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DANCING LIGHT

Soaring, angled rooflines mark the design of this Paradise Valley home, which has broad views of Camelback Mountain. Architect Brent Kendle placed the pool next to the edge of the house, causing light to reflect from the water's surface onto the overhangs and walls, giving the home its name: Dancing Light.

In Paradise Valley, Creative Vision
and Masterful Teamwork Combine in a Groundbreaking Sculptural Home

BY **KATHERINE ADOMAITIS** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ALEX VERTIKOFF**

ROOTED IN A DESERT LANDSCAPE WITH VIEWS OF CAMELBACK MOUNTAIN, businessman Randy Knight's new house is a piece of sculpture, with sweeping rooflines; sheltering, angled walls; panoramic windows; and a mix of bold materials meant to reference Arizona's geology. Inside? The house is warm and friendly, perfect for Knight alone or when he's visited by his extended family.

The delicate balancing act between style and comfort was conceived four years ago when Knight wanted to build a Modernist house. He put together the beginnings of what he calls his "A Team"—builder Jerry Meek and interior designer David Michael Miller, both of whom he had worked with on several previous residences—and tasked them with finding an architect. "It was stiff competition," explains Meek.

Noted for his soaring rooflines, use of innovative materials and designs that blur the line between indoors and out, Brent Kendle's architectural approach appealed to Knight. "I liked Brent and his ideas," he says. "Once we made that decision, I turned everything over to the team and let them run with it."

Knight's 3-acre residence in Paradise Valley, once part of a larger horse property was, in essence, untouched desert. Kendle walked the site and decided to orient the house toward Camelback Mountain to the south. "I knew right away that everything about the house was the view of the mountain," he explains. "You can see the entire formation, head to tail, from the site and watch it change colors from morning until night."

The open landscape and unparalleled views inspired Kendle to design a 6,200-square-foot home that includes two guest bedrooms and a detached guest casita for visits from Knight's four adult children and 16 grandchildren. The main house encircles a central atrium, flanked on two sides by the great room and the garage. The master suite and home office angle off another side of the atrium, as does the guest wing near the entry.

"In most cases, you design a house to be compact, tight," explains Kendle. "In this case, the property was large and relatively flat, so we could spread things out, pull things apart. We treated the house as different sections around the atrium, interspersed with glass, light and views."

SLIDESHOW



At dusk, the home glows lanternlike in the desert. The sand-blasted glass fencing screens private courtyards for the home's indoor/outdoor bathrooms.

The design inspiration came from Arizona's history and geography. "I don't use metaphors often to describe my work," Kendle adds, "but this is my 'metaphor house.' I channeled the feeling of walking through canyons or boulder fields, then coming around to a view, as well as the geology of the mountain. I also thought about Spanish colonial houses and their courtyards, and midcentury Modern houses with atriums for the floor plan."

The architect used angled and squared-off walls made of rammed earth and cast-in-place concrete both inside and out, materials that anchor the house into the desert site and echo the striations of the mountain. Dark, weathered steel cladding on the garage and other parts of the house features horizontal ribs, which cast shadow patterns as the sun moves throughout the day.

From the exterior, the home presents a blank face to the street, with walls angling out to frame a sandblasted glass pivot door. Once inside, views are revealed. Floor-to-ceiling glass surrounds the atrium, allowing glimpses of the great room and home office from the entry.

The centerpiece of Kendle's design is the pavilion-like great room—an open space that includes the kitchen, living and dining areas, surrounded on two sides by sliding glass walls, beneath a roof that floats on metal posts, allowing broad vistas of Camelback. The ceiling, clad in Douglas fir, adds warmth and drama to the space. With numerous facets and angles, the ceiling is interspersed with dark, narrow channels that discreetly hide lighting and air vents.

The room opens up to a pool patio, sheltered by an expansive roof overhang. The pool itself comes right up to the house, doubling as a reflective surface that throws light onto the ceiling and walls. "When the light is right, the roof looks like a monsoon thunderhead," Kendle says, "and there's a Zen-like moment when the reflection of the pool water moves across the walls. That's why I call this house 'Dancing Light.'"

Kendle's poetic touches extended to other rooms. In the master suite, the angled ceiling line is repeated. A corner window offers a glimpse of the mountain from the bed, while a two-sided glass fireplace at the foot of the bed frames views of the swimming pool. In the master bath, a glass wall in the shower slides back to access a private courtyard, encircled by sandblasted glass walls, which look crystalline in moonlight. The two guest bedrooms also offer views of Camelback, as well as have access to private bathroom courtyards. Hallways are interspersed with slot windows or end in glass walls, bringing more light patterns into the house. In the powder room, a low slot window allows visitors glimpses of the desert floor.



SLIDESHOW



Slot windows in the rammed earth wall and a glass wall cast light in the guest wing hall, where a sculpture by Jeremy Thomas is a focal point.



Building Kendle's design was no easy task, but Meek relished the challenge, tackling everything from ensuring that the house was positioned and built to avoid runoffs from washes that crossed the property to providing concierge service to maintain the property once it was finished.

"This was the first time we did a rammed earth house," says Meek, "so we had to sequence the construction a little differently from a standard, framed house."

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The 8-inch-thick concrete walls and the 2- to 3-foot-thick rammed earth walls—made of cement mixed with fine, decomposed granite—necessitated making plumbing and electrical decisions early. Any changes would mean gouging or redoing the solid walls. To speed things along, Meek had his construction team build extra wood forms for new sections of wall while others were being filled and tamped down with the earth mix, rather than using one set of forms and waiting for the walls to set.

