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# CITYAZ



# DESIGN ISSUE

**TOP 10 ARCHITECTURE • INTERIORS MAVERICK JUDI TESTANI • ICON: EAMES  
KEY PARTY FASHIONS • DESIGN AWARD WINNERS • AT HOME WITH AGNESE UDINOTTI**

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**TOM WEISKOPF TALKS GOLF  
THE GLASS MAN: DALE CHIHULY  
JEWELL & DEL LEWIS REMINISCE  
SCULPTING STEEL WITH PETE DEISE  
SIPPING SAPPORO STYLE**



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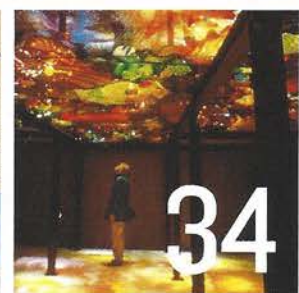
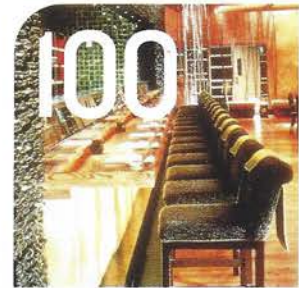
ON THE COVER  
Photography Bill Timmerman.

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# TOP 10 OF THE LAST 20 YEARS



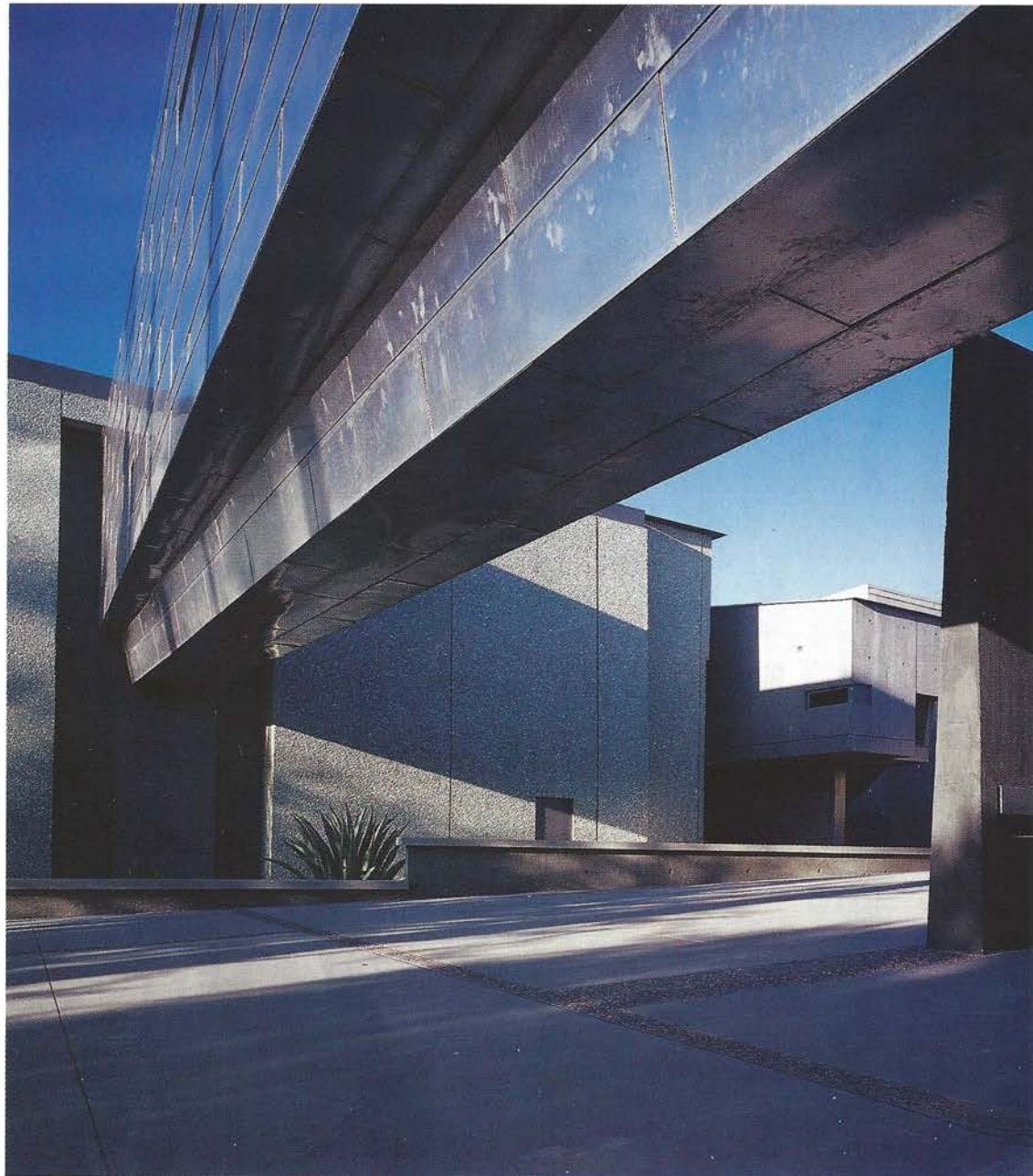
It's been nearly 20 years since the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects produced its definitive work, *A Guide to the Architecture of Metro Phoenix*, yet the past two decades have been as architecturally exciting and productive as any time since the days of Frank Lloyd Wright. Here we rank our top 10 examples of Valley architecture, ranging from monumental works of civic pride to unique single-family residences. By Dawson Fearnow



