

PHOENIX

M A G A Z I N E

RANKING THE SCHOOLS

A look at which public institutions are making the grade

Plus

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Class Size
AIMS Testing
Private Campuses
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the RIGHT ANGLES

ARCHITECT WILL BRUDER USES THE
GEOMETRY OF STEEL TO MIMIC THE
CANYONS, MESAS AND MOUNTAINS
SURROUNDING A SCOTTSDALE HOME.

By Nora Burba Trulsson
Photography by Bill Timmerman

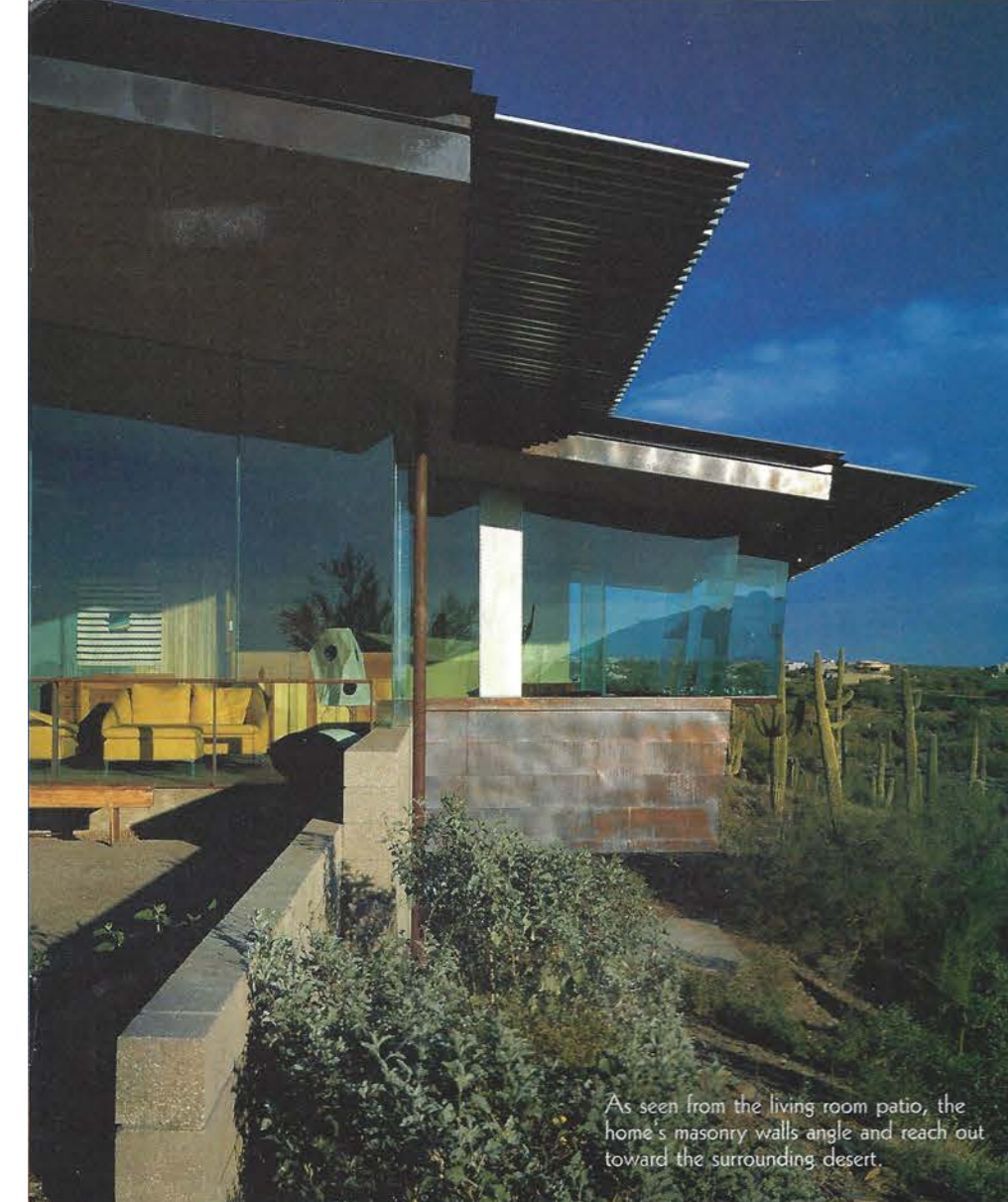
There's a telling home accessory in the living room of Carol and Bill Byrne's new north Scottsdale home. It's a pitcher and a set of glasses. Though the contemporary barware sits on flat bottoms, each piece leans at a distinct angle, as though it were formed in a windstorm.

