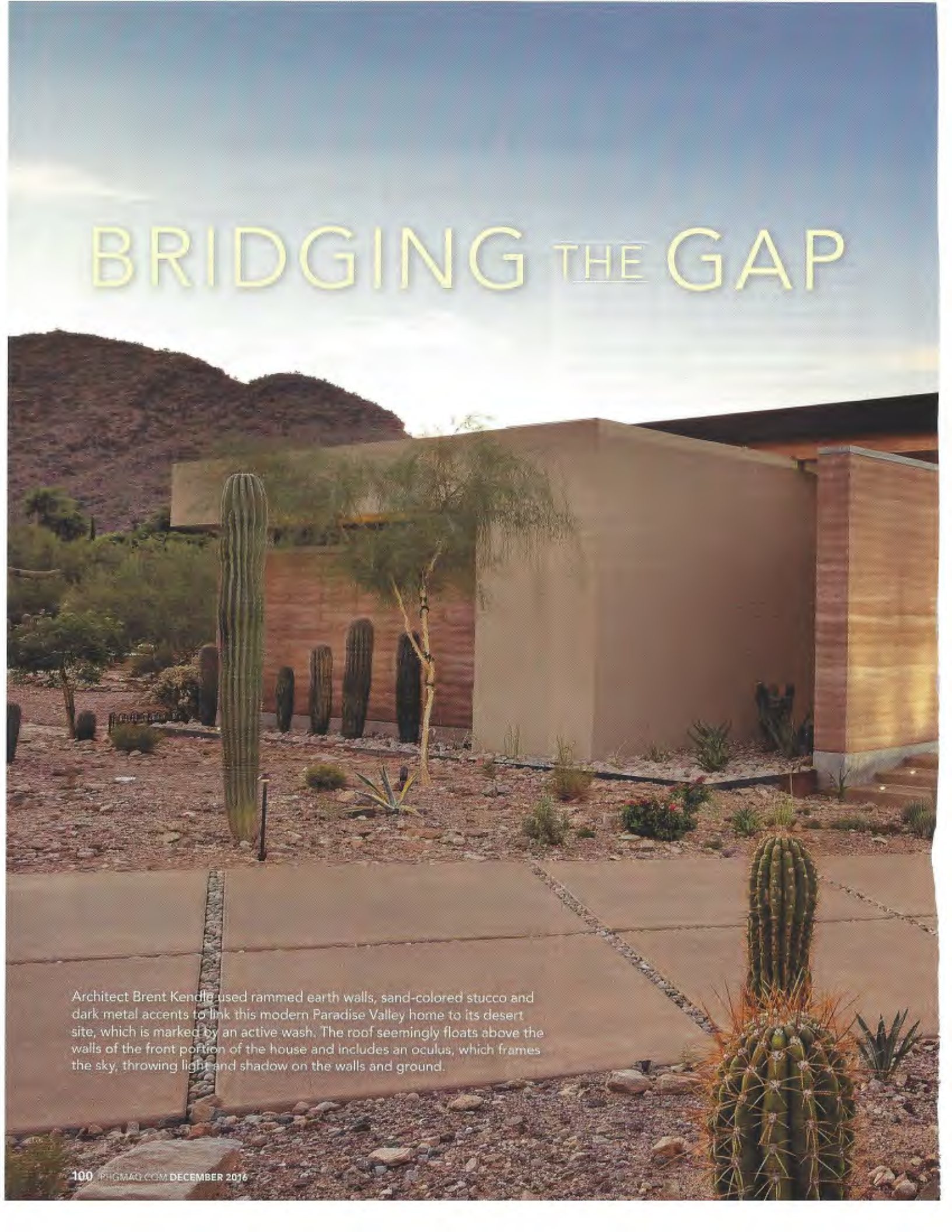