98







## 9 GRUBER RESIDENCE, ALFRED NEWMAN BEADLE, 1998

Even in death, Al Beadle (1927-1998) remains Arizona's preeminent Modernist, and one who left behind a rich library of ideas that continues to influence. Beadle's final completed design, the Gruber residence, was built on a mountainside overlooking Paradise Valley and North Scottsdale. Although the look is distinctly Beadle—low-lying, rectangular, and floor-to-ceiling glass facades—the scale is extraordinary.

Rich Fairbourn, principal of The Construction Zone Ltd., stepped in to help Beadle finish the project when the architect's health started to fail.

"The Gruber House was particularly challenging for Al," Fairbourn explains, "because the scale of the structural members—the exposed steel beams—was larger than he

was used to dealing with on residential projects." However, in the end Beadle nailed the design, and it serves as a lasting tribute to his ability to create large-scale homes that leave minuscule footprints on the site, and instead hover lightly over the desert landscape he loved.

Yes, having a liberal budget makes creating great architecture easier, however, Fairbourn, the builder behind several Valley landmarks including the Yoder/Doorbos residence, believes Beadle's final home is deserving of its place on our list.

"I hadn't been there in a year," he says. "I forgot how airy and light it is. It's essentially a long house with glass on both sides, and you forget the sense of how much light there is in Beadle's work. It's really a remarkable piece."

## 10 PHOENIX ART MUSEUM, TOD WILLIAMS BILLIE TSIENTS ARCHITECTS, 1996

With its beautiful massing of cast-in-place concrete and aluminum elements, the redesign of the Phoenix Art Museum is especially impressive when considering the many challenges that confronted the New York-based firm Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects. The project was faced with chronic shortages of funding and a museum that insisted on remaining open throughout the extensive building process.

"It was an important commission for us," Williams admits. "And we were willing to stay with it and work those things out."

The first of a planned two-stage remodel, the museum hopes to eventually create an arts complex befitting Phoenix's stature as the nation's sixth largest city. More important, it adds to the revitalization of Central Phoenix,

which started with the Burton Barr Central Library.

"We've started to address Central Avenue with this phase," Williams says, "and in the next phase I think we can have an even more positive presence."

Tsien is proud of the refined interiors and "the sense of passage and the views that are framed by the windows."

And if Williams and Tsien were to select the best architecture of the past 20 years, the unanimous answer is will bruder's library.

"The inside is simply extraordinary," says Williams "and it's a civic building, which brings life to the center of Phoenix." However, Williams is less certain about future rankings. "I'd like to think that when [the museum] is all done, we'll have the upper hand. Not because his will be worse, but because ours will be better."







8

## SCOTTSDALE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, WILL BRUDER ARCHITECTS, LTD., 1998

Surely the Valley's most renowned living architect, William Bruder, has been creating works of art for nearly four decades. Since he founded his practice in 1974, he has worked on almost 500 projects. Interestingly, he was never formally trained in the art of architecture; he concentrated on sculpture at Milwaukee's University of Wisconsin.

