

PHOENIX HOME & GARDEN

MARCH 1995

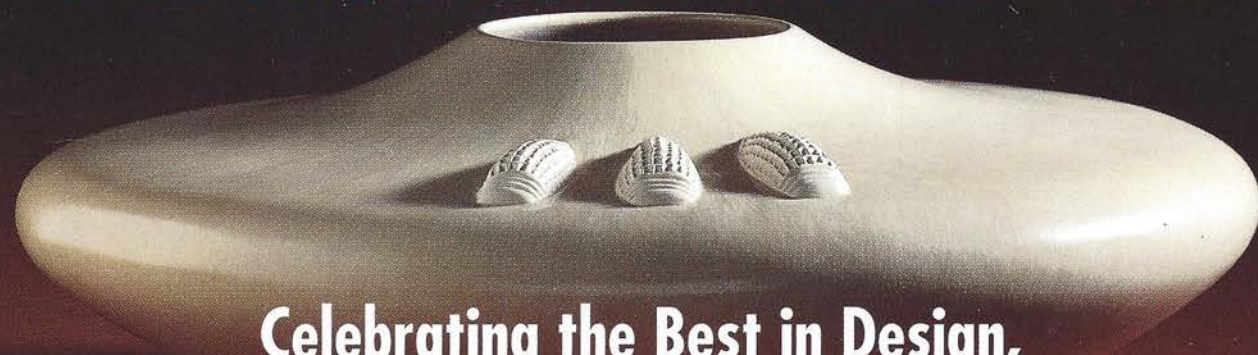
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1995's MASTERS of the SOUTHWEST



**Celebrating the Best in Design,
Landscaping, Art & Cuisine**



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A low-shouldered storage *olla* by Al Qöyawayma bears images of corn, the staff of life for native peoples of the Southwest.
Photograph by Jerry Jacka.
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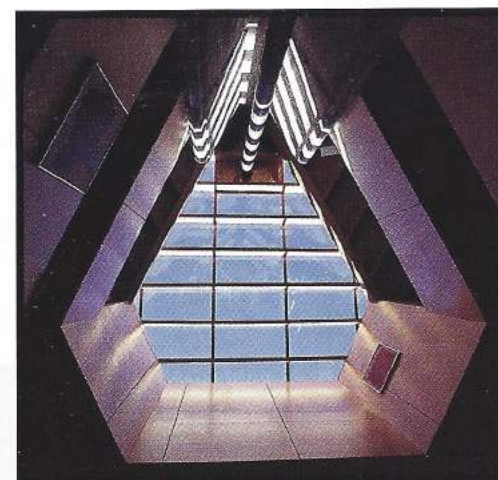
Sunlight plays off the west elevation of Phoenix's new Central Library—a metaphorical mesa penetrated by a steel canyon. Bruder's preferred palette of copper and stainless steel borrows from the structures of Arizona's agricultural industry. Opposite above: A celebration of light crowns the atrium of the Kett's four-story hexagonal tower house set in the Prescott pines. Opposite below: The Phoenix mountains at sunrise bring splendor to the courtyard of the Hill/Sheppard house, an honor award winner in the 1994 Arizona Homes of the Year competition. Galvanized steel clings to the house like a taut, protective skin, its sculptural forms punctuated by window perforations representing a recent area of the architect's experimentation.



