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Cover: Goldberg-Bean Residence, Los Angeles, California  
Franklin D. Israel Design Associates, Architect  
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# Desert Shield

*For a retired couple and their animals, Will Bruder designed a house that captures desert views in every room.*

*Theuer Residence  
Phoenix, Arizona  
William P. Bruder, Architect*





Desert buildings are about sun and walls," states architect Will Bruder, who left his native Wisconsin for Phoenix in the early 1970s. An apprenticeship with Paolo Soleri and a lifetime appreciation of Frank Lloyd Wright have left Bruder with a keen eye for tying architecture to the landscape. For Robert Theuer, a retired airline pilot, and his wife Rhonda, Bruder designed a 2,500-square-foot house that embraces the rugged land in a sweeping curve. On one side of that curve is a desert garden, stocked with more than 40 species of local plants, while on the other lies a suburban wasteland of expensive tract homes. Relying on a simple palette of cinderblock, glass, weathered steel, and copper, Bruder erected solid walls facing the subdivision and glass ones looking north to the garden and the South Mountains in the distance.

Like traditional Southwestern houses, this one turns a weather-toughened face to the street and provides a sheltered forecourt only to those who have been allowed past the front gate. Although this inward-looking elevation contrasts with the more expansive north facade, it introduces many of the elements that give the house its character: bold curves, maintenance-free materials, and indigenous landscaping. Peeling away a concrete-block wall from the main house to form the forecourt, Bruder makes it clear from the start that this is an architecture of walls set in motion by the sun. And by hinting at what's to come, the architect has added a sense of mystery to the house's allure.

From the forecourt, the house reveals itself slowly. A recessed entry, designed as an elegant composition of glass planes set between a polished-concrete floor and a particle-board ceiling, draws the visitor indoors. Once inside, subtlety gives way to the spectacular view of the garden and the mountains beyond. Centered on a point 50 feet into the garden, the curving geometry of the north wall draws the eye to the outdoors. Ten-foot-high panels of half-inch-thick glass rise the full height of the wall, offering uninterrupted views.

"We wanted the outside in and the inside out," says Robert Theuer, "and Will certainly did a number on that." One example is a stainless-steel fireplace that sits half inside and half outside the glazed wall. Resting on a seven-foot-wide circular pan of water, the gas fireplace seems to hover between contrasting worlds.