Bruder was drawn to the Arizona desert by the revolutionary thinker and architect Paolo Soleri, whom Bruder calls a "visionary." He received the commission to build the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art (SMoCA) through a competitive interview process.

"I think they enjoyed my enthusiastic ideas for turning something ordinary into something extraordinary," he says. Bruder succeeded in this, as the sleek design

complements the adjoining Scottsdale Center for the Arts (SCA), and also creates a seductive volume for displaying cutting-edge art. Perhaps the finest aspect of Bruder's masterful design is that his work complements the art inside without overshadowing it. "One goal," he says, "was to produce the simplest of galleries that would have an elegance about them."

Bruder himself is most pleased with the magical effect created by his manipulating the scale of transitional portals, such as the giant 12-foot doors to the galleries themselves.

"It's an Alice through the looking glass composition," he says. "Consequently, when you walk into the galleries they seem even bigger than they are."

And when it all comes together, as it does in SMoCA, Bruder admits "it's very gratifying."

7

## SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR U.S. COURTHOUSE, RICHARD MEIER & PARTNERS ARCHITECTS, 2000

This might be the most controversial selection on the list; however, no one can deny that Phoenix's new courthouse is a stunning edifice of glass and steel, especially at night when it serves as a luminous beacon of civic pride. Named after Arizona's famed native daughter, Sandra Day O'Connor, it is the first such honor bestowed upon a living Supreme Court justice.

Designed by the internationally renowned firm of Richard Meier & Partners Architects in New York, with assistance from Langdon Wilson Architects in Phoenix, the building's centerpiece is a spectacular open-air atrium that rises through the entire six-story structure. It is part of an overall design aesthetic that redefines the previous concept of courthouses, which often resembled monolithic fortresses.

Thomas Phifer, formerly of Richard Meier and now the principal of Thomas Phifer and Partners, was the design partner in charge of the courthouse project.

"The building represents the way the court system can be open and accessible," he says. "The main hall makes a

connection to the city and the people of Phoenix."

However, the soaring atrium is also at the center of a raging controversy surrounding the courthouse's unique cooling system—a naturally ventilating system built around an intricate matrix of misters. Yet as visitors discovered last summer, the planned cooling effect was a failure, as interior temperatures regularly topped 85°.

Phifer asserts the problems have been assessed, and though he refuses to point fingers, he predicts the addition of larger water reservoirs for the misters, as the system was originally designed, will prevent future air-conditioning failures in the future.

Until then, the monumental building stands as an important, albeit controversial, addition to our ever-expanding architectural palette. Phifer agrees.

"I think the building has a certain sense of optimism to it," he says. And what's his judgment on top architecture?

"Will Bruder's library. It's an extraordinary response to building in the desert."







6

## THE HOUSE OF EARTH & LIGHT, MARWAN AL-SAYED ARCHITECTS, LTD., 1997-PRESENT

The only work in progress design that made this list is Marwan Al-Sayed's House of Earth & Light (the McCue residence), which has already made significant contributions to the ongoing dialogue pertaining to desert architecture.

Hovering over a wash that bisects the property—if a home defined by fortress-like “poured earth” walls some 18” thick can hover—the building is stark and beautiful. An equally unique light and airy steel-and-tensioned-fabric roof tops the earthbound and low-lying walls. It echoes the canvas roofs that were integral to many designs in Wright's Arizona oeuvre. Al-Sayed's design allows for abundant natural light to seep through the translucent membrane, while attempting to protect the enclosed volumes from the extremes of our climate.

Five years after the start of this project, Al-Sayed is most pleased with the “contrast between the massive earth walls and the lightweight roof.”

Al-Sayed, who arrived in Arizona in the mid-'90s to serve as the project architect for the redesign of the Phoenix Art Museum, continues to look to the desert for inspiration. In particular, he's influenced by North Africa and “the solidity of the way they build.”

He is also influenced by modern art and artists' use of color and light.

“Something ancient and something new,” he explains. And if Al-Sayed had to choose his favorite architecture of the past 20 years?

“I'm a big fan of Al Beadle's work,” he admits. “How he combined Modernism with the desert is really brilliant.”

