



From top: Situated on 5 acres in Scottsdale, this two-story home blends into the desert environs; natural light bathes the kitchen, outfitted with white oak cabinetry.

MODERN NATURE

When Marmol Radziner designs for the Sonoran Desert, magic ensues.

By Riki Altman-Yee // Photography by Bill Timmerman

“Our goal was to make it feel like this house grew out of the natural landscape,” explains Ron Radziner, one of the architects behind a 5,000-square-foot oasis recently realized in the Sonoran Desert. Commissioned by a Midwestern couple, the project was the first Los Angeles-based design-build firm Marmol Radziner (marmol-radziner.com) completed in the Grand Canyon State.

The firm is known for its award-winning modern designs, including the notable, sensitive renovation of the iconic Kaufmann Desert House in Palm Springs, Calif., designed by modernist Richard Neutra in 1946. The home’s original owner, Edgar J. Kaufmann, commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to build Fallingwater 10 years prior.

Though arid environs were nothing new to Marmol Radziner, this particular build also came with specific directives from the owners. “They wanted a home that would preserve the incredible views,” Radziner recalls, “and they wanted something simple and elegant that would blend seamlessly into the desert terrain.”

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From left: Marmol Radziner varied the home's elevations to provide seamless sight lines. Deep overhangs shelter the pool patio; a river rock wall terminates in the living room, but begins on the home's exterior.



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Before sketching, the firm had to consider how to situate the home to allow for the most privacy. Designers also had to study the way water would move across the site in a storm, since the 5-acre parcel has two washes. To that end, drainage courses were added and various elevations were incorporated into the structure's design, resulting in sightlines that are equally pleasing from both the sunken outdoor patio and second-story office.

Marmol Radziner also integrated stepped rooflines out of respect for the horizon. To ensure the structure would blend in with its surroundings, the firm generally used darker browns and earthen tones on the exterior. A dramatic river rock wall, Radziner explains, "pierces" the house horizontally and vertically: "You see it at the parking court. Then it comes through a wall that follows through the front entry; then it becomes the back of the kitchen, and it reappears at the other end at the fireplace."

Marmol Radziner sourced travertine slabs in the master bath, red cedar for ceilings and poured concrete for the floors.

The great room, which is enclosed on two sides by telescoping glass walls, is the heart of the home. Depending on where occupants sit, they enjoy views of Pinnacle Peak or the McDowell Mountains, while a large overhang restricts blasts of sunlight. Three bedrooms and three bathrooms are also found on the ground floor, with an office near the kitchen. Another office is stacked above, providing a space where the "man of the house" can practice guitar.



A glass bridge extends from the living room over one of the site's natural washes, leading guests to private quarters. Marmol Radziner's landscape architecture unifies the tableau, where native succulents decorate the home's entry and an outdoor living space, otherwise comprising a dining area, grill and fire pit overlooking the pool and desert.

Indoors and outdoors, day and night, this home is a testament to how beautiful life in the desert can truly be. ●

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—RON RADZINER »