



# ARIZONA AESTHETIC

FOR HIS OWN HOME,  
A PHOENIX ARCHITECT  
ADDS A TWIST TO  
TRADITIONAL  
REGIONAL DESIGN

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This page and opposite: A strong repetition of forms and materials distinguishes Clyde Rousseau's home. A fish pond wraps around the Arizona room, and a pool zigzags across a corner of the yard to preserve space. Budget-conscious and creative, the homeowner topped a metal trash can with a mosaic surface to serve as a patio table.



*Around these parts* we like to boast about our outdoor rooms. But few among us can say our outdoor space is the main room in the house.

Clyde Rousseau can.

He can say it because that's the way he designed his central Phoenix house; and he can say it because it's true. Step through his front door and you'll find yourself headed right back outside again. A small foyer enclosed on three sides leads directly to a space that is as much a patio as it is a room—an outdoor room with an indoor aesthetic.



Above and opposite: Draperies add softness to this outdoor room and block sun and wind as needed. Furnishings are a mix of old and new. Flooring here and on the porch outside the master bedroom (below) is a combination of quarry tile and blue ceramic tile set in a pinwheel pattern.

Covered overhead and tiled underfoot, the Arizona Room, as Rousseau calls it, is open-sided, richly draped and comfortably furnished. It is outfitted with a television, a gas fireplace, a phone and an evaporative cooler. This is an outdoor room that can be used any month, any day, any time. Just beyond is the remainder of Rousseau's outdoor living space. It includes an open courtyard, fish pond, lawn area, swimming pool, barbecue, porch, and a hot tub tucked in a niche just outside the master bathroom.

"The design of this house is the antithesis of the central-hall Colonial," says Rousseau. "There is no sequence of rooms. There is one way to enter the courtyard from the street, but four ways to get back into the house. My intention was to minimize the size of the interiors in order to maximize the outdoor space. There's a balance of scale between the spaces; one was not sacrificed at the expense of the other.

"The architecture is not a well-defined style," he adds. "It's my interpretation of what's appropriate to the specific site and climate, and also what's appropriate for the user: me."

A native of Phoenix, Rousseau grew up on a farm on the Valley's west side. (You can still buy Rousseau Farming Company carrots at local markets, he says.) He eventually left for the East





Opposite: In the kitchen, "freebie" tiles were put to good use as countertop trim around the stove, and as decorative accents on the cabinet sides. Leftover wallpaper set between strips of wood creates decorative molding. Cabinetry here and throughout the house is a combination of jitoba and sheet metal. • Above: Two views of the living room highlight the soaring ceiling and illustrate the continuity of materials from outdoors to indoors. The stairway is made from copper pipe and perforated aluminum. A strip of original hallway carpeting from the Arizona Biltmore hotel was cleaned and framed, and now serves as artwork in the living room. Rousseau says the large piece also helped reduce the echo in the lofty space. Artwork on stairwell is by R.L. Nielsen.

Coast, where he earned his master's degree in architecture at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and then worked in New York. Rousseau returned to Phoenix in 1995, opened Rousseau Design, and became reacquainted with his hometown and its network of canals.

"I've always been intrigued by the canals. I used to ride my bike along them, and I always thought they were a neglected resource," the architect says. "They break up the grid of the city. They're the arteries of life."

One day he happened upon a for sale sign for a lot on the edge of a canal. He bought the property, then spent more than a year and a half designing and building a house to put on it, in between doing "real" projects for clients.

"The design follows the conflicting geometries of the street

grid and the canal," Rousseau points out. "There is a splayed effect that you can actually see from the courtyard. It's very much built to the site and with respect to its place in central Phoenix.

"My intent was to respect the old Phoenix vernacular but not ape it," he continues. "It's traditionally motivated forms and detailing with a contemporary take on materials and spatial relationships."

Painted concrete block and brick detailing are among elements the architect perceived as being reflective of the area. He added a twist by using such industrial materials as I-beams for lintels and porch supports, copper piping for railings, and corrugated metal as roofing. Turquoise, soft yellow and minty green are used to accent various architectural features, including lintels and porch beams.

All of the materials and colors used outside are repeated



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inside. White concrete block walls define rooms, turquoise I-beams cap windows and doors, copper pipes serve as stair railing and curtain rods, and bricks cover stair risers. Stained-concrete floors run throughout the house, as does a rich dark wood called jitoba, used for doors and cabinets. This visual continuity, as well as each room’s relationship to the courtyard, make the home’s 1,650 square feet of living space seem like much more. A variety of levels, from an upstairs office to a sunken kitchen, also contributes to the sense of spaciousness.

What the rooms may lack in size, they make up for in a wealth of design detail and innovative ideas for maximizing small spaces.

The ceiling of the little living room, for example, soars to almost 20 feet. This lends the illusion of space, even though the room fits only a standard sofa, chair, small storage cabinet and coffee table. The barrel-vault ceiling, which also stretches over the office loft, is trimmed in a combination of jitoba and pressed tin, and was textured by artist Terry Decker with the leaf from a

queen palm. The same pressed tin/jitoba combination appears over the bed in the master suite. Wherever possible, Rousseau included built-ins to maximize square footage. The television is built into a wall of the stairwell, for example, and the master suite includes several built-in storage spaces.

A lover of tile, Rousseau used the material as much as possible. The guest bathroom is completely covered in white tile, from the floor on up the walls, onto the ceiling, and into the niche of the skylight. Navy blue tiles accent the sea of white. In the kitchen, mosaic tiles serve as a backsplash behind the sink, and as the surface surrounding the stove and on the dining table. Even the toe-kick under the built-in booth is tiled. The door surround leading to the master bathroom, as well as the vanity and wall behind the sink, are covered in glistening glass mosaic tile, a material Rousseau decided he couldn’t live without.

“I was working under budget constraints, so the glass mosaic tile I used in the master bathroom was kind of a splurge,” he

recalls. “But sometimes you just have to tell yourself to go for it.”

“It was nice to design for myself,” he concludes. “This house suits me. I feel comfortable living here.”

*See Resource Guide.*

**Opposite:** Located off the living room, the master bedroom features four windows facing the courtyard. All are dressed in a combination of rich brown velvet and sheer fabric found at a discount store. • **This page, clockwise from top, left:** Rousseau designed the headboard and nightstand. Built-in cabinets hold a television, clothes and other necessities without taking up floor space. Above the bed is a light fixture made from part of a bronze Art Deco door surround from a bank. A crackled ceiling treatment is trimmed with wood and pressed tin. • The efficient master bathroom glistens with glass mosaic tile. Copper piping appears again as a towel bar. • The hot tub is located outside the master bathroom, and is just steps away from the pool.