5

## YODER/DOORBOS RESIDENCE, MICHAEL P. JOHNSON DESIGN STUDIOS, LTD., 1999

Perched high atop the south side of Camelback Mountain, the Yoder/Doorbos residence stands as that rare example of a private commission that the entire Valley can enjoy. Basically a low-slung rectangular box, a small portion of its eastern end is anchored to the mountain, while the rest of the home floats across the steeply sloping grade, solely supported by the elevator tower and a thin concrete slab. This precarious arrangement also cantilevers the master bedroom into space, providing singular vistas of the Valley below.

The home's architect, Michael Johnson, a Valley fixture since 1977, taught architecture at the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture in both Scottsdale and Spring Green, Wisconsin. The clients, owners of a contemporary European art gallery in Milwaukee, hired Johnson with very specific requirements for their new showpiece.

“The clients wanted a 5,000-square-foot, one-level house,” says Johnson. “There were two building pads, and neither was close to 5,000 square feet.” The clients also

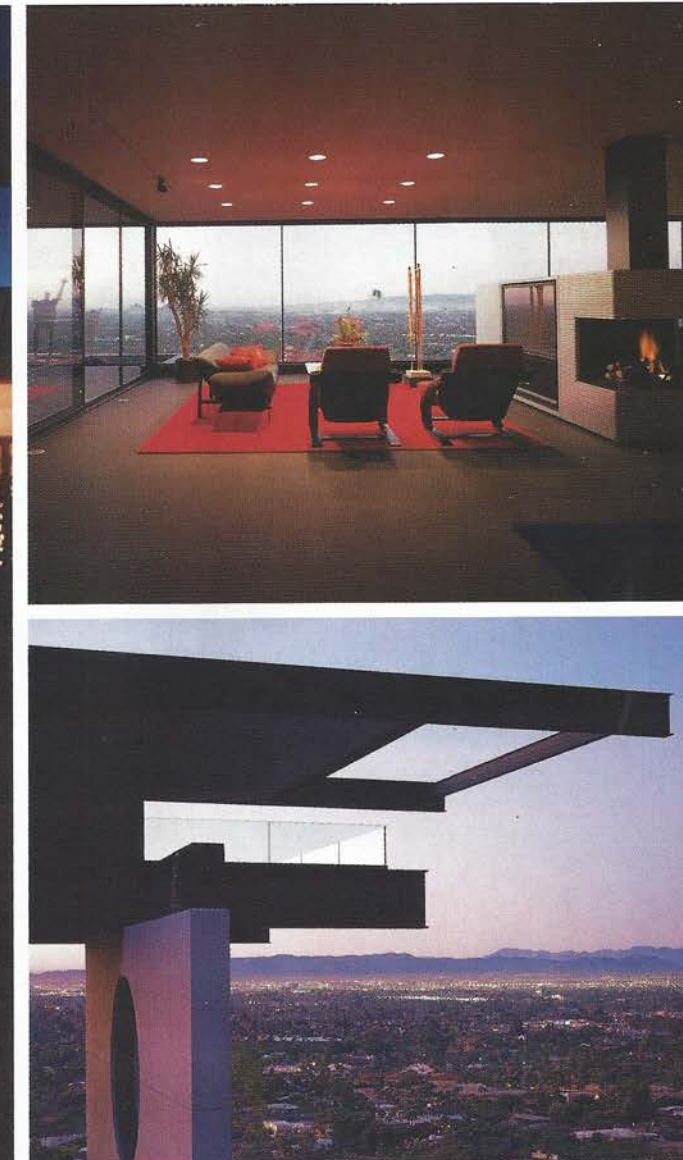
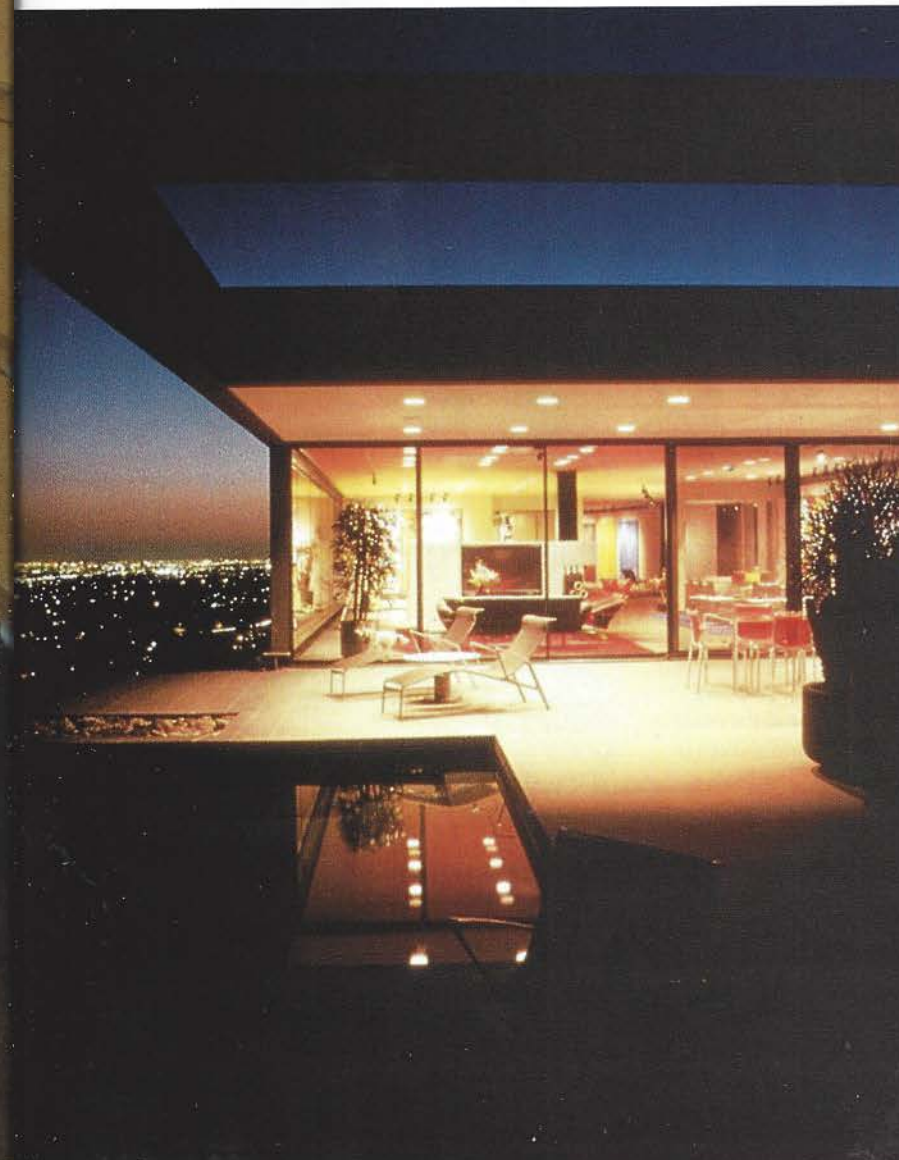
wanted an outdoor living area with a pool, two-car garage, and guest parking. Those requirements alone filled all the available space, yet Johnson's artistic ethic prevented him from blasting away more of the beautiful mountain.

