

CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Historical Ibizan architecture meets the Sonoran Desert in this Scottsdale family home.

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Architecture: Rolf Blakstad, Blakstad Ibiza Design Consultants Interior Design: David Michael Miller, David Michael Miller Associates
Home Builder: Eric Linthicum, Linthicum Custom Builders Landscape Architecture: Clayton Miller, GreeylPickett

The mantra “form follows function” may have molded the concept of modernist design, but the idea is an ancient one. Our ancestors, too, fashioned simple structures responding to local climates and materials—like the iconic finca farmhouses of Ibiza. Built for the windswept Mediterranean island’s dry landscape using regional stone, clay and timber, these humble domiciles echo present-day sensibilities with their flat roofs, modular massing and whitewashed walls.

This architectural expression proved perfect for one couple dreaming of building a contemporary-leaning abode in North Scottsdale. Their neighborhood’s strict guidelines, however, limited homes to traditional Mediterranean styles. The solution clicked into place when their builder, Eric Linthicum, found Ibizan residential designer Rolf Blakstad, famed for his historically rooted modernism distilling the finca’s traditional hallmarks. “It’s this modern take on a Mediterranean form that our desert environment would accept in a genuine way,” Linthicum notes. Blakstad embraced the challenge, working closely with interior designer David Michael Miller to translate ideas of Ibizan warm-weather living to the Sonoran Desert. “It was fun exploring the origins of this architectural style through a contemporary lens,” Miller says.

The home’s single-story design maintains a reserved profile, unfolding in a “series of cubes that reflect a building naturally growing to accommodate a family’s needs,” Blakstad describes. The structure nestles into the surrounding hillside, buttressed by 6-foot stacked walls built from stone excavated on-site. Instead of Ibiza’s limewashed façades, however, the plaster exterior became a “warmer beige color that felt more appropriate for our desert,” Linthicum adds. Working drawings by architect Vivian Ayala, formerly of Candelaria Design Associates, further tweaked the design where needed to fit the neighborhood’s requirements, like the obligatory tile roof carefully pitched low to retain the style’s modular lines.

Inside, the couple’s daily living concentrates around a central great room framed by Blakstad’s signature bevel-edged columns. From there, the layout expands to other entertaining areas, including a detached guest casita. Alfresco moments in between include a pergola by the infinity-edged pool lined with olive trees, a dining courtyard with

a reclaimed European limestone fountain, and the couple’s private en suite spa patio complete with plunge pool. Landscape architect Clayton Miller filled these intervals with cacti, native grasses and desert perennials nestled amid rock beds of local DC Ranch stone, which “reinforced that feeling of the surrounding mountainside,” he explains.

Miller, in turn, favored finishes that would amplify the home’s natural milieu, reinterpreting Blakstad’s refined use of Ibizan materials “in a more desert context, which worked beautifully,” he observes. The authentic three-coat plaster walls, on the other hand, needed no translation, hand-troweled velvet smooth for a “subtle movement and depth that you can’t get from paint.” For Blakstad’s geometric ceiling beams inspired by Ibiza’s exposed timber supports, Miller chose thick Douglas fir bleached and stained taupe blond. “We didn’t want anything too serious and dark, because we needed this soft, mellow transition from room to room,” he explains. European white oak infuses similar sunbaked shades into the millwork and portions of the floor.

Other areas feature more contemporary white concrete flooring, hand-polished to reveal delicate cumulus patterns that complement the textural craftsmanship of the home’s Old World-style materials. Meanwhile, the team “deliberately made the kitchen a purely modern element amid this softer architectural environment,” Miller explains, pointing to the seamless oak cabinetry and steel vent hood suspended from the skylight above.

The designer fleshed out the interior by swathing everything in desert shades of cream, ochre and goldenrod. Furnishings have clean, simple lines but embrace unpolished tactility by highlighting rich wood tones along with linen, cotton and wool upholstery. “A house like this just thirsted for natural fibers,” Miller notes. Area rugs follow suit, with both vintage and modern pieces featuring subtle geometric patterns that recall traditional Moroccan weaves. An eclectic mix of curios from around the world—like Indonesian bamboo fishing baskets, 18th-century French terra-cotta olive oil jugs and antique Spanish limestone planters—adds layers of handmade history.

The successful translation from centuries-old Mediterranean style to contemporary Arizona design is proof positive that simple, landscape-centric architecture is eternal. “I think we’ve come full circle,” Blakstad muses. “We’re becoming aware that we can use this shared ancestral knowledge of home and adapt it for modern living.” ■



A Liaigre table and James Perse stools flesh out the courtyard dining space. Above hangs a row of ceramic L'Aviva Home pendants. A set of 18th-century French olive oil vessels from Studio Ressource accents the display shelving.



Above: Perched atop a Marc Phillips rug, Jasper lounge chairs and a Formations sofa make the family room ideal for lounging. An Andrianna Shamaris teak bowl adorns the custom coffee tables. The adjacent TV lift, crafted by Allaire, Inc., conceals the television when not in use.

Opposite: Crowning the airy foyer is a Blackman Cruz chandelier; a vintage rug and alder-and-iron Formations table anchor the space. In the corner is an antique limestone planter from Studio Ressource.



In the living room, comfort comes in pairs, from the facing Gregorius Pineo sofas to the Marmol Radziner lounge chairs to the matching plaster Blackman Cruz floor lamps. A Lucca Studio bench rests between the custom coffee table and fireplace.





Above: Set behind a custom table and Gregorius Pineo chairs, a Meghan Morrison painting takes pride of place in the dining room. Lucca Studio chandeliers and a set of rattan-and-bamboo fish traps from Mimi London add texture.

Opposite: Contrasting against the home's old-world finishes, the kitchen leans modern, featuring whitewashed cabinets with quartz countertops and a walnut bar, all by bulthaup Scottsdale. A Gaggenau cooktop and KWC faucet are seamlessly integrated. In the adjacent breakfast nook are Roman and Williams Guild chairs and a Gregorius Pineo lantern.



Above: Made for luxuriating, the primary bathroom is centered around a Hoesch freestanding tub and marble-columned shower that opens to a private courtyard. A Holland & Sherry wool rug and Kevin Walz for Ralph Pucci daybed create an inviting lounge area.

Opposite: In the primary bedroom, a Holland & Sherry rug joins a bed, nightstand and glass lantern, all by Gregorius Pineo. Diane Silver's *Searching for Connections 1* at right and Carrie Marill's *Astral Dawn* on the back wall add pops of color.





Next to the pool by Phoenician Pool Construction, James Perse seating and a Liaigre coffee table create a dreamy gathering area under the pergola. A Perennials outdoor flat-weave rug helps define the space.

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