

Desert Living

INTERIORS • ARCHITECTURE • ENTERTAINING • FASHION

AT HOME IN ARIZONA



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Desert Living

[CLASS OF AZ & OUR HOMES]

> 50 **class of az** Inspired by *the party* of the last century—Truman Capote's 1966 Black & White Ball—Desert Living captures a photographic showcase of the Valley's eclectic, prolific, and prominent residents for its Class of AZ 2002.

> 62 **interiors** The Far East arrives in the desert of the West. One North Scottsdale couple has fused Eastern art with Western design to create a contemporary desert dwelling fit to house their world-class collection of Asian artworks and artifacts.

> 68 **fashion** In a twist that turns the painter into the canvas, a few Valley artists take a break from their day jobs to strut their stuff in the latest fall fashions.

> 76 **architecture** Taking full advantage of mountain vistas and city views, New York architect Bartholomew Voorsanger designed a stunning home north of Tucson.

> 84 **space invaders** After leaving his desert studio in distant New River, renowned architect Will Bruder decided to join in the revitalization of Downtown Phoenix.

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CLASS OF AZ 2002
AT WORK WITH WILL BRUDER
NEW FALL FASHIONS
REBUILDING SCOTTSDALE'S VALLEY HO
INTERIORS: WEST MEETS EAST



Hard at work, bruder surrounds himself with the images and memorabilia that inspire him.

A SIMPLE PLAN

Renowned local architect **will bruder** recently sold his studio on the outskirts of town and designed his new sanctuary in the heart of Downtown Phoenix. **By Dawson Fearnow and photography by Brad Reed**

FOR THE LAST THREE DECADES, THE DESIGNS of architect will bruder have redefined modern desert living, pushing the status quo and bringing simple beauty to our cluttered architectural landscape. More important, his impressive portfolio, highlighted by the monumental Burton Barr Central Library, has brought acclaim and international recognition to the Valley. Yet, despite the variety and constantly evolving nature of his nearly 400 commissions, every bruder design of the last 25 plus years has one thing in common—it was conceived, sketched, and willed to life from inside his former studio/residence on the outskirts of the Valley.

Now bruder has relocated, having sold his pristine parcel of land in New River and moved to Downtown Phoenix. After decades working as an artist in the desert, bruder says he suddenly “woke up to the reality of the city and the importance of being there.” His reasons were practical. His staff commuted a combined 1,200 miles a day, and increased traffic congestion made it difficult to get to meetings and the airport.

“Phoenix has reached a point where its extension into the desert is really unfortunate,” bruder says. His adopted hometown of New River, a once

isolated outpost, has been virtually absorbed by the ever-expanding Valley. “It has compromised the ability of our city to be a well-functioning, 21st-century metropolis. There’s too much sprawl with too much void in between.”

Upon deciding to uproot his entire operation, bruder started with the premise that he wanted to be as close as possible to 0,0 on the map grid, perhaps in an historic warehouse district.

“At first blush, I thought that [my] artist studio would be a converted warehouse or loft environment, with a skylight and this interior world,” he says. However, after thinking about his staff and “the unforeseen hours we work to accomplish wonderful things,” bruder decided a warehouse district, lacking the security of constant street life and activity, was impractical. Also, after nearly three decades of looking across a landscape, he realized he needed a view to the outside world. Ultimately, bruder found the perfect solution in the form of the 111 West Monroe Building, a 19-story glass and aluminum gem rising above the intersection of 1st Avenue and Monroe Street.

“It’s a ’60s building,” bruder says, “a good Modernist building, designed by Dick Drover. It’s a bit



of Mies van der Rohe, a bit of Lever House, a bit of Niemeyer in South America, Corbusier—it has good genes.”

At the time, the entire fourth floor was abandoned and “a total disaster area,” he says. But where others see an empty shell, an architect sees an irresistible challenge—a blank canvas.

“Nothing was here,” bruder says, “and in the nothingness was the vision of an idea.”

Bruder explored the space, walking from the central elevator core to the extreme northeast corner (where his desk now sits) and looked out the window. “I could see a little bit of the Central Library,” he says, “lots of traffic and streetlights, and on a clear day I can see out to the same New River plateau that I looked at for 30 years.” Seduced by the poetry of the vista and the purity of the building, bruder called off the search.

Next bruder, serving as his own client for the first time in nearly 30 years, sat down with his team and studied the space.