“So I had nothing to do but build the house in the air,” Johnson says.

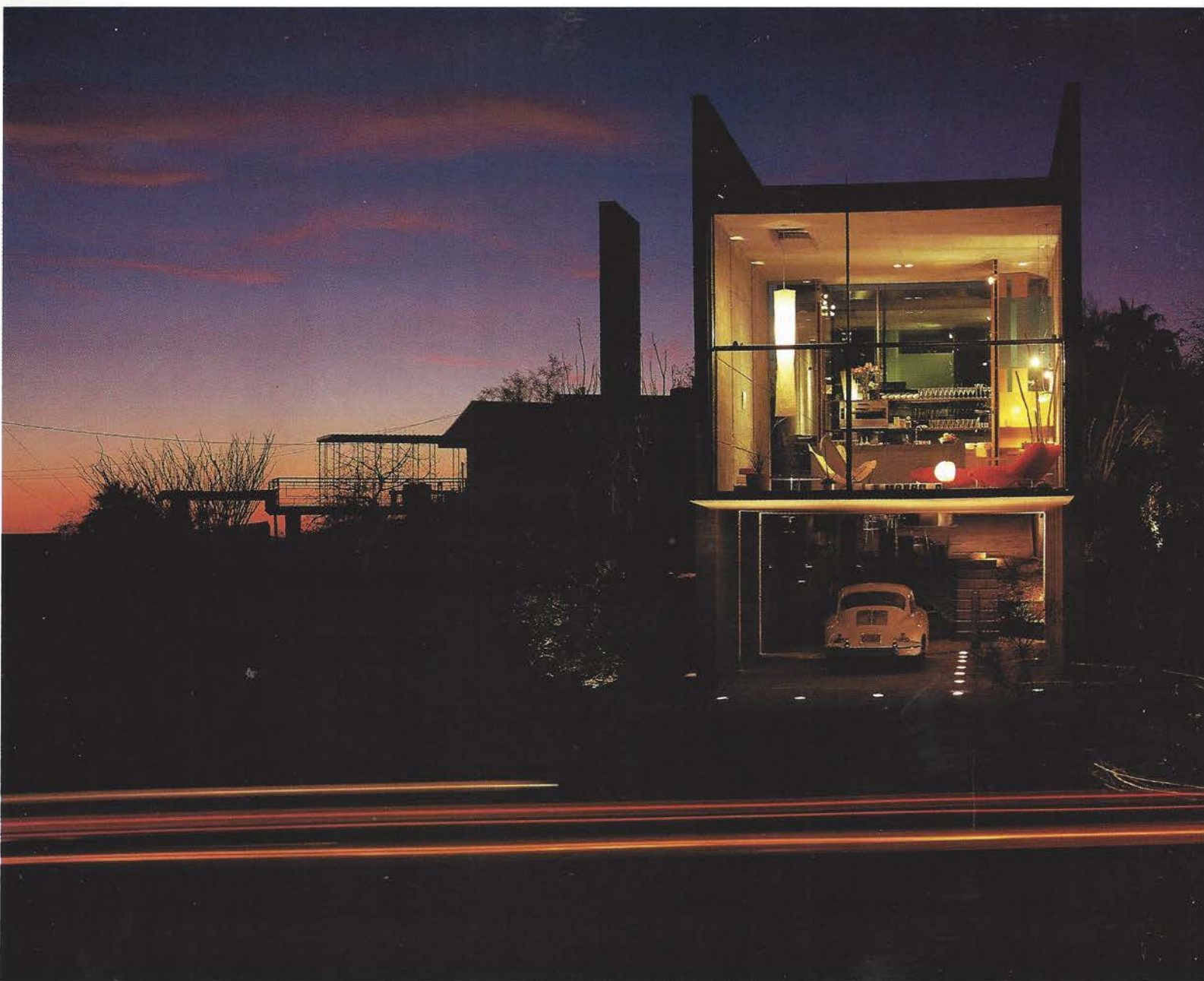
It's a casual explanation for such a remarkable solution, yet fitting for an understated masterpiece. A true landmark of residential architecture in Phoenix, it has been published in design and architecture magazines around the globe, and brought welcome attention to our own burgeoning community.

So, which design does Johnson himself nominate as the top creation of the last 20 years?

“Al Beadle's Novak house,” he answers without skipping a beat. “Commercial buildings or big houses with good budgets are easy to do, but to have a small building site and a limited budget like the Novak house—that takes talent. And Al had it.”







3

### ARIZONA SCIENCE CENTER, ANTOINE PREDOCK ARCHITECT, 1997

Rising abruptly out of its bulky base, the massive concrete fin that bisects the Arizona Science Center is a landmark in the new Downtown. Created by Albuquerque-based architect Antoine Predock, the structure is bold and stark, but never cold and calculating. Anyone who has seen the hordes of kids playing on the abstract geometric landforms realizes the design is a great success—it's architecture with a heart.

The building's eye-catching looks are the direct reflection of Predock's unique creative process. Prior to creating models, he constructs large-scale collages, cutting and pasting various images that relate to the site and tell a story. For this project Predock created a collage nearly 15 feet wide, that had "elements of the Arizona landscape, cultural traces, allusions to science and space, diffraction patterns of light...all the incredible things that those who live here experience day to day." Much of this imagery was then coalesced into a clay model, and then transformed into the beautiful, eclectic museum.

As for that monumental silvery blade, Predock reveals that in the original design it was partly conceived to serve as a gallery that would interact with the solar system, with apertures through which visitors could look to the sky. Unfortunately, the funding has not yet come through for this.

And what does this architect, who is "obsessed with the search for the authentic," see as the realization of Phoenix architecture during the last two decades?