"Yes, we did get those after we built this house," Carol says with a smile. The glassware is a reflection of the unique character of the house, a confident melding of angled geometry, materials and engineering that mark another milestone in the ever-evolving career of architect Will Bruder. The design of the Byrnes' house, inspired by its rocky, 5-acre hillside setting, garnered Bruder a top award last year from the Arizona Masonry Guild, as well as being selected as a 1999 Record House by *Architectural Record* magazine.

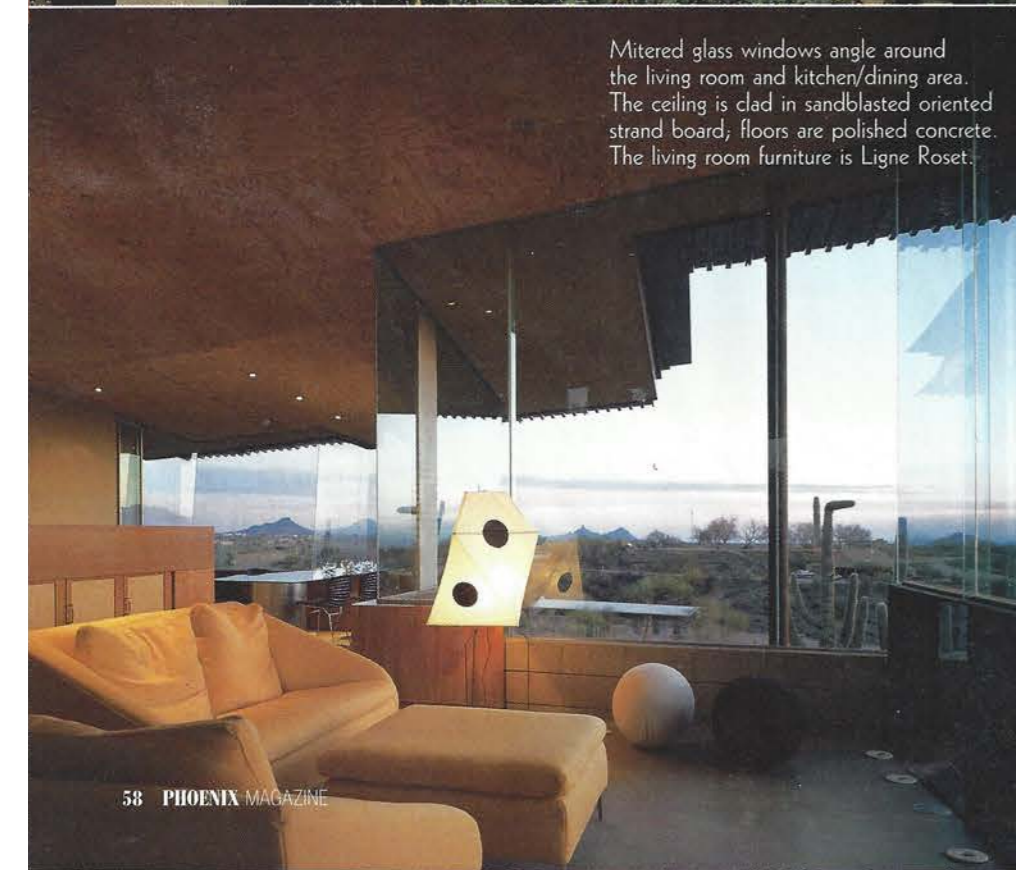
The path to building the house started out inauspiciously enough. The Byrnes — she's a color and textile consultant to the automotive industry, he's general manager for a luxury home builder — attended a lecture given by Bruder, at the suggestion of Carol's parents, who happened to be friends of Bruder's parents. Bruder, who won the coveted Rome Prize in 1987 for advanced design study, is best known for his recent projects, which include the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art and the Phoenix Central Library. In his 25 years of private practice, Bruder has also done scores of residences.

