

Coming to Light

For this Scottsdale couple, downsizing led to a bigger, brighter life.

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Interior Design: Janet Brooks, Janet Brooks Design



It was time to downsize. Coming from an 11,000-square-foot Tuscan-style residence, Bob and Shelley Diakiw were ready to make a break from an imposing, fanciful aesthetic and go for a lighter, freer look—and the way of life that a smaller space necessitates. The empty nesters, who split their time between Arizona and Hawaii, didn't need to look far. With its clean lines and incredible light, a 3,000-square-foot condo in their Silverleaf development caught their eye. "She knew you can't take a condo like that and turn it into a Tuscan home," notes designer Janet Brooks, whom the couple tapped to create their interiors. "They wanted something fresh."

The layout of the sunny condo, which prioritizes breathtaking views of the McDowell Mountains from the great room and the spacious deck, was a guiding principle. "The feeling of that area is light," says Brooks. "It's not a place you would do dark finishes." For that reason, Brooks looked to European oak hardwood with a light wire-brush texture for the flooring throughout, and silvery travertine and ivory limestone for the fire surrounds in the great room and the primary bedroom. Polished quartzite countertops and creamy cabinets by Distinctive Custom Cabinetry seamlessly melded the kitchen with the adjacent great room.

Next came the furnishings, and the Diakiws proved they truly were ready for a fresh start—they didn't bring any furniture or art from their prior abode. When it came to choosing pieces, authenticity in style and texture was the name of the game. Shelley was drawn to pieces that were "sophisticated and quiet, a little bit earthy, but not too homespun or rustic," Brooks says.

It started with the area rug in the great room. In shades of gray-green, ivory and bronze-brown, the palette echoes the surrounding environs and lays a neutral backdrop that continues throughout the residence: burnt-copper wallpaper in a guest bedroom; bronze-and-crystal accents on the dining room lighting; a mix of grays in the primary bedroom.

Brooks looked to an elegant mix of materials to incorporate the clients' interest in organic yet

refined elements. Given the mountain views, a tactile approach bridges the experience of sight with that of feel. In the great room, a casual nubby beige fabric covers the large sectional and wood-framed armchairs, while a bronze-base glass coffee table and sheepskin pillows add some glamour. Similar pairings repeat in the dining room, where upholstered chairs encircle a round metal-base table with a geometric, patinated top. Above it, a chandelier of cast bronze in the shape of seed buds introduces reminders of the natural world. Luxurious materials elevate the primary bedroom, where accent fabrics, like those on an ottoman and decorative pillows, feature the slightest shimmer. Even the geometric arrangement of slightly raised lines on the wallpaper, which Brooks describes as a "rosy taupe," are metallic.

Brooks also worked with Shelley to acquire a new art collection that would fit the natural, relaxed style of the home. "We found things that we liked, had them brought back to the condo and saw what worked," says Brooks. In addition to a number of paintings, one special find was the collection of ceramic plates by local artist Loren Yagoda that Brooks arranged around the fire surround in the great room. "They provided some texture and a focal point," says the designer. "We needed a pop of geometry that would make a statement on the wall."

The curves of the plates also add a sense of balance to the straight lines of the travertine surround. This was something that Brooks did in every room to ensure that the organic vibe flowed throughout. "You'll notice there are curves on the backs of the dining chairs and the kitchen's bar chairs," she says, as well as on the lamp bases and planters. "It adds a counterpoint to straight lines."

Of course, the success of every project is determined with how the owners feel living there, and it's nerve-racking to downsize by 8,000 square feet. But, Brooks says, over the 15-month-long project her clients got used to the idea of living with less stuff. Now, the homeowners are reveling in their new environment. "She was leery of having to downsize so drastically, but she's found it's freeing," says the designer. "She has everything she needs." ■



An organic sensibility sets the tone in the dining room of this Scottsdale residence designed by Janet Brooks. Ochree's Seed Cloud Chandelier from Town Studio hangs above a table with a hand-forged iron base from John Brooks.

A sofa and swivel armchairs, both from the Vertice Collection by Castello Furnishings and purchased at All American Outdoor Living, provide an opportunity to view the mountains from all angles.





Above: In the corner of the homeowners' bedroom, Brooks created tactile interest with a Century Furniture chair and ottoman, upholstered in a sensual faux-lamb fabric, set against Walker Zanger limestone tiles on the fire surround. A piece by botanical artist Dyana Hesson from Bonner David Galleries ups the ante with a splash of brightness.

Opposite: For the sleeping area of the main bedroom, Brooks used shades of plum, taupe and rose drawn from the carpet from Azadi Fine Rugs. The geometric wallcovering is by Winfield Thybony Design.