

# Design & Architecture

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Arizona Edition\*

\*Inspirations in Design and Art for the Home



Reconsidering  
the City

West By  
Midwest

The Architect's  
Architect

Lighting in  
Home Design

interior design points

# north

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*\*In one bedroom of the 1,700-square-foot African/Ethnic guest house in The Boulders in Carefree, Janet Brooks and her studio combine elements such as a beehive fireplace handpainted by Scottsdale's Timothy Chapman; viga lime-washed to provide tribal inspiration; African artwork by Luis Meque; and a four-poster alder 'tusk-bed.'*



## Interior Design Points

# North

*"Everything in an interior doesn't have to make a statement."*

*J. Brooks Brammer*

**F**or Janet Brooks Brammer, A.S.I.D., and her bei studio, well-directed interior design points north — toward crispness and cool definition, toward the Polar Star of restraint and moderation. “Bei” is Chinese Mandarin for north. A logo of its character — inverted, mirror-image F’s superimposed on a cobalt-blue pyramid — hangs on her studio entrance wall in north Scottsdale, 17785 N. Pacesetter Way, Suite 888 — for clients and associates both a hospitable welcome and a firm affirmation.

“The directional logo appears on all building plans — always with the arrow indicating north,” says Brooks, whose studio employs four, including Melinda Weiland, interior designer; Angelica Henry, interior designer; Amy Schreckengost, receptionist and design assistant; and Celeste Stone, project manager.

While not a minimalist, she endorses the school’s Miesian dicta: “Less is more” and “God is in the details.” For her interiors, she achieves the sharp-edged definition of points north: the “less” of cleanliness, avoiding the “more” of clutter. She paints a winter landscape in which details crisply affirm life and energy. “Janet educates her clients on the need for completing their interior environments with richly executed original pieces that beautifully complement the finishes, fabrics, and furnishings selected for the space,” says Laurie Hayden, a principal of Scottsdale’s Niemann Hayden Fine Art, a regular vendor to bei studio.

While restrained, her work has received unrestrained praise from fellow designers, vendors, and clients. Her interiors are uniformly warm, cozy, and inviting. The key for Brooks is keeping to the direction — achieving a well-focused product in line with the vision of the client(s) as well as her vision of superior interior design. “She is always striving to achieve that unique look, tailored to that specific client,” says Chris Hargrove of Phoenix’ Chasm



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*\*left: Janet Brooks and bei studio combine elements such as a beehive fireplace handpainted by Scottsdale's Timothy Chapman; viga lime-washed to provide tribal inspiration; African artwork by Luis Meque; and a four-poster alder 'tusk-bed.'*

*\*right: Elegant, but unpredictable, A.S.I.D. Showhouse Dining Room with arched Cantara stone doorway and corrugated tin ceiling.*

Woodworks, a company that constructs regularly for bei studio. So, too, Tim Huber of Woodesign of Phoenix, who has milled numerous pieces for bei studio: “Janet has a propensity toward providing unique, creative, and original designs for her clients — a trait very rare among interior designers today.”

“It’s about being selective and using restraint in the design process,” Brooks says. “It’s about resisting the impulse to use too much of a good thing because you love it — whether it’s a color, a shape, a furniture style, or a texture.”

Restraint and moderation point to telling details at bei studio: “The signature of good design is that your eye is drawn to one or two elements in a room,” she says, — “and the rest becomes complementary.”

### Bring Me A Vision, I Will Form It

With restraint and moderation her goals for any project, Brooks will work in almost any genre for her clients: contemporary, Southwestern, Old World, even an uncluttered hybrid that incorporates her standards. “Janet is versatile,” says Mark Taylor, who owns Scottsdale’s Legendary Fine Finishes with wife Valarie. “We have worked together on refined Southwest, Tuscan, and contemporary designs for her — all with Venetian plaster finishes and styles.”

Clients first bring Brooks a vision: For her, it’s an adventure reminiscent of what she describes as her “younger, less cautious years” when she would lose herself in a strange city, state, or country — eventually to find and redefine herself at the end of the journey. Years later, the beginning of every design process offers that same excitement, edginess, and unpredictability. “Janet’s projects are routinely anything but routine,” says Timothy Chapman, an artist who has worked with Brooks.