"We were enchanted," Carol recalls of the lecture.

Though all of their previous homes had been on the traditional side, the Byrnes asked Bruder, whose architectural studio is in New River, to visit the desert lot they had recently purchased.



As seen from the living room patio, the home's masonry walls angle and reach out toward the surrounding desert.



Mitered glass windows angle around the living room and kitchen/dining area. The ceiling is clad in sandblasted oriented strand board; floors are polished concrete. The living room furniture is Ligne Roset.

Bruder's enthusiasm for the site and its possibilities was contagious. "Within 15 minutes he knew how this house would look," Bill recalls. "He wanted it to seem like it was rising out of the desert floor, with canyonlike walls that leaned and shifted."

The Byrnes had only a few requirements for the home: the use of simple materials to capture views of the desert and city lights, and to be able to display Carol's quilt collection as well as a few pieces of antique furniture. "We gave Will free reign as to the home's design," Bill says. "That's why we wanted to work with him — for his artistry."

"This house is all about geological metaphors," Bruder says of the 2,900-square-foot residence. "It mimics the angles of the surrounding plateaus and the shifts of the land. In plan, it reaches out into the desert with big, strong moves."

With Bill serving as general contractor, Bruder had the two-level house nestled into the hillside. The main level is organized around an entry gallery, which accesses the living room, kitchen and dining area, and master suite on one side, and a library and bath on the other. The lower level, bermed into the hill, has a family room, another bedroom, laundry facilities and home office space.

Working with a palette of sandblasted concrete blocks, metal and glass, Bruder created a variety of experiences for the Byrnes as they pass through different areas of the house.

In the entry gallery, the high block walls are canyonlike, heightened by the fact that the walls lean at an angle, an effect achieved by laying each course of block three-quarters of an inch off plumb. By day, a strip skylight washes the textured block walls with a shifting display of light; by night, contemporary lighting adds dramatic effect. The gallery is long enough and tall enough to display several of Carol's prized quilts.

The living room, dining area and kitchen angle together at one end of the house. A freewheeling expanse of mitered glass walls follows the bends of the house, capturing views and creating a series of depth-enhancing reflections all around. Where block wall intersects the living room, Bruder had a series of windows carved into the wall on site, to frame specific views of clouds, mountains and desert, like fine art.

Bruder's expertise with unusual materials particularly comes into play in the public areas of the house. He experiments with the juxtapositions of polished concrete flooring, a ceiling clad in sandblasted oriented strand board (OSB, a humble construction

material), strips of cherry paneling, copper cladding and the clean lines of maple and cherry cabinetry. The corrugated metal deck roof forms deep overhangs around the glass walls of the house; Bruder points out that its reflections mimic the ridges of the site's saguaro cactuses.

In the master suite, more windows focus on the vistas, while an adjacent deck is partially enclosed with a perforated metal wall that cants away from the house.

Translucent fiberglass steps lead down to the lower level, where, in spots, low strips of windows allow views from a seated position. Bruder kept most of the lower level's walls pure white, to bring a sense of light and the outdoors into the space.

"You're always traveling toward the sky and the light in this house," says Bruder, whose newest project list includes the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno, as well as a small house for a retired librarian who has worked at two of the Phoenix branch libraries he designed.

