

Robb Report

# Vacation Homes

APRIL/MAY 2006

EXCEPTIONAL WATERFRONT, GOLF, COUNTRY, MOUNTAIN AND VINEYARD PROPERTIES

## Indoor-Outdoor Living

**5** Dynamic Second  
Homes In Tune  
With Their Setting



Pro

**Exclusive Properties**

**DAWN DICKINSON**  
480-363-0175  
DAWNDICKINSON@MSN.COM

ARCHITECTURALLY DISTINCT HOMES  
REPRESENTING BUYERS AND SELLER

Lucas

Hotel-Condos

Robb Report  
**Vacation Homes**  
APRIL/MAY 2006 VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3

**FEATURES**

**104 || Mexican Memento**

A honeymooning couple discover their dream vacation property

BY ALEXANDRA DROSU

**114 || Room of Their Own**

How a couple carved out their privacy in a family-friendly second home

BY JODI MAILANDER FARRELL

**124 || Southwest Departure**

The design for a Scottsdale retreat pays tribute to Mexican modernist architecture

BY JORGE S. ARANGO

**132 || Phoenix Rising**

An Asian-inspired home ascends from the ashes of a decimated Malibu estate

BY ANDREW MYERS

**140 || Elements of Surprise**

A Sun Valley residence marries design motifs from around the globe

BY ELIZABETH EXLINE

**On the Cover**

A new Malibu home rises from the flames. Photo by John Edward Linden.



JOHNNY WILLIAMS



**PETER MAGEE ADMITS THAT FOR** much of his life, “I was a suit.” An MBA in finance and an undergraduate degree in economics propelled him into a high-powered corporate consulting career, for which he traveled the world. “I saw a lot of good and bad architecture,” he recalls. But almost unconsciously, he became enamored of the modern Mexican style pioneered by José Villagrán García in the 1920s and honed to minimalist perfection by Luis Barrágan, Juan O. Gorman and Ricardo Legorreta, among others. “I kept encountering it without knowing what it



