

hyperwest

american residential architecture on the edge

Alan Hess

Photography by Alan Weintraub

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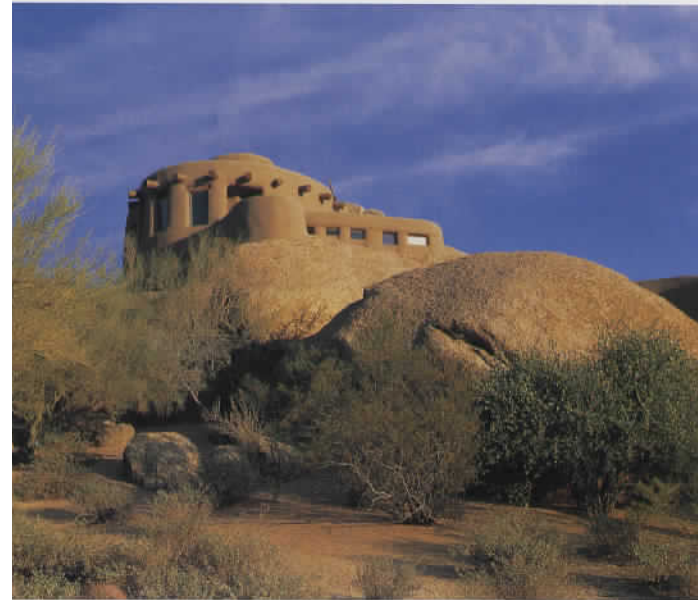
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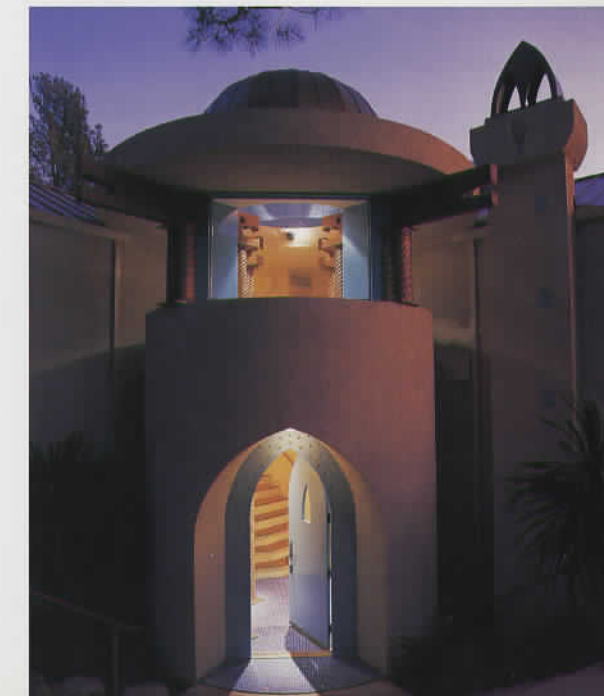
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ABOVE The angular laundry-room window is as much a part of the composition as every other opening in this iconoclastic home. A hanging corrugated panel detached a few inches from the wall allows light into the second-level master bath.

William Bruder

Hill-Sheppard House, Phoenix, Arizona

This is a tough, moody house. Built in 1992, it is located in the center of sprawling Phoenix, but it has the dusty, rustic feel of a shack in the middle of the desert nowhere. It plays with interpenetrating space and structure in the manner of R.M. Schindler, but it also has the populist feel of a recreational vehicle. In short, it is a house of contradictions – the ideal Western house.

The front gate, hidden around a corner, leads to a flight of stairs that looks and feels like a natural desert wash; irregular stone steps are lined with gutters like seeps. High, narrow concrete-block walls evoke a box canyon. The entrance court – one of three distinct outdoor areas – is a dry garden with bright yellow walls.

Entry to the house passes through a wall of glass. To the left are the tall living room and kitchen, in a trapezoidal wing. The pool terrace on one side and the backyard on the other are landscaped as pieces torn from the virgin desert; concrete-block walls with weeping mortar cancel out the neat orderliness of high-design and usher in the raw utilitarian vernacular West.

The unromanticized galvanized corrugated siding is as austere as the landscaping. The house is a real desert home – not prettified with adobe walls but tough, powerful and liberated.

TOP LEFT Trapezoidal forms break the house out of the ordinary. Irregular flagstone and native plants create a spare but evocative landscape. Wide metal overhangs provide shade and add depth to the interior spaces. RIGHT Outdoor stairs lead to the third-floor roof deck and its spectacular view of Squaw Mountain in the center of Phoenix.