While Bruder was working on the Byrnes house, he kept structure in mind. "This house exceeds the Phoenix Library in structural gymnastics," Bruder admits. "Mark Rudow and Keith Berry, the structural engineers, made it happen." Among other structural feats of derring-do, a steel beam structure for the angled roof ties into a wall with seven brackets, making the vast expanse of the roof seem like it's floating above the house. The angled walls are reinforced. Even the custom casement windows are placed just-so for maximum cross breezes.

The Byrnes moved into the house last July, furnishing it simply with their select antiques and a few pieces of stylish, modern Italian furniture. The sculptural house itself was the focal point; no "decorating" was necessary. The couple has had friends and family over for dinners and informal parties (the angled barware has come in handy), but most of all, they enjoy just being in the house, constantly moving, as Bruder puts it, toward the sky and the light.

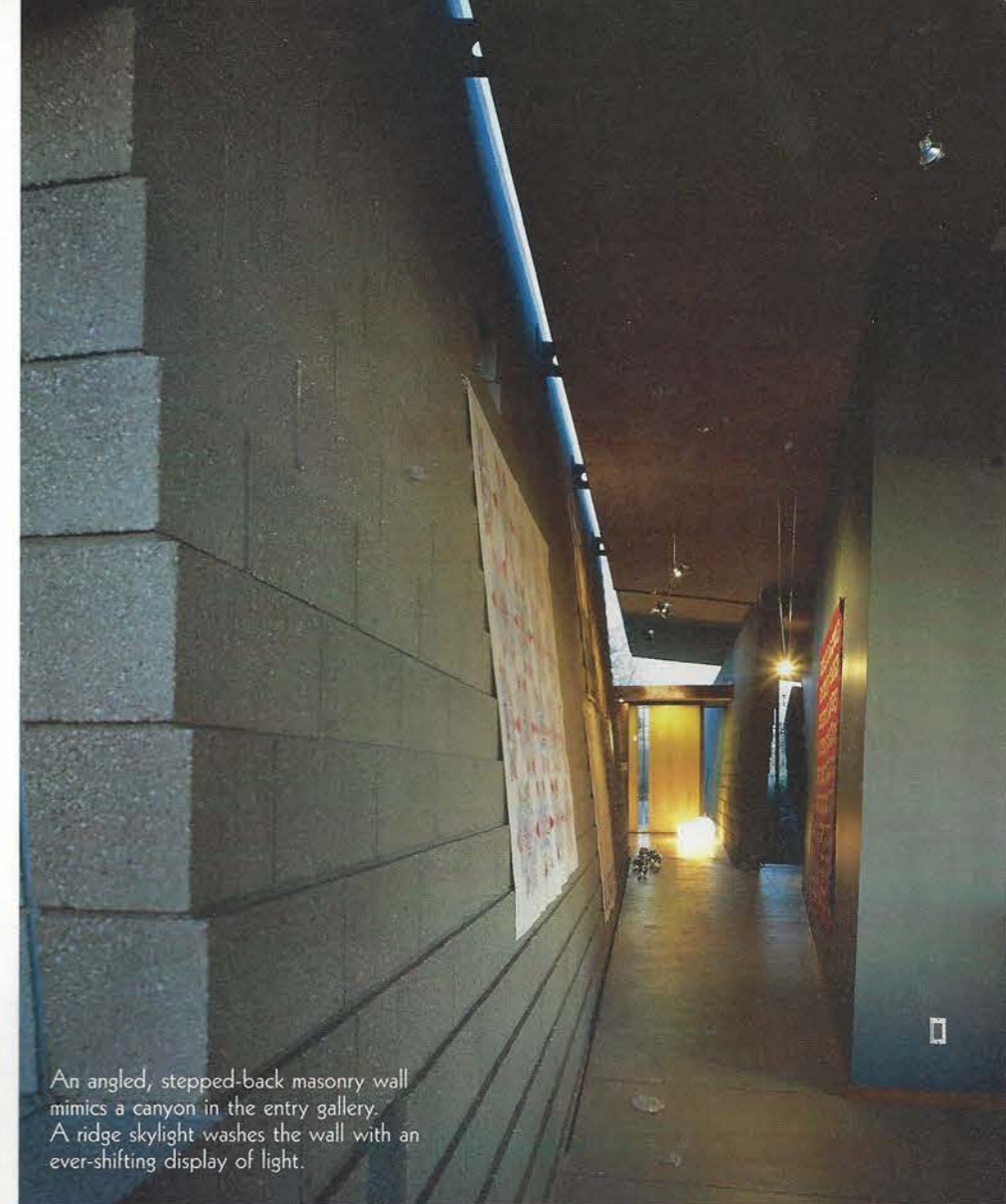
RESOURCES

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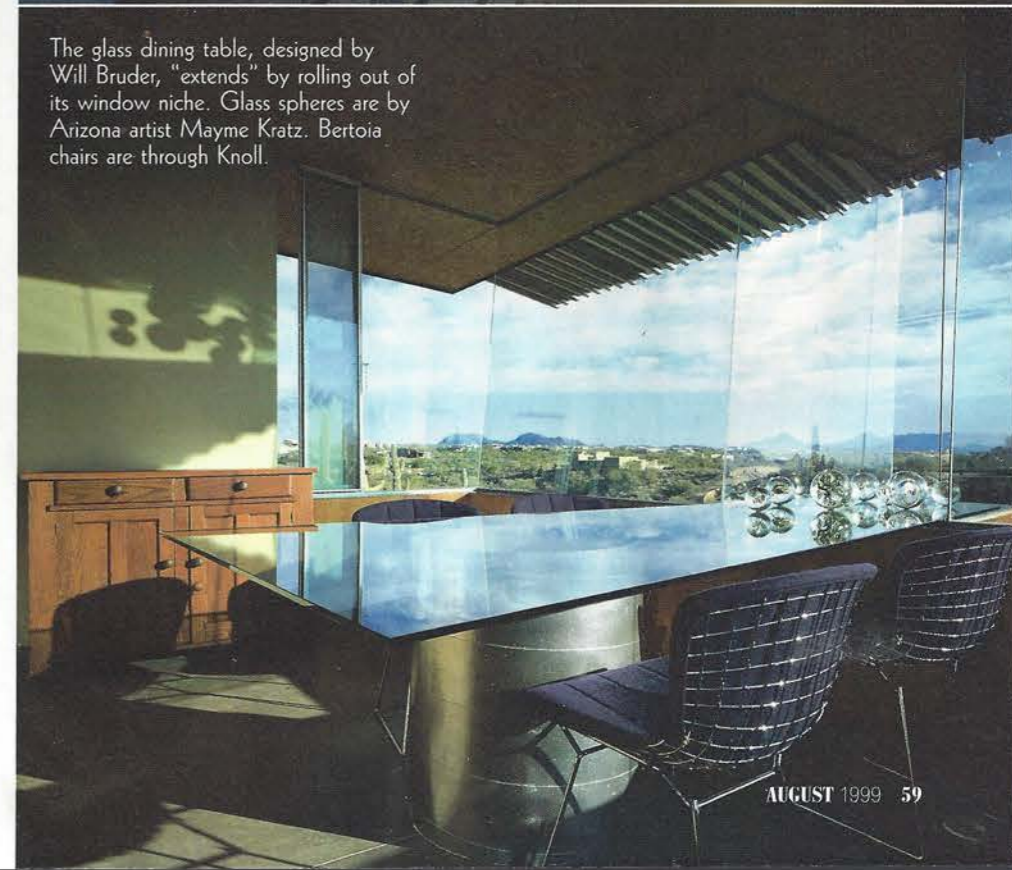
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An angled, stepped-back masonry wall mimics a canyon in the entry gallery. A ridge skylight washes the wall with an ever-shifting display of light.



The glass dining table, designed by Will Bruder, "extends" by rolling out of its window niche. Glass spheres are by Arizona artist Mayme Kratz. Bertioia chairs are through Knoll.