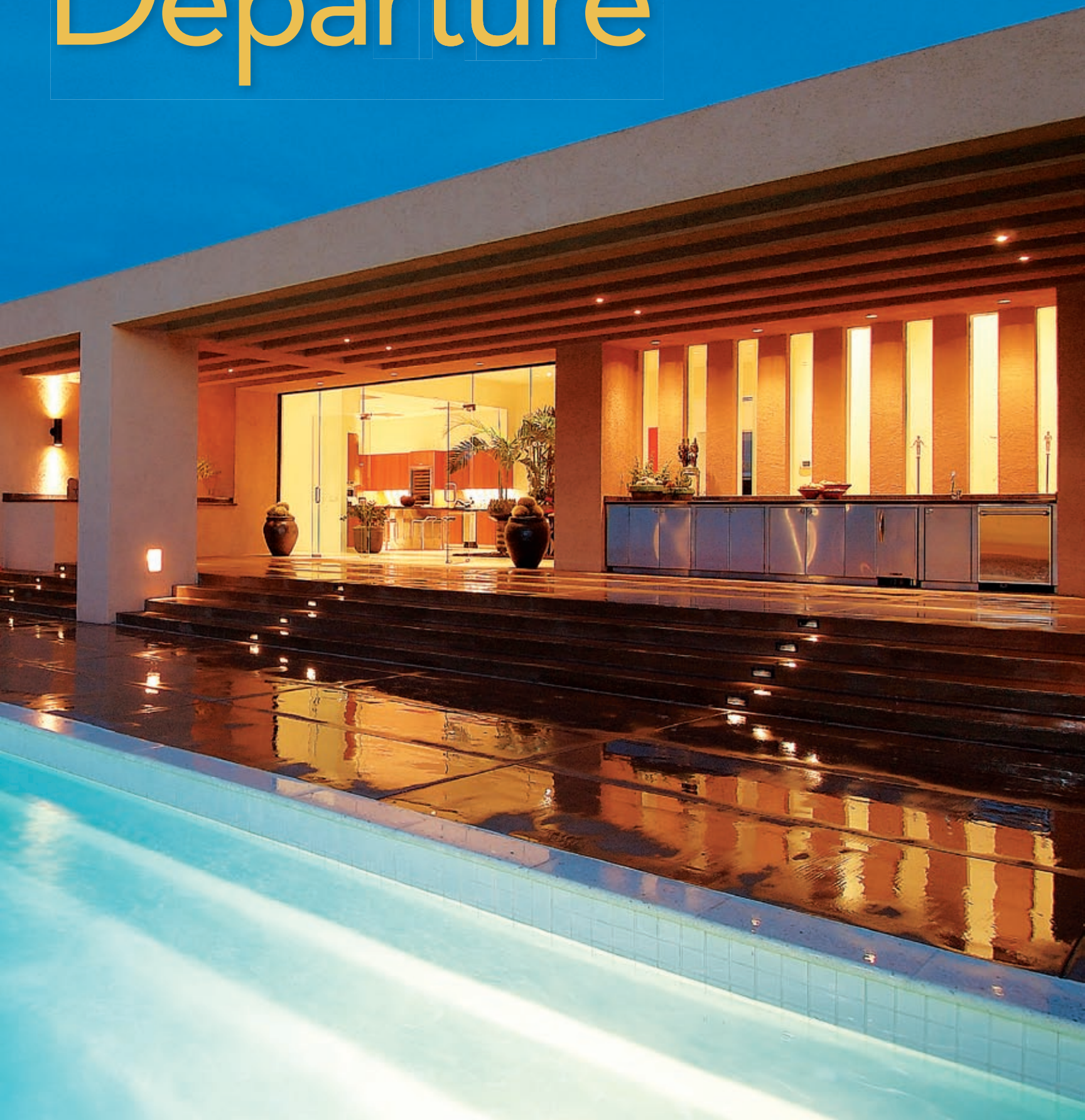
# Southwest



The design for a Scottsdale retreat pays tribute to Mexican modernist architecture

BY JORGE S. ARANGO > PHOTOS BY JOHNNY WILLIAMS

# Departure



## SOUTHWEST DEPARTURE

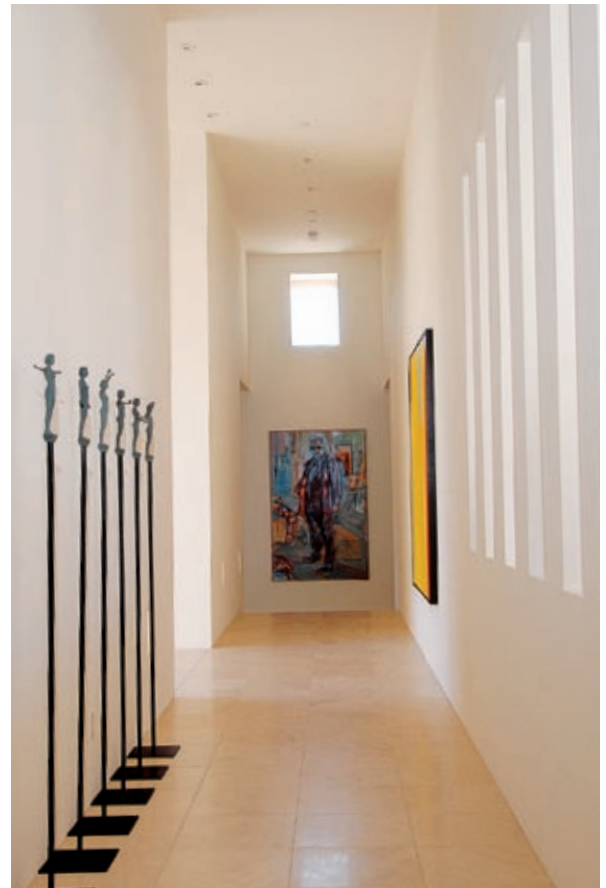


was for many years,” says Magee. “I fell in love with the Hotel Camino Real in Mexico City, which was Legorreta’s masterpiece.”

So when he retired to Scottsdale and found himself restless, Magee decided to teach himself the basics of a computer design program and, by outsourcing the drawing, construction and structural engineering work, founded Magee Custom Homes six years ago. The company’s signature aesthetic is a synthesis of International Style and modern Mexican architecture. “I felt that people would get tired of the Southwest look, and that there was going to be a demand for more contemporary architecture.”

Magee’s instincts were right on. Today his bold contemporary design statements are taking shape at Desert Mountain, an 8,000-acre luxury community on the northern edge of the Scottsdale city limit that backs up against the Tonto National Forest and Continental Mountains. About 1,300 of the master plan’s 2,700 homes have been built amid six Jack Nicklaus–designed golf courses and five clubhouses. While not quite wilderness, it is not unusual to see grazing mule deer or hear reports of stray mountain lions and bobcats slinking into town for a look-see.