The ceiling configurations were another challenge for Meek and his team. "You really see just the ceiling," he says. "The shade pockets, the lights and the vents were all carefully built in and hidden."

Because some of the major finish materials were in place early during the construction, they had to be protected during the rest of the building process. "The rammed earth, the concrete, the glass—these were finished surfaces that were installed sooner than normal," Meek explains, "so we had to work carefully."

Interior designer Miller, a Phoenix Home & Garden Masters of the Southwest award winner, also played an important role from the start of the project. He specified interior finishes and plumbing fixtures and custom-designed items that included bathroom cabinetry, office shelving, interior doors and the kitchen's light fixture. He also collaborated with the lighting consultant to make sure the home's essence was maintained after sunset.

When it came to selecting furnishings and art, Miller had a good idea about Knight's tastes. "I've worked with Randy on his homes since 1992," he says, "so I knew he wanted a house that wasn't just beautiful but also was something he could live in, something warm and comfortable. The interior had to complement the very gestural, gravity-defying architecture."

While some designers might have gone with a minimalist, steel-and-glass aesthetic for the interior, Miller instead wanted a tactile, organic response to the earthy walls, choosing inviting furnishings in neutral hues, sparked with a few pops of rusty orange. "This house didn't need a lot of furniture," Miller says, "and we didn't want pieces that were too assertive. We went for a more subtle look."

SLIDESHOW



A side view of the home's front entrance reveals the materials palette of rammed earth, metal, concrete, wood and glass.

Like the furnishings, the kitchen was also a critical element. To make sure it fit with the overall aesthetic of the home, kitchen designer Robert Moric, also a Phoenix Home & Garden Masters of the Southwest award winner, was charged with creating an appropriate work space. “The kitchen is part of the great room,” he notes, “a space that’s primary to the home’s design with the roof and the views. It’s too dramatic of a space to stick in a microwave or a hood. The kitchen had to be part of the architecture, to disappear.”

Moric created a sleek, monolithic block of back cabinetry, clad in vertical grain walnut, that hides pull-out pantries, an appliance garage and the refrigeration system. The long island, with its stainless steel countertop, includes an induction cooktop with a disappearing downdraft venting system. Behind the main kitchen, a large butler’s pantry is basically a secondary kitchen, which includes the ovens, a workspace for catered dinners and a place to hide a party’s mess. “We managed to ‘de-kitchen’ the kitchen,” says Moric, “but it still functions efficiently.” Outdoors, the home’s landscape provides gathering spots and echoes the structure’s architectural lines. The basic approach, says landscape architect Shari Zimmerman, was more polished surfaces and enhanced plantings closer to the house, and a more natural look at the property’s perimeter.

SOURCES

Architect: Brent Kendle, AIA, LEED AP; Kendle Design Collaborative, Scottsdale, kendledesign.com. Builder: Jerry Meek, Desert Star Construction, Scottsdale, desertstarconstruction.com. Interior designer: David Michael Miller, David Michael Miller Associates, Scottsdale, davidmichaelmiller.com. Kitchen designer: Robert Moric, Bulthaup Scottsdale, bulthaupaz.com. Landscape architect: Shari Zimmerman, GBtwo, Scottsdale, gbtwo.com. Lighting consultant: Creative Designs in Lighting, Scottsdale, cdltg.com. Windows: arcadiainc.com and fleetwoodusa.net.

JERRY MEEK

2017 MASTERS OF THE SOUTHWEST AWARD WINNER

Builders are the unsung heroes of the home design industry, toiling often unrecognized to bring the visions of architects and designers to life—on time and on budget, while maintaining the highest standards of quality.

One such builder is Jerry Meek, owner of Desert Star Construction in Scottsdale. Celebrating his firm's 40th anniversary this year, he has been constructing some of the Valley's most luxurious and—as is the case with the one featured on these pages and many others in past issues of Phoenix Home & Garden—most structurally complicated homes.

But while Jerry is widely recognized for his way with construction materials, he's even more well-known for his way with people.

His passion and drive for excellence influence all aspects of his life. He is, as one client described him, “a man on a mission who loves people.”

Jerry agrees. “We don't do the easy, simple projects. We do the complex ones. And what allows me to do that is the fact that I love people. I love working with them. I love learning from them. I love challenging them to do better. And it's been the input of others that has allowed me to grow.”

Always ready with a positive word and friendly smile, Jerry truly represents what it means to be a Masters of the Southwest award winner. We at Phoenix Home & Garden are pleased to present him with this honor. Congratulations, Jerry!



—The Editors



DESERT STAR CONSTRUCTION

THANK YOU to everyone who through the years have helped make this honor possible – The Masters of the Southwest recognition by Editor-in-Chief Karol DeWulf Nickell and *Phoenix Home and Garden*.

I am grateful for our Clients who provide the vision, resources, and trust in what we as a team can accomplish.

I am grateful for the Architects, Interior Designers, Landscape Architects, Lighting Consultants, and all other Consultants who consistently deliver their best creativity and design plans.

I am grateful for every person who dedicates their time, skills, and talent throughout the construction of each project – our amazing Trade Contractors, Suppliers, and all of those at Team DSC® – past and present.

Last but definitely not least, I would like to acknowledge that nobody has ever accomplished anything great on their own.

I am honored and humbled to be able to stand on the shoulders of giants who believed in me from the very beginning – my Parents, Wife, Family, and Architect George Christensen – who all made a leap of faith when I started this amazing journey 40 years ago.

At Desert Star Construction, we remain dedicated to pursuing excellence knowing that quality and integrity are intentional by design, decision, and perseverance.

With extreme gratitude as we each continue to master the gift within ourselves –

Jerry Meek

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– Jerry Meek
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