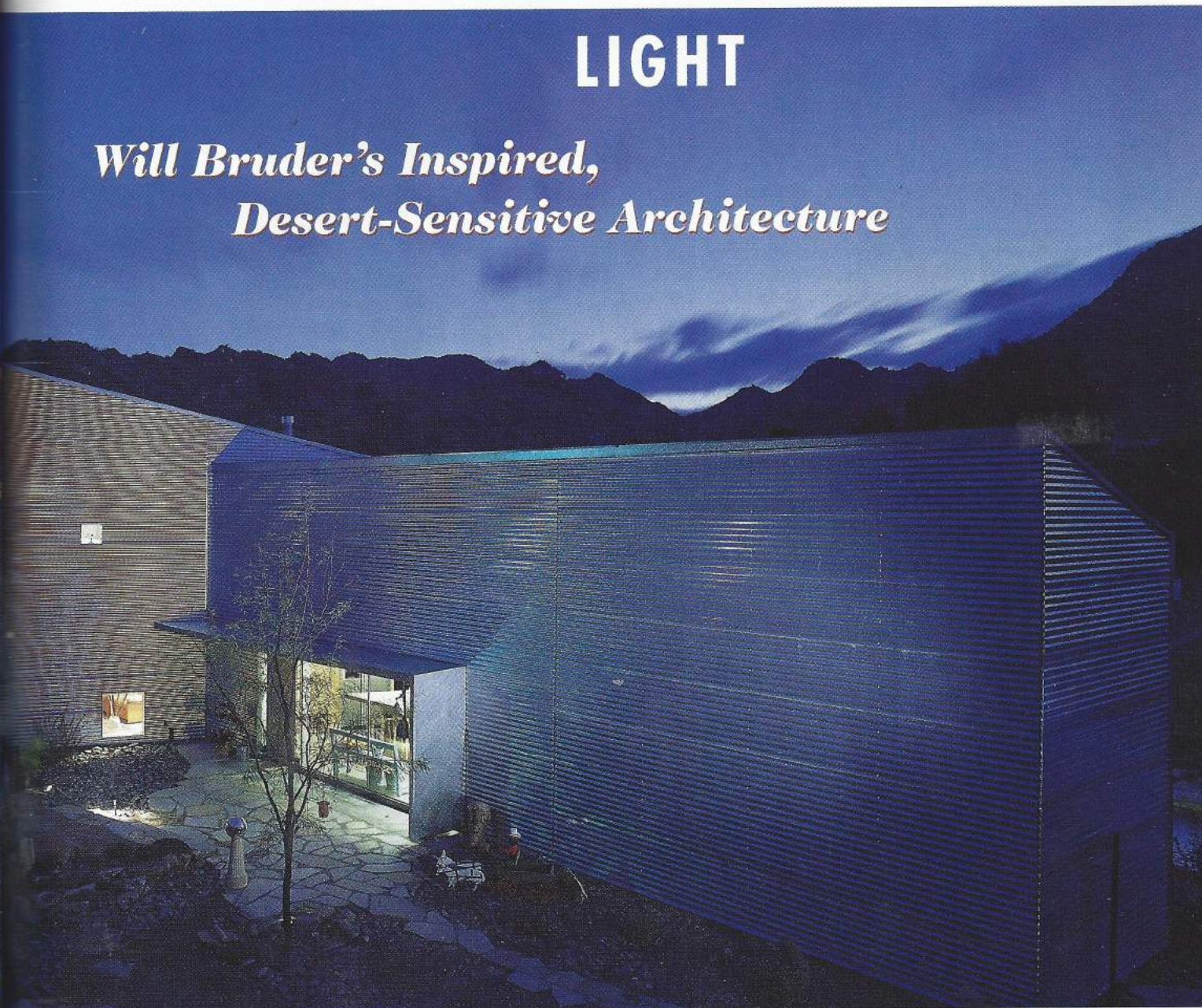
MASTER OF THE SOUTHWEST

POETRY OF LAND AND LIGHT

TEXT BY REED KROLOFF



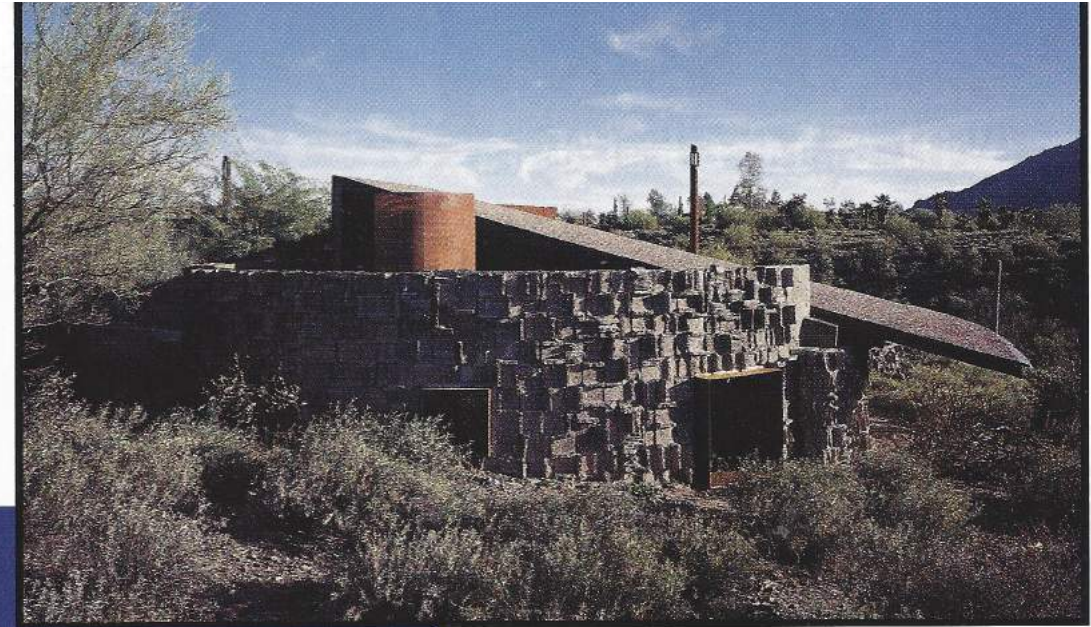
*Will Bruder's Inspired,
Desert-Sensitive Architecture*



Despite the prevalence of southwestern and Mediterranean design motifs, Arizona has a strong tradition of modern architecture. From Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West to Alfred Newman Beadle's Triad, the desert has inspired visions of the architectural future ranging from modest to messianic. Yet running through all of them is a common thread which distinguishes Arizona modern from some of its more celebrated contemporaries: an appreciation of the land. In fact, it is the modernists who have gone further to celebrate the desert than any other architects in the region.

Thus, when Will Bruder says he took one look at the

Carefully integrated into the undisturbed desert north of Phoenix, the Cox residence's east courtyard carves into the slope, becoming a sky-viewing terrace off the master suite. Breaking concrete blocks that had been rejected by the manufacturer due to cracks, Bruder formed dramatic rustic walls, unifying the shapes by sandblasting. The home's copper-clad clerestory curves off into the distance. Opposite above: Sculptural, rusty steel box windows offer a west-facing guest suite intimate micro-views of the desert.



desert and knew this was the place he had to be, it comes as little surprise.

At the time, Bruder was on his way to apprentice with one of the more romantic of the desert visionaries, Paolo Soleri, with whom he'd spent time while completing a degree in sculpture at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. Now, as the state's preeminent modernist, Bruder's work is perhaps best known for its embrace of the Sonoran eco-cultural ethos. A Bruder building is as much a statement about living in the desert as it is a reflection of the architect's aesthetic sensibilities or the client's program.

What distinguishes Bruder from others with similar proclivities is what he sees in the desert and as the desert. It is a vision which is gimlet-eyed and sincere: Bruder has lived with his archeologist wife Simon for more than twenty years in a remote little home they literally built themselves, perched on the edge of a fourteen-acre desert sanctuary in New River that backs up to protected state lands. From there, Bruder surveys the reality of the Sonoran desert that is at once rugged and fragile. "It's an extraordinarily powerful landscape," he marvels. "I am amazed every single day at how beautiful it is."