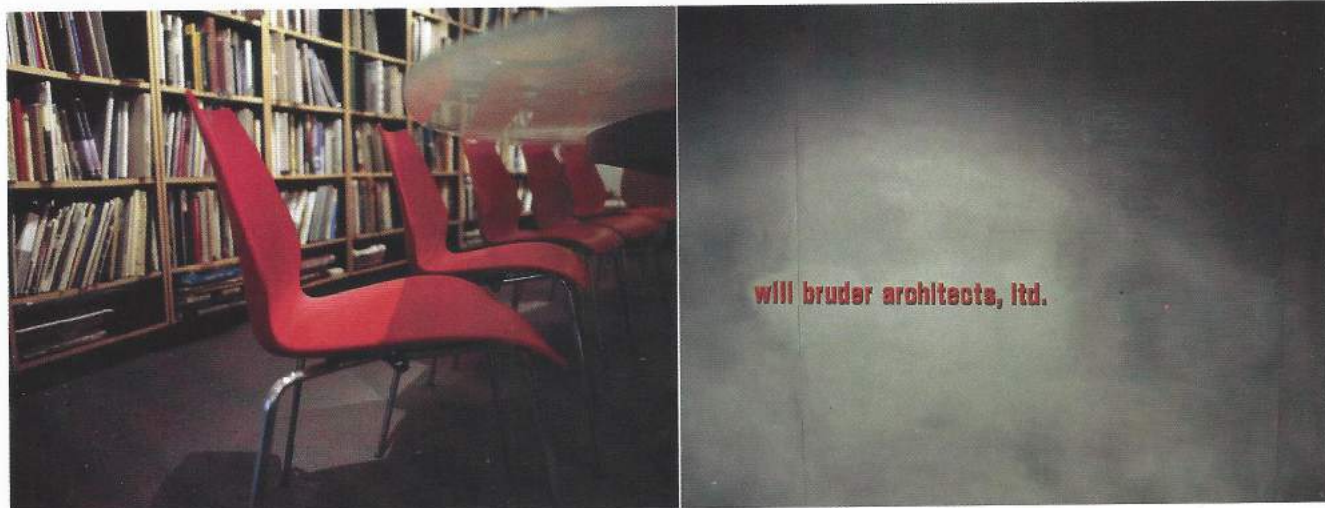
He sought the inherent integrity, or bones, of the building. Eventually they determined three integral elements had to be preserved: The expansive, north-facing window wall, the concrete floor plane, and the unfinished ceiling. The window wall—a rhythmic series of glass panels that travels from ceiling to work surface uninterrupted—was left as is.

It’s quite wonderful,” bruder says, “and creates a really nice, mysterious quality of light all day long.” The second integral feature, the concrete floor, was ground, sanded, and sealed, but not patched or repaired. “All of the archaeology of every partition that’s been here in the last 40 years is right there. We don’t often see something this old and raw in Phoenix—it’s usually pretend raw.” Finally, bruder painted over the unfinished ceiling plane, but he mostly left it alone—exposed ductwork, haphazard trowel marks, loose wires, and all—because it adds “density and variety, like a painting.”

For the interior build out, bruder’s team designed for maxi-



This page: The orderly and geometric workstations are juxtaposed with the raw and unfinished ceiling. Opposite page: (Above) The conference room is ready for a consultation with clients. (Bottom left) Bruder selected stylish, yet comfortable, conference room chairs. (Bottom right) The entryway is framed with bruder’s signature brushed steel.



will bruder architects, ltd.



This page: The expansive window wall "creates a really nice, mysterious quality of light all day long," bruder says. The concrete floor was left as is—including the scars and pockmarks left behind by decades of shifting office partitions—to give the space a sense of history. Opposite: The spacious workstations allow bruder's team to pour over blueprints and diagrams at their desks—still an important task despite the influx of computers.

"THIS ENVIRONMENT IS ABOUT ART AND THE THINGS THAT INSPIRE OUR BUILDINGS. I SURROUND MYSELF WITH THE THINGS THAT INSPIRE WHAT I DO, NOT THE THINGS I'VE DONE IN THE PAST."



mum efficiency, creating an open floor plan and generous, yet practical, workspaces for every staff architect. At night, a single wand of fluorescent spans the entire office and provides lighting. The walls are painted the same light gray as the ceiling and, unlike in many architectural offices, the walls are mostly decorated with art and memorabilia instead of renderings or pictures of completed projects.

"This environment is about art and the things that inspire our buildings," says bruder. "I surround myself with the things that inspire what I do, not the things I've done in the past."

Moving forward, bruder is particularly excited about his work for the new light rail system. Commissioned to design a series of stations traversing central Phoenix, including one servicing the Bur-

ton Barr Central Library, bruder sees the structures as portals to the cultural heart of the city—oases of shade, shadow, comfort, and art, where passengers can pause and ponder the city. And in a pleasant twist of fate, one station will stand beneath bruder's office—the architect will be able to oversee its construction while sitting in front of the drawing board upon which it was conceived.

"There's an amazing efficiency of being here geographically in the city, as well as in our laid-out environment," bruder says, clearly pleased with his new digs. "Before, the studio was 25 years old, not designed for computers, not designed with light in mind, not designed with the generous layout of these workstations. Now it's a really healthy environment for working."