And who could blame them? Homes like this contemporary hacienda provide a gorgeous eyeful. Here, Magee experimented with the Mexican courtyard home concept,





This page: The front entrance of this Scottsdale home, currently on the market for \$2.95 million, features a broken wall of rectangular blocks, which creates dramatic shadows on the desert landscaping.

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: A small atrium featuring a Mexican fence post cactus is visible through the dining room window. The deep entry hall features 15-foot-high ceilings and offers expansive wall space for displaying art. The detached building behind the pool houses two guest rooms separated by a breezeway.

Previous spread, main image: Architect Peter Magee relied on a synthesis of International Style and modern Mexican architecture. Inset images: Magee uses geometric wall cut-outs to create patterns of light and frame views.

## SOUTHWEST DEPARTURE

Right: A wall-mounted sink in the guest bedroom stands out against an eggplant-hued wall and vividly colored art.

Below: The master bath features a floating vanity, Hansgrohe vessel sinks and a limestone floor. The window grid, visible in the mirrors, breaks up views while maintaining privacy.

Opposite page: The sculpturally landscaped entrance frames an abstract Louis Leon Ribak painting just beyond the glass doors.

surrounding a sparkling 12-by-40-foot pool on three sides with the main house—and on the fourth with a detached structure accommodating two guest bedrooms connected by a breezeway. The 5,145 square feet of living space is balanced by a 4,000-square-foot patio, all of it sitting on just over an acre. The sales price of \$2.95 million includes the deferred equity golf membership (\$325,000), which provides access to all courses and clubhouses, as well as concierge member services, in case you need to make reservations at a downtown restaurant or book a dirt bike camping tour of the surrounding desert.

You approach the main house along a path of 200-year-old stone pavers from Mexico, then walk through double glass doors into an entryway with a 10-foot ceiling that quickly soars to 15 feet once you hit the foyer. Inside, there are long hallways, generously proportioned rooms and what seems like miles of wall space. The gallery look is intentional. “If they’re not art collectors when they buy the house, they’ll become collectors,” says Magee, “because there is so much wall space just begging for art.”

Magee has populated these particular walls with abstract works by, among others, Elaine de Kooning and Louis Leon Ribak, the legendary Taos artist who studied in New York



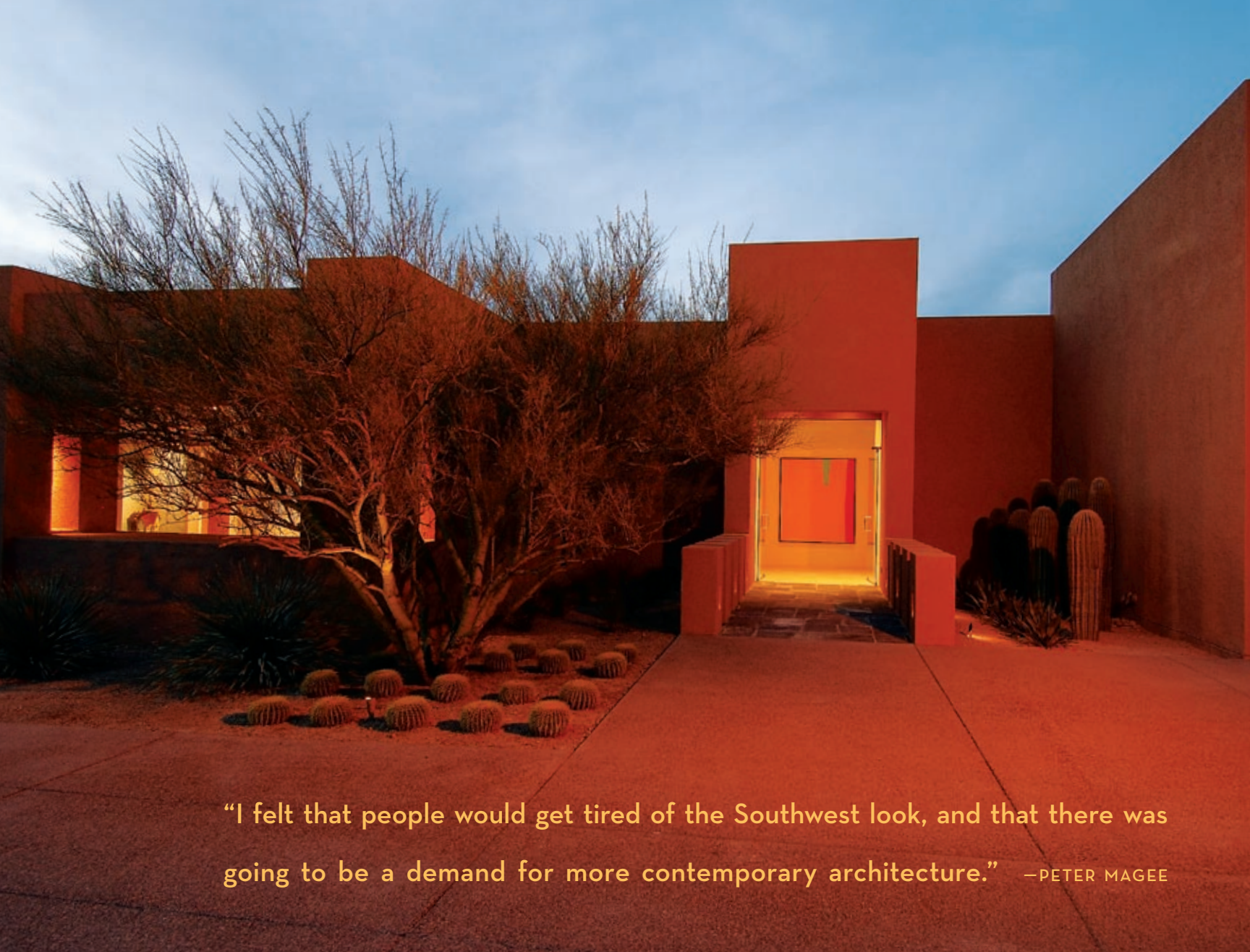
under John Sloan in the 1930s and moved to New Mexico to live out his days. Magee also installed low-voltage lighting throughout the house—all wired to a programmable Lutron system—specifically with art in mind. (Realtor Dawn Dickinson gladly provides quotes on request for anyone interested in purchasing the house complete with artwork and furnishings.)