“Clients don’t always know how to define their taste, their passions, or describe their budding interests,” Brooks says. As a

result, she listens attentively to the said and unsaid, then encourages clients to articulate their interests, to express all elements of their personas, even the less apparent ones such as whimsies and dreams. From here, she prepares two or three options — a “show and tell” including photographs and samples of fabrics, woods, and flooring. Today’s interior designers do just that, she says: They provide a limited number of feasible, exciting design options rather than future-shocking clients with too many choices. Designers are not, as they were once construed, furniture buyers, she says: Designers provide total design visions. “Like an orchestra, you need to see all the pieces together to appreciate the harmony of the design,” says Chasm Woodworks’ Hargrove. “Janet always seems to have the larger picture in mind.”

Brooks was born in central Illinois, so a “keep it simple and direct” Midwestern spirit burns in her craft. She moved to Colorado as a young woman, where she began her interior-design career in the late ‘70s as a showroom manager in Crested Butte, providing design for second homes in the surrounding ski areas. Later she worked in Durango, providing design for a large mixed-use residential/retail/office complex through her “Through the Looking Glass” studio.

She moved to the Valley in 1987 where she relocated her firm to the Scottsdale Airpark.

While new, bei studio continues Brooks’ tradition of providing design for newbuilds or major remodels — projects that can take as long as three exhausting years and the execution of those devilishly divine Miesian details. But, for bei studio, too many details send a project south: “If you pile so much into an interior, you make it lavish. If you make every piece make a statement, there is no statement. You don’t need too many pillows; you need just enough pillows. You have to step it down.”