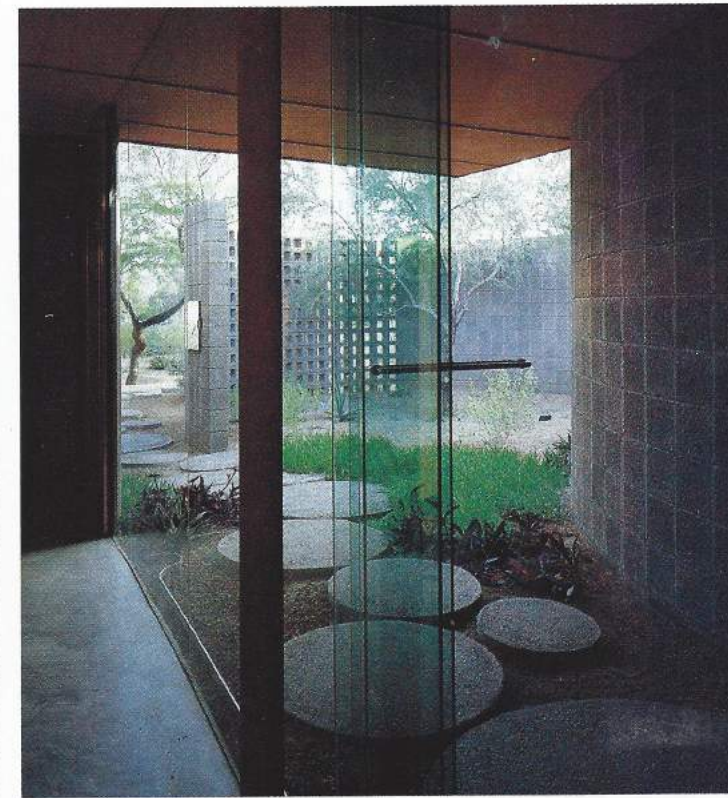
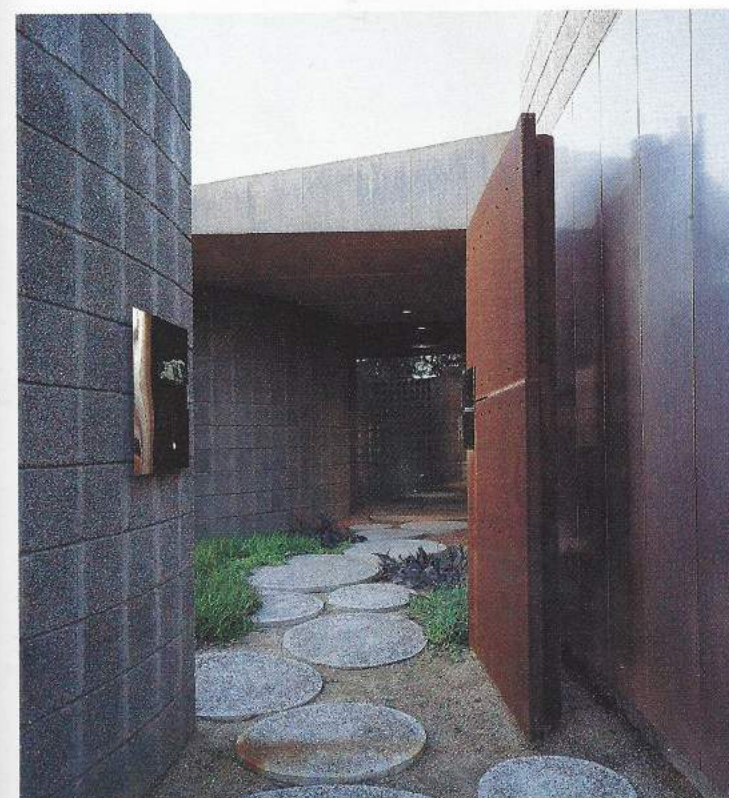
Instead of having separate living, dining, and family rooms, the house has one great room that provides the free-flowing living space the clients had requested. Even the kitchen works as an extension of the living area, separated by only a slender cantilevered counter. The sense of spaciousness is heightened by the contrast between the 10-foot-tall, glazed wall on the north and the seven-and-a-half-foot-high masonry wall on the south. Adding a final touch of drama to the composition is a one-inch-high strip of clerestory window sandwiched between the cinderblock wall and the low ceiling.

The single-loaded-corridor plan ensures that all rooms face the garden and provides cross ventilation to help cool the house. Roof overhangs also protect the house from the sun—three feet beyond the solid south wall and five feet beyond the glazed north wall. Further sun protection comes from a series of perforated-weathered-steel shade "sails" that hang from the roof above the covered garden terrace. A covered stable just west of the house and a dog run adjacent to the guest wing accommodate the clients' two horses and two Great Danes. Both for humans and animals, the house encourages what Bruder calls "resort living," a term that implies spending as much time outdoors as indoors. *Clifford A. Pearson*

