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DAVID MICHAEL MILLER GIVES A SLEEK CONTEMPORARY HOUSE WARM INTERIORS THAT EMBRACE THE ARIZONA LANDSCAPE

photography by MATTHEW MILLMAN text by NORA BURBA TRULSSON

"The connection to the desert is close and intimate," says designer David Michael Miller of a Scottsdale, Arizona, house he collaborated on with Allen + Philp Architects/Interiors. The landscape, seen through the living room's glass walls, inspired the interior's muted palette.



The moment David Michael Miller set foot on his clients' pristine desert property in Scottsdale, Arizona, he could visualize exactly how their new hillside house should look. "The most compelling part of this house is its site," says Miller, a Scottsdale interior designer known for his pared-down approach to residential interiors. "We knew it was all about pulling back and not letting the house become visually overwhelming."

Miller first collaborated with his clients twenty-five years ago when the couple asked him to design their previous residence in Phoenix. "We'd always wanted a desert home," explains the wife, "and when we bought this lot, there was no question that David would be the designer. He also helped us choose an architect."

After an interview process, the couple

and Miller selected Scottsdale-based Allen + Philp Architects/Interiors, confident that the team understood the desired minimalist aesthetic that would keep the emphasis on the surrounding nature. "This was a great opportunity for us to do a contemporary desert house," explains architect Mark Philp, co-founder of the firm, which specializes in hospitality projects such as the Hotel Valley Ho in Scottsdale. "We don't do many homes, but when we do, we like to make them just as powerful and rejuvenating as a hospitality experience."

Philp and architectural designer Jonathan Heilman inspected the eighteen-acre site to determine the best—and least obtrusive—location for the house. "There aren't many flat spots on this hillside," says Philp; he and Heilman chose a saddle midway up the slope from the street. They opted to break the 8,500-square-foot mass of the house into two components, nestling the private quarters into the hillside and cantilevering the public living areas, pavilion-like, above the downward slope of the property. An elevated hallway bridges the two sides of the main house.

"In true modernist form, the house's crisp, horizontal lines and its sense of transparency contrast with the site," says



The house's entry staircase leads to the open living room. Miller furnished the space with clean-lined Holly Hunt pieces, including a sectional sofa, low table, wing chair and side table. Fabric from Great Plains by Holly Hunt covers the sofa, and a Randolph & Hein hide adds texture to the wing chair, **opposite, top** "The steep site informed the house," says architect Mark Philp. The structure sits on a natural saddle on the hillside.



"We wanted to create a dining composition that was simple and comfortable," says Miller. "But it needed a subdued quality that wouldn't compete with the spectacular desert backdrop." Holly Hunt's Soho Armed dining chairs, upholstered with Great Plains leather, surround a custom table by Gulassa. The bronze sculptures are by Gene Summers.



The streamlined kitchen features Bulthaup cabinetry made with ebonized oak and brushed stainless steel. "The front cabinets and sitting area [far right] are held off the floor so that light can illuminate the surface," says architectural designer Jonathan Heilman. Frosted-glass panels conceal the entry staircase. The bar chairs are from Holly Hunt. **opposite, top** Furniture from Henry Hall Designs outfits the pool terrace.



Philp. The structure's flat roofline has deep overhangs to protect window walls from summer sun, while the exterior materials of sand-hued plaster, rock accent walls, zinc and steel provide a link to the land, notes Philp.

When the front door opens, sculptural bronze stairs are marked by a rock-veneer wall on one side and scrim-like frosted glass panels on the other. The steps lead up to the public half of the house, where Miller suggested a color palette of stone, khaki and ebony, sparked with accents of Cherokee red, to play off sandblasted fir ceilings, integrally colored concrete flooring and subtly mottled Venetian plaster walls. "We wanted the interiors to be warm and quiet," says Miller. "We didn't want them to compete with the building itself."

To that end, the designer chose furnishings with spare lines and simple accessories. In the living room he paired a Holly Hunt sectional sofa and a contemporary hide-covered wing chair to create a comfortable sitting area near the zinc-clad fireplace. Leather-covered armchairs, also from Holly Hunt, encircle Gulassa's round mahogany-and-patinated-steel table in the glass-enclosed dining alcove. Window walls further blur the boundary between the rocky desert and soothing interiors in the east-facing master bedroom, where Miller designed a platform bed and a sleek credenza in which a flat-screen television can be raised and lowered.

The outdoor spaces were also carefully considered. Phoenix landscape architect Steve Martino revegetated the site, using mostly plant materials like those found on the property to create the appearance that the house was simply dropped into place without disturbing the land. "This house is an object in the desert," says Miller. "But it also has a quality that makes it appear to emerge from the landscape. It seems to belong to its site, as though the land and building were destined to meet." +



In the master bath, a raised Douglas fir plinth sets off a Hoesch tub with a Vola tub filler. The Valentin wall lamp is from Holly Hunt. **opposite, top** Deep overhangs shade the master bedroom's glass walls. Miller designed a platform bed and a low console that doesn't distract from the view. Bolsters are made with Bergamo fabric, and the rug is from Hokanson.

Arizona desert contemporary

DESIGN DETAILS

Mark Philp and Jonathan Heilman of Allen + Philp Architects/Interiors designed a residence that treads lightly on its desert site. "The home is divided into distinct uses," says Philp. "The pavilion-like entertainment area has wide views. Private areas anchor into the hillside."