Amazed, but not lulled into quiet reverie, Bruder is the consummate peripatetic: He is constantly on the move, around the state, the country, and the world. And everywhere he goes, his eyes are wide open (usually, so is his camera: Bruder has amassed a personal slide collection with more than 60,000 images). He also reads everything about architecture and the environment that he can put his hands on. Paralleling Simon's analytic training, and combining it with his own architectural experience and artistic curiosity, Bruder's understanding of the desert is more than what might meet the eye of the casual observer. He notes the land form, yes, but also the people who have traveled across it, the machines and material they brought with them (or left behind), how they lived on the land, and how the land allowed them to live. To Bruder, it is all one story, some of it neat and clean, some of it messy, all of it vital.

Will Bruder buildings engage the land full on...

Beneath copper-clad skylights, the tension between rustic masonry walls and shoji-like fiberglass screens prefaces the excitement of textures and geometry characterizing Bruder's mix of the rustic and refined throughout the house. Opposite: The architect's contemporary interpretation of a beehive fireplace in masonry and metal rivets attention in the home's south-facing great room. A polished concrete floor, curving walls of ordinary particle-board and a ceiling of sound-deadening board with finely-scaled radial oak battens define the space. A table and Akari lamp by Isamu Noguchi and classic Charles Eames chairs add to the home's timeless qualities.

If there were one word to characterize the man and his work, vital might be it. There is so much energy in Will Bruder and his architecture that it is at times difficult to contain. He is a walking chain sentence, the words bubbling up and out of him at a frantic pace, so excited is he about what he has seen and how he will make it take form in his architecture. And the designs themselves: aggressive, sculptural, dynamic, and very much alive. Will Bruder buildings don't cower into the side of a hill, pretend they are boulders, or drape themselves in imported historical references. Will Bruder buildings engage the land full on, staking their claim, hunkering down, back against the sun, then asking for little more. They live like desert creatures, self-sufficient, prickly, and introverted, yet comfortable in their sur-

roundings, and unfailingly handsome.

And there are many of them. Over twenty-five years of practice, Bruder has completed more than 150 projects, ranging from synagogues to car washes, museums to grave markers. But until recently, he has been best known for his residential work. His reputation is not limited to Arizona, though. He has been published in journals from Europe to Japan, won numerous awards, and executed projects in places as disparate as Canada and Australia.

It is in Phoenix, however, that Bruder's largest and most important commission to date is under construction: the new Central Library. This building—slated to open in May, 1995—will be one of the more closely watched (and largest, *(Continued on page 109)*

Not the Retiring Sort...

(Continued from page 37)

tendencies, he moved to Scottsdale to work in environmental research and planning for Salt River Project and pursue an advanced degree in control systems. A few years ago, Qöyawayma chose to "retire" from the utility and from national committee work on environmental issues, despite considerable encouragement to stay involved.

He scoffs at the concept of "retirement" itself, for, in addition to making the ceramics that have brought him international recognition, he occupies his time vigorously pursuing his intellectual curiosity. He has teamed with archeologists and anthropologists, for example, to prepare for a map of the site origins of ancient Hopi pots. As individually recognizable as fingerprints, he says, clays and pottery-making techniques show widespread trade routes that testify to the sophistication of pre-Columbian civilizations.

Another area of keen interest is his work with the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), an organization he helped found and continues to counsel. "This morning, a question came over e-mail that will generate hundreds of responses," he says. The group's network takes many forms, from computer links to seminars to mentoring connections to its own magazine, *Winds of Change*—all of which encourage communication among high school and college students from most of the more than 200 Native American tribes within the United States.

Qöyawayma is particularly intrigued by the role this unprecedented information interchange can play in creating an ethical framework for contemporary society. "We can't change the past," he says. "But the future can still be shaped." He refers to today's young Native Americans as the 'healing' generation, one he characterizes as more empowered, self-motivated, ambitious, and responsible—as well as more able to engage in widespread dialogue through their virtual multi-tribal gatherings. "They understand the pressures of modern life, but have also adopted the code our people have followed since ancient times. If you commit your word, you may not betray yourself."