There is another reason for the ample wall space, says Magee. “The wall is almost a sacred element of Mexican architecture,” he explains. “Carving it up to create plays of light and shadow has become a feature of the style.” Magee has followed suit, slicing vertical slits into some walls to frame particular views or, in the case of the master bath, punching out a grid of squares that breaks up the view in tantalizing

ways while conserving a degree of privacy. Other rooms get the full panoramic treatment, with International Style glass walls that open up to expansive views of mountains and flaming sunsets.

Magee also likes to cut into walls without going clear through, thereby adding architectural interest to rooms. For example, a recessed illuminated alcove in the dining room creates drama, as well as provides space for exhibiting a small sculpture. And, in the great room, Magee pushed back a low





**“I felt that people would get tired of the Southwest look, and that there was going to be a demand for more contemporary architecture.” —PETER MAGEE**

horizontal section of wall and cut further into it to accommodate the gas fireplace.

The whole house is shot through with structured wiring and has five temperature zones with humidifiers and electronic air cleaners. Magee also included a centralized reverse-osmosis water purification system with a 165-gallon tank that recycles regularly, so the water never stagnates. That means you can leave for weeks, but when you turn on the tap in the kitchen (which is outfitted with cherry cabinets, granite counters, Sub-Zero and Wolf restaurant-grade equipment), you will always have fresh water—no small concern in the desert.

Outside, the harsh midday sun is broken up with porticos of glue laminate beams (“stronger than steel” says Magee), that are covered in stucco. The buildings look like adobe, but are actually a combination of concrete block and wood frame sheathed in stucco. “This house ain’t goin’ anywhere,” jokes Magee.

And what would modern Mexican architecture be without a graphic, deeply hued, Barragán-like wall? Here it stretches—low, languorous and painted a rich, saturated blue—along one short end of the pool. A square pipe pierces a smaller earth-tone wall in front of it and empties water into the pool, just like one of the fountains at Barragán’s San Cristobal stables.

The soothing sound of the water’s flow, sublime simplicity of clean, intersecting stucco and glass planes, and severe beauty of the Arizona desert glimpsed through openings in the walls . . . all of these would please the famous Pritzker Prize-winning Barragán, who once said, “Any work of architecture which does not express serenity is a mistake.”

Certainly, there is no mistake here.



**Magee Custom Homes**, 480.488.0090

**Dawn Dickinson**, Exclusive Properties of Arizona

480.363.0175, [www.eprealtors.com](http://www.eprealtors.com)