.” That’s what you can do when you don’t have snow.

Still, Rob admits the house has a somewhat “cave-like” feeling, an effect he says the client sought. “To get the really big view, you have to walk through the house and onto the deck. We like playing with dark and light, tension and release. It creates an emotional effect.”

Under Desert Sky

Although living space is confined to two floors, Rob was able to move some dirt and rock to carve out a third tier for the double-height garage. Eventually, the client will install a lift system so he can accommodate four cars in the space of two. Currently, the area is used as storage for his collection of architecture books, magazines, and other memorabilia inherited from his father, who sadly passed away during the project.

For now, he parks his daily driver under a carport Rob designed for guest use. It harkens to the materials of the house, but is even more intentionally “sabi,” or worn. “We purposely wanted it to float free of the house. Originally it was supposed to be made of solar panels, but we had extra steel, so that became the structure. We wanted the steel to have that looseness and spikiness; it kind of returns it to the desert.”

The entry sequence moves from the carport, past a courtyard formed by retaining walls, and over a steel bridge to the house. Here, the exterior elevation’s stucco is a bold chartreuse, in contrast with the muted, integral color block walls. The wall color was the client’s choice, says Rob. “I was thinking white or even black. But it was a nostalgic choice for the client, whose father used a lot of green and purple—it’s almost an ode to him. And it echoes the cactus.”