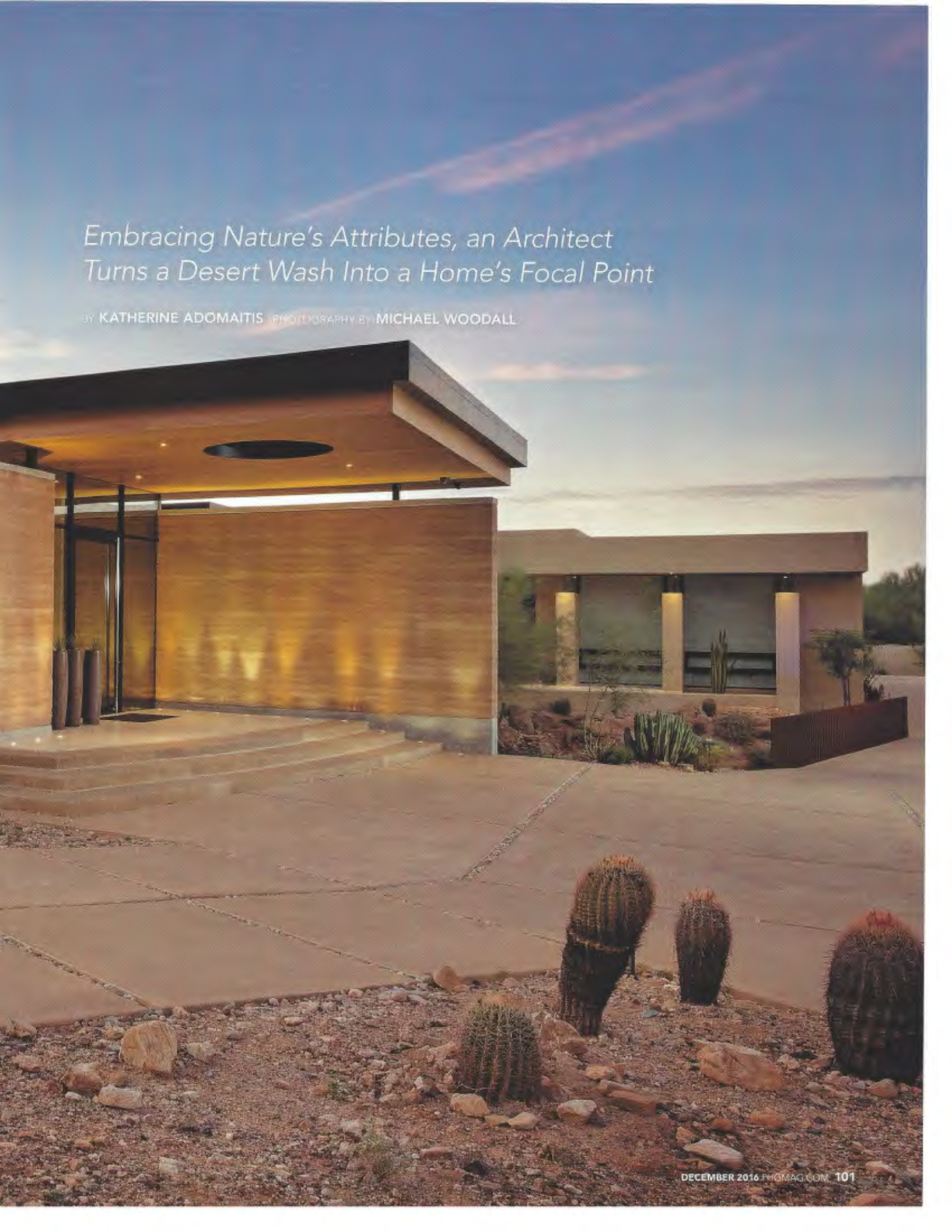