In a manner ancient and wise, patient and revolutionary, Qöyawayma the potter seems to have found new clay to shape. ■

Out of the Forest...

(Continued from page 41)

knowledge the ecological soundness of the stance as well as the dangers of its alternative: In one of the rare instances that he did fell a tree, it bounced up, breaking a couple of his ribs.

Once the trees are deposited in his studio yard by a logging truck, Werner saws them into blocks roughly the size of the planned artworks. He carves them outdoors, spending a few days to a few weeks on each before bringing them inside for their two-year drying stint. Then, after correcting the distortions that have occurred, leveling the surfaces with power and hand planes and recarving them, he decides which ones to sand—a procedure entailing everything from power tools to the finest sandpaper. Finally, he anoints the finished work with a protective linseed oil-base finish.

If Werner's earlier pieces were influenced by such artistic giants as Isamu Noguchi and Constantin Brancusi, his later works draw inspiration from Japanese and Chinese art, and especially from the carvings of tribal Africa and the South Pacific. "Michelle and I collect utilitarian African objects, so I've been looking at a lot of benches," he says, noting that for ten years he avoided doing seating because it related too closely to the work of his mentors, including John Brooks.

Living in Phoenix has given Werner a heretofore unknown mobility and productivity, since he can carve outdoors in winter, as well as spring, summer, and fall. "I don't like to work with gloves on," he says, "so back east, I can't work when it gets below thirty-five to forty degrees." To his surprise, he also found he can function just fine without his well-outfitted East Coast machine shop's large stationary joiners, planers, and table saws. The freedom he attributes to the now wholly subtractive character of his work.

"Carving is what I love to do," he says. "I like the physical nature of it and I like a new form emerging from the wood." While the outset is the most gratifying part of his process, he also enjoys the moment when the first coat of oil transforms the wood, adding depth and richness. Between the two phases, sanding involves far more time, toil and tedium. This is when Werner's mind tends to wander, as it never does while the saw is in his hand and risk surfs on the antic sea of his creative pleasure and excitement. ■

Poetry of Land and Light...

(Continued from page 53)

with 300,000 square feet and a budget over \$40,000,000) library projects in the country, and Bruder, in partnership with DWL Group, has created a tour de force: a gleaming, 100-foot-tall, 300-foot-long ribbed copper and stainless steel monolith parked along Central Avenue, overlooking Margaret T. Hance Park.

Central Library is a virtual catalog of Bruder design strategies. By any definition, it is a bold, powerful presence on the skyline. It is sheathed in indigenous materials, finished in patterns and textures reminiscent of the agricultural and shipping industries which helped Phoenix grow. At night, these backlit, perforated copper sheets make the building glow. It turns a blank wall to the blistering sun of the west, while completely opening itself on the more hospitable north and south exposures (though even these are protected by computer controlled louvers and shade sails). All of the building's major components reveal their carefully crafted connections, as if it were one large tinker toy, pulled ever so slightly apart to show us how it works.

But it is on the inside that Bruder really lets us have it. The entire non-fiction collection of Central Library will be housed in one open, two-story, 300-foot-long, 165-foot-wide room on the top level—more than an acre of floor area, with spectacular views of downtown and the mountains through nearly 10,000 square feet of glass to the north and south. The roof will appear to hang delicately from a series of slender, tapering columns which themselves seem to poke through skylights above. Everywhere, light will define the experience, trickling in here, pouring in there, always carefully controlled by the hand of Bruder.

Because after all, if you take away all the buildings, all the plants, even the mountains, what we have left in the desert is light—extravagant, fantastic, otherworldly light. Light which transforms the color, the texture, the very image of everything around us. It is light—the sun—which defines desert living. And it is light, therefore, which Will Bruder accommodates in his buildings, which Bruder massages in his buildings, which Bruder brings to us contained by his buildings.

Capturing light. It is a magic trick achieved only by masters. Will Bruder is one of them. ■