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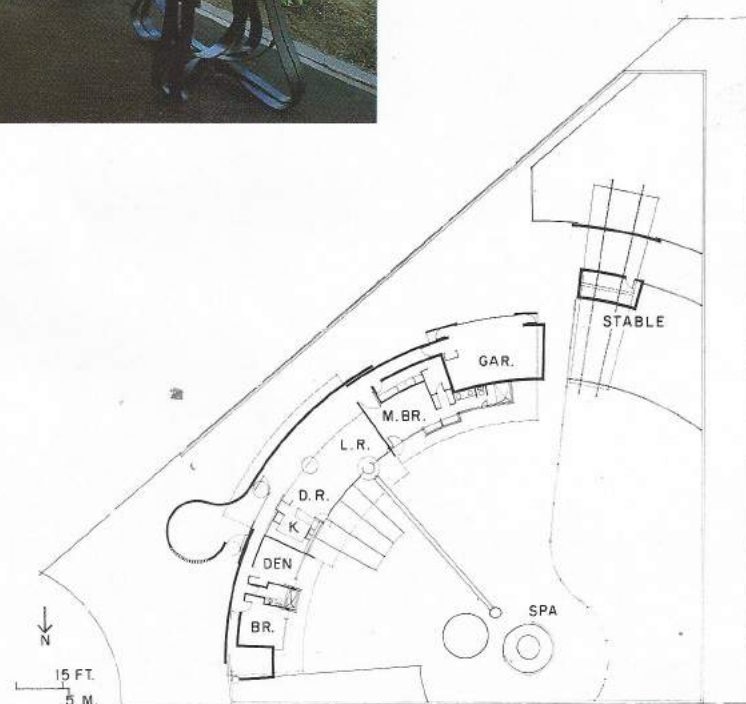
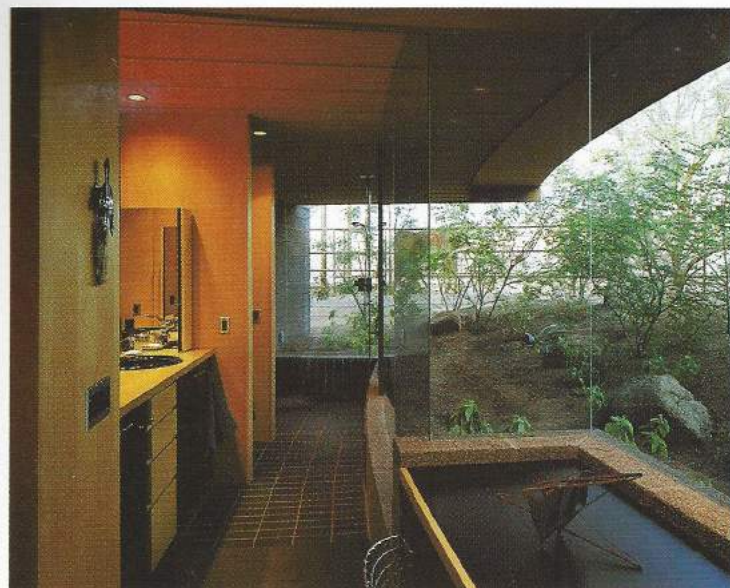
*Built on a one-acre lot in a suburban subdivision, the Theuer Residence faces its neighbors with a set of curving masonry walls that only hint at what's inside (opposite top). A concrete-block wall with some blocks rotated so they create a perforated effect encloses an outdoor forecourt. The entry gate to the forecourt is made of punched weathered-steel (opposite bottom left), as are the curving shade "sails" protecting the garden terrace on the opposite side of the house (above). The recessed entry is a play of rough and smooth materials (opposite below right). The structural system combines wood framing, load-bearing masonry walls, and steel members along the glazed north wall (previous pages and top).*











Heart of the house is a great curving room that includes living and dining areas, as well as a kitchen (previous pages). A particle-board ceiling with maple battens slopes up to meet the 10-foot-high butt-glazed wall overlooking the garden. Bruder relied on a simple palette of materials such as maple-plywood paneling and cinderblock for walls and polished concrete for floors. A snaking line of quarter-inch-thick stainless steel and "bush-hammered" concrete picks up the curving motif found in much of the house (previous pages).

A stainless-steel fireplace, set half indoors and half outdoors, features a gas flame that seems to float on a seven-foot-wide pan of water (opposite). The water runs down a 50-foot-long trough slicing through the garden, then is recycled. The garden is planted with over 40 species of native plants and requires little watering. Because the house looks onto a nature preserve, even the master bedroom (bottom left) and master bath (top left) enjoy floor-to-ceiling glazing. A three-zone heat-pump system provides heating and air-conditioning.

#### Credits

*Theuer Residence*  
Phoenix, Arizona

**Owners:** Rhonda and Robert Theuer

**Architect:** William P. Bruder, Architect—William Bruder, principal-in-charge; Wendell Burnette, Robert Adams, Tyler Green, design team

**Engineers:** Jack Trummer, JT Engineering (structural); Roy Otterbein (mechanical/plumbing)

**Consultants:** Roger Smith, Lighting Dynamics (lighting); Randy Hall, Ray Electric (electrical)

**Landscape Architect:** Christy Ten Eyck, The Planning Center

**General Contractor:** Owner/builder