BRIDGING THE GAP



Architect Brent Kendle used rammed earth walls, sand-colored stucco and dark metal accents to link this modern Paradise Valley home to its desert site, which is marked by an active wash. The roof seemingly floats above the walls of the front portion of the house and includes an oculus, which frames the sky, throwing light and shadow on the walls and ground.

A photograph of a modern desert home at dusk. The house features a large, covered patio area with a prominent wall of water. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, with a few wispy clouds. The foreground shows a concrete patio and some desert landscaping, including several barrel cacti and rocks.

*Embracing Nature's Attributes, an Architect
Turns a Desert Wash Into a Home's Focal Point*

BY KATHERINE ADOMAITIS PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL WOODALL

The architect designed the house in two parts, placing the entrance, office and guest quarters to the right and the main house to the left. Both are linked by a glass-walled bridge that spans the wash. Landscape architect Chad Robert placed sculptural plantings closer to the house and softened the edges of the wash with native shrubs and trees. The metal sculpture is by Chris Farrell.





FOR SOME PROSPECTIVE BUYERS, THE

Paradise Valley property had a large challenge: A major wash bisects the site, making it difficult to envision building a traditional house on the one-acre lot. But when the current owners—a couple with two young children—first laid eyes on the parcel, they knew it was the perfect place to build their family-friendly, desert-centric home.

“Some people saw the active wash as a drawback,” admits the husband, an attorney, “but we saw it as a unique opportunity to celebrate the desert landscape, a place where we could build a modern, functional and outdoor-oriented house.”

However, the couple wasn’t sure exactly how to capture that opportunity. “We knew it might be challenging,” recalls the wife, a pediatric nurse who’s now a stay-at-home mom. “We couldn’t figure out how we could get all the rooms we wanted onto the lot. We thought we’d have to build everything at the back of the property, behind the wash.”

To make their vision a reality, the couple enlisted the expertise of architect Brent Kendle, known for his modern, airy designs. “We came up with the concept right away,” says Kendle, “putting part of the house toward the street, then bridging the wash with a gallery that connects the front to the main part of the house at the back of the lot.”

The husband concurs. “Brent met us on the site and basically sketched out the house on a piece of paper on the back of his car. That initial drawing is pretty much what we built.”

The 6,700-square-foot home is divided into two sections: On the north side of the wash are the entry, a guest suite and an office that cantilevers out over the wash. An interior bridge crosses over the wash and leads to the dining room, kitchen, great room, master suite, two children’s bedrooms and a playroom. The driveway to the garage, located at the side of the main house, also bridges the wash.

Working with builders Tim Cooper and Mark Doerflein, Kendle specified materials that link the house to its natural desert setting, including



ABOVE: Floor-to-ceiling windows flood the dining room with light and views. The modern table and chairs are a study in contrast to the antique Chinese chest, a family heirloom. The painting is by Paul Tom.

RIGHT: At the end of a hallway, a Buddha rests on a Japanese chest. Both were passed down generation to generation.

smooth, sand-colored stucco walls, rammed-earth accent walls and dark metal details. Generous expanses of window walls blur the lines between indoors and out, while a line of clerestory windows makes the roofline appear to float above the walls. Deep overhangs provide shade and stretch the house out into the landscape. Kendle also designed circular cutouts, known as oculi, for the overhangs, which throw ever-changing light and shadow patterns on the house.

“The two parts of the house connected by the bridge are basically pavilions,” says Kendle, “It’s like living under a large shade structure in the desert.”

Indoors, tongue-in-groove Douglas fir cladding adds warmth and interest to the tall ceilings, while pale porcelain tile flooring serves as a counterpoint to the exposed rammed-earth accent walls.

One of Kendle’s design challenges for the home’s interior was creating spaces where the owners could display their extensive collection of paintings and Asian antiques. “We had to balance the use of windows with enough wall space for art,” Kendle explains.

To do so, the architect introduced two walls for larger artworks in the entry. For the bridge, he lined one side that overlooks desert and mountain with floor-to-ceiling glass, while the opposite side serves as a long wall for gallery-style hangings. To keep the gallery side of the bridge from seeming too enclosed, he added short slot windows along the floor line—just high enough for the couple’s two children to peer through at the wash below.





The bridge linking the two parts of the house doubles as a gallery where the homeowners can display part of their extensive art collection. The short slot windows—just at the right height for small children—offer a peek at the wash below and cast patterns of light on the floor.



Everything had to work for our kids
and the puppy, too. We didn't want to
keep saying 'don't touch.'”

