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ART IN DESIGN

STONE COLD MODERN

ARCHITECTURE: PHX ARCHITECTURE
INTERIOR DESIGN: MICHAEL FERGUSON
TEXT: ERIKA HEET
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With the dramatic mountains of Sedona as inspiration, architect Erik Peterson of PHX Architecture created a home as elegant as it is unencumbered by rules.

Designed for repeat clients, the house, solitary in its siting, melds with the landscape and celebrates its 270-degree views. "We knew we wanted to work with Erik—he's not a cookie cutter guy," says the homeowner.

Having worked within the architectural confines of a private community that leans toward the tile-roofed Mediterranean style for the couple's previous home, Peterson was free to exercise a more unfettered, modern approach this time. "I asked Erik if he could do something much more contemporary and much more personalized," the resident says. Peterson answered with a low-slung house that hugs the contours of the land and straddles the seasonal washes that run beneath it. "This house is

meant to flow with the land and appear as if it's floating on top of the landscape," the owner says. "The idea was to avoid disturbing the land as much as possible."

"It was one of the most spectacular sites in an amazing little community in Sedona," says Peterson, who worked closely with project architect Scott Carson and custom builder Anthony Salcito. "The client wanted all of the rooms to focus on the different buttes in the distance," he says. "We stood together on the lot and identified the specific views for each room." With the washes to contend with, that led to the idea of the home being made up of pavilions that are linked with glass bridges across the washes. "This gives a wonderful effect—when it rains you can stand on the bridge and watch the water flow," Peterson says. "The client also wanted the home to be able to feature spectacular art and sculptures, so it was designed with the circulation as a gallery."



Among the home's most striking sculptures—the quiet, contemplative 1921 nude, *Assunta*, by Georg Kolbe—stands in the entrance hall beneath a chandelier from Holly Hunt. The piece, which belonged to the homeowner's mother, actually influenced the design of the space around it. Similarly, an untitled 1964 Hans Hofmann painting that once belonged to the homeowner's father dominates the great room. Its palette inspired the abstract painting in the hall by local artist Kenneth Peloke. Designer Michael Ferguson—whose interior vision was integral to the flow of the home—allowed the art plenty of space to breathe, and complemented the views with elegant contemporary and modern furniture that provides a steady internal rhythm. "The house turned out much more serene than even I expected," Ferguson says. "It's so calm and restrained. It's very Zen." The great room—with its Liaigre chairs, J. Robert Scott sofa, custom rug from Scott Group Studio and stump tables found at a local linen shop—embody that Zen aesthetic. And where the perfect pieces did not materialize, Ferguson collaborated with the homeowner on designing them (the great room's side tables were one of their creations). "It was a collaborative effort," says Ferguson of the process. "Ultimately, it's the clients' home. My job is to execute an environment for them."

The serenity is also carried in the material palette. "We design with a maximum of three materials—too many materials becomes busy to the eyes," Peterson says. Here, dry stack ledgestone, metal and glass are all that's required. "The ledgestone adds texture and blends into the desert colors," Peterson says. "The metal is a contrast to the stone as it is smooth and dark, and it emulates the deep shadows created by the desert sun. The glass is the transparency that allows the blend of interior and exterior space."

Designing in the desert presents many challenges, but this is well within the team's wheelhouse. "We start first with tracking the sun path and how it moves across the site at all times of the year," Peterson explains of the architectural siting process. In addition, the team never strayed too far from the project's driving force: the views. "We like to frame views with the architecture," notes Peterson. "It is actually more interesting as you move through the home that you see different views. The red rock buttes in the distant view in Sedona are all named for their shapes, like Cathedral, Bell and Coffee Pot. Multi-hued stone formations jut upward from the high desert floor, creating a vivid, mesmerizing setting that changes hourly with the light." ■ PHX Architecture, phxarch.com; Michael Ferguson Interiors, michaelfergusoninteriors.com