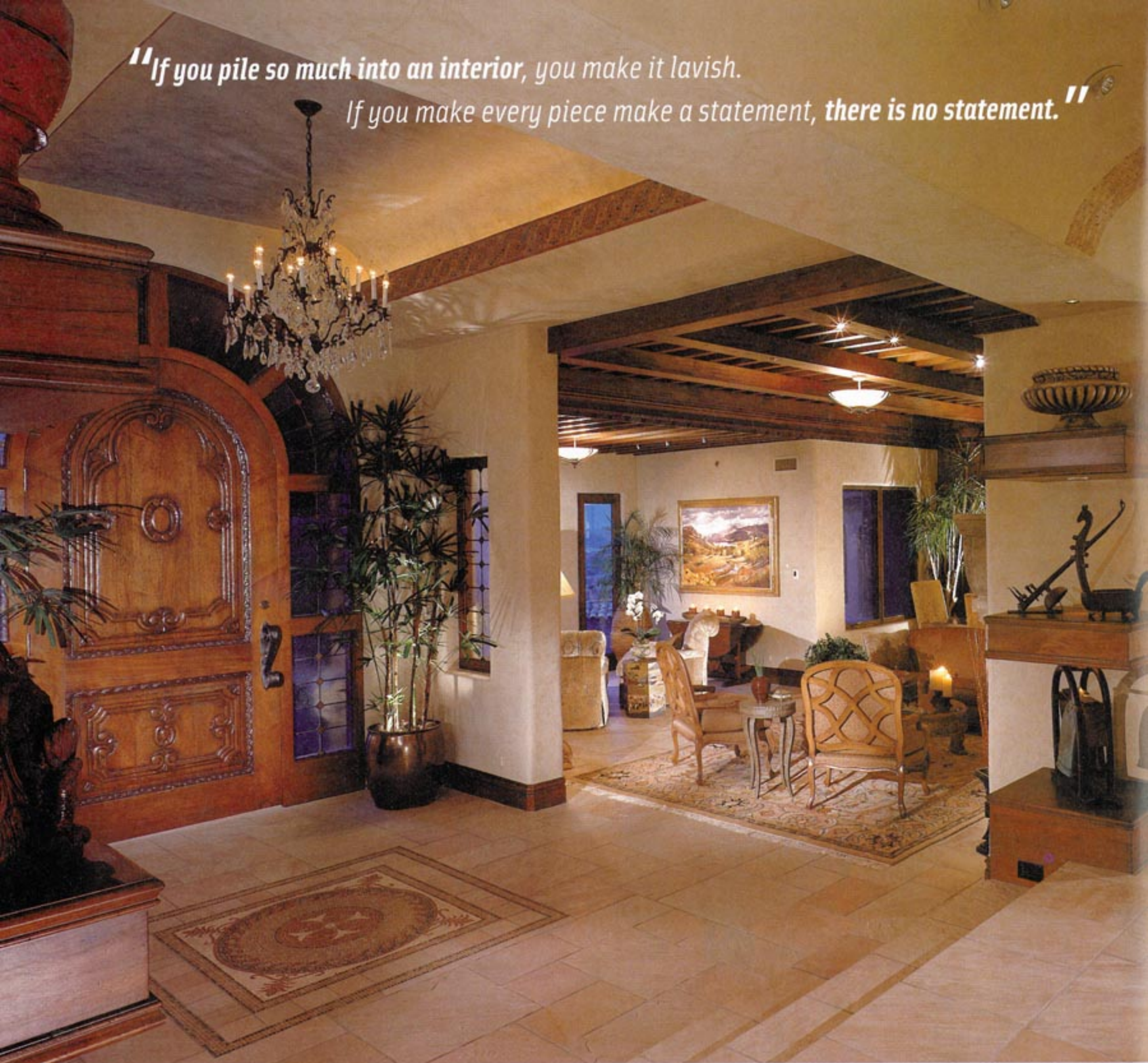
### \*Stretching for the Right Effect

In the hallway of the African/Ethnic guest house at the Boulders, artist Timothy Chapman creates focal-point attraction with his colorful, eccentric “Zheuraffe” munching on greenery as it is encircled by an Edenic snake. The light background of the acrylic on panel creates a three-dimensional illusion, pulling the viewer into the African scene: an adventure in itself. But more: The hand-painted frame is tribal inspired and humorously mirrors the neck of the giraffe, so that the giraffe and the frame stretch down into the desk area below with its playful elephant light, casual black wicker chair, and other effects. “I thought the T-shaped frame would make a nice transition between the shape of the animal’s head and the squarish niche,” says Chapman, who shows much of his work at the Wilde-Meyer Gallery in Scottsdale. For the right effect, sometimes even a wildly talented designer like Janet Brooks just has to stick her neck out. ★



*"If you pile so much into an interior, you make it lavish.*

*If you make every piece make a statement, there is no statement."*



Three recent projects illustrate her ability to work within self-imposed restraints — yet to deliver vivacious, livable interior spaces.

### **Out of Africa and into The Boulders**

Completed in 2002, the 1,700-square-foot guest house in The Boulders in Carefree, built by Mark Malouf on a design by Craig Brown, is itself a safari. The owners purchased the lot adjacent to their main house for the two-bedroom guest house, placing a lush desert garden between the two structures. Brooks had provided the interior design for the Territorial-style main house in the '90s: "We had so much

confidence in her that we allowed her to just run with her wonderful imagination," one of the owners writes.

The owners are frequent world travelers, including trips to South Africa and Botswana. About 95 percent of the guest house comprises African artifacts and designs collected by the owners, including Dominic Benhura's black Zimbabwean springstone sculpture, "Reclining Woman," from the Zuva Gallery at El Pedregal in Carefree, and Suzanne Klotz' "Milagros," a carved wood and mixed-media in the living room, acquired for the project by Linda Corderman when she was the director at the former Suzanne Brown Galleries

(she now owns Corderman Art Resources LLC of Scottsdale).

Still, Brooks calls the interior design African/Ethnic: Various elements exist throughout the guest house, including Indonesian-style corbels in the hallway, native-inspired basketry patterns, and a hand-carved Honduras mahogany coffee table in the living room (by Chasm Woodworks). Brooks: "With Craig Brown, we had to make the architectural style of the building bridge the gap between the Southwestern style and something that would support the African theme that we wanted to carry in the interior."

Hence, she asked Brown to design a



*\*left: Old World in New Scottsdale: Entry Foyer with hand carved front door.*

*\*below: Joe and MaryAnn Beckwith's Contemporary Prairie home in DC Ranch in north Scottsdale features a powder room with angled quartered cherrywood by Woodesign of Phoenix; earthen-tone flagstone; and a fossilstone countertop and integral stone sink by Saban Marble & Granite of Phoenix.*

“Yes, we know you’re expecting an elegant Southwestern-inspired environment here in the Sonoran Desert, but at every turn we’re a day ahead on the itinerary: This environment was not just meant to house you during your stay with us; it was meant to entertain you.” The effect is perpetual surprise and adventure — much like the experiences that generated it.