—The homeowner



In the great room, window walls open to link the patio with the kitchen, living and informal dining areas. Porcelain tile flooring underscores the setting, while the ceiling is brightened by clear-coated Douglas fir tongue-in-groove cladding. The ample custom dining table and sectional are favorite family hangout spots.



Custom sapele cabinetry and the island's marble countertop add drama to the kitchen. A butler's pantry behind the main kitchen has a dishwasher and refrigerator, easing party prep and cleanup.



Kendle also designed in several focal points at the end of hallways or between rooms where the antiques could be displayed.

“We love art,” says the husband, “and we collect paintings by American and European artists, as well as by friends. It’s part of our life.”

To complement the home’s architecture and their art collection, the couple chose large-scale furniture with sleek lines for much of the house, commissioning several pieces from local craftspeople.

“We wanted furniture with clean, neutral colors so that the art would stand out,” says the wife, “but we didn’t want the rooms to look cold or museumlike. Everything also had to work for our kids—and the puppy, too. We didn’t want to keep saying ‘don’t touch.’”

In the dining room, a custom wood table and angular, modern chairs share space with a Chinese chest. In the great room, a roomy charcoal-hued sectional paired with another custom wood table, encircled by classic Eames molded fiberglass chairs, makes entertaining and family gatherings a breeze. The elongated kitchen island, clad in bold black and white silver wave marble, is lined with a row of metal and wood pneumatic barstools so that younger family members can be part of conversations and dinner preparation.

In the bedrooms, the looks are more transitional. The master suite’s upholstered headboard and deep armchairs soften the room’s frameless



TOP: An oculus in the roof casts a circle of light on the patio, which overlooks the wash. Overscale furnishings guarantee lingering.

ABOVE: The striations of the patio’s rammed earth wall provide a Zen-like backdrop for everyday relaxing, as well as special occasion entertaining.

An antique Tibetan chest and two Chinese chairs create a vignette in a hallway linking the bedrooms. Sake bottles and Japanese woodblock prints add to the worldly setting.



It's like living under a large shade structure in the desert. —Brent Kendle, architect



The husband's desk and chair—family heirlooms—have found a new home in the office, which cantilevers over the wash. The Chinese scholar's rock in the corner is a meditative piece.



TOP: The master bathroom's corner window and slot windows in the shower offer a sense of plain air bathing. Motorized shades provide privacy.

ABOVE: Custom floating sapele cabinetry adds definition to the vanity in an otherwise pale-hued master bathroom.

See Sources.

corner window, which overlooks the wash. The kids' rooms reflect their personalities: Hers is pastel and princesslike; his is darker-hued and sporty.

Outdoors, landscape architect Chad Robert created several zones for the house. "We used strong, architectural plantings in a grid pattern closer to the house to complement its design," explains Robert, a *Phoenix Home & Garden Masters* of the Southwest award winner. "Away from the house, we used native materials, such as bursage, brittlebush and creosote, to blend the property into the natural desert."

In the back, Robert created what he calls a "green zone" of lush plantings, a lawn for children's games and raised vegetable beds so the owners could grow everything from asparagus to zucchini, all enclosed by a solid garden wall. Robert also planned a negative-edge pool overlooking the wash, something the owners will likely tackle when their children are older.

Now that they have settled into the house, the family is enjoying both the design and setting. When the weather is mild, the great room's window walls open wide, linking to the shaded patio overlooking the wash. Almost daily, family members spot desert creatures, including bobcats, javelinas and coyotes. An adopted desert tortoise lives in an enclosure under the cantilevered office. And, yes, the wash has run during storms. "It looks like a rapid when it rains hard," says the husband. "It's amazing." ■



ABOVE: Some of the owners' favorite paintings make a personal statement in the master bedroom. Luxurious bedding and an upholstered headboard add a touch of soft elegance.

RIGHT: Two deep armchairs in the master bedroom offer good vantage points to view the desert through the frameless corner windows. The coffee table is an antique French bellows.