"Right away, of course I think of Will's library," he says. "There are other quieter works around, residential works I admire a lot. But I'd have to say the library."



### 4 BURNETTE STUDIO/RESIDENCE, WENDELL BURNETTE ARCHITECTS, 1995

Jutting out of a steeply graded site in the foothills of North Mountain, architect Wendell Burnette's studio residence is the essence of modern desert architecture. The building's shell is certainly minimalist; it's stripped of all but the most essential elements of shelter. Yet the aura inside and out is warm, inviting, and most of all, comfortable.

Throughout the space, Burnette's deceptively simple design masterfully bridges the chasm between purity and livability. The mostly self-taught Burnette—he spent a few formative years at Wright's desert laboratory, Taliesin West—prefers to think of his design as simply the most logical and economical solution to building on an unusual site. This statement is borne of the fact that Burnette built his standout residence on nights and weekends for the bare-bones price of \$120,000, thus sealing its number four ranking on our list.

But the greatest compliment came from the Modernist architect Al Beadle.

"One day," Burnette recalls, "Beadle drove up, got out of his El Camino, and shouted with his fist in the air, 'Integrity!' So I think he liked it."

If Burnette, like Beadle, saluted a local building of the last 20 years, it would be something close to his heart—a structure that he helped design. "It's a building I had a lot to do with: the Phoenix Library."

*Moments of Experience*, a poem by Burnette about his home: **Laying in the still pool of a waterfall body parallel to an internal entry court at a most distant point in the canyon bottom floating horizontal with a vertical perspective infinite**



2

## NOVAK RESIDENCE, ALFRED NEWMAN BEADLE, 1994

This Beadle design was a significantly smaller commission than the Gruber residence. However, this home stands as a living testimony to everything Beadle learned and valued during his nearly 50 years building in the Arizona desert.

A precisely placed triangle perched on a tight mountain site, the house maximizes the views of the surrounding mountains and cityscape, and at the same time eliminates less serene vistas. With a few simple strokes Beadle created both a gorgeous form and an effective solution to the cramped site.

Local architect Ned Sawyer, whose sister-in-law had occupied the house before her recent death, enthusiastically studied Beadle's design. He says the house contains clear elements of the traditional Beadle aesthetic, and that it also shows Beadle's flexibility.

"[Over the course of his career] Al got a lot freer," says Sawyer, "and he wasn't so rigid with the module. The house is a triangle, but, as I discovered, it's not a perfect or symmetrical triangle." This is an interesting comment on the once rigorously symmetrical Beadle design ethic, and his ability to evolve.

Not to imply that Beadle's effort was slap-dash.

"Al just appreciated doing design," Sawyer says. "He didn't care what the size or the scale was—just the fact that somebody wanted to do something special on a good site."

Rich Fairbourn, who knew Beadle professionally and personally for two decades, remembers his friend.

"Al was a fighter, who more than anyone else, pushed the Modern agenda," he says. "Without him, most of what you see today would not have happened. We've all benefitted."



1

## BURTON BARR CENTRAL LIBRARY, BRUDER DWL ARCHITECTS, 1995

A five-story "mesa" of corrugated copper and concrete, the thick-skinned exterior of the Central Library barely conceals the glorious interior that hums in its own stark beauty. Shattering the myth that libraries must be dark and solemn, will bruder has given our city a monumental space that is airy and well-lit—a radiant chapel dedicated to the timeless art of study.

But while bruder is certainly proud of his creation, he is the first to clarify that it is not solely a will bruder building.

"It is critical," he says, "that it be known as a bruder DWL architects design. That is the team I put together and I want them to get credit." Bruder's stellar team included Wendell Burnette as co-designer.

And what of that glorious fifth floor reading room, that crown jewel that shines over an entire acre? It serves as a

paean to the beauty of natural lighting, as solar events grace the space from dawn to dusk. Bruder says the famed Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris provided his inspiration.

"We wanted something light," he says, "something to disconnect the columns and the walls to let the light sculpt the space."

And where does bruder place the mantle of the most significant piece of architecture of the last 20 years?

"Without saying the library, I'd say the introduction of native trees on the streets of central Phoenix," he says. "It helps define the city from the anonymous to the specific, using these plants and trees that we usurped to be here. The laciness and color, and the evergreen quality, makes the experience of being on Central Avenue much richer for its rightness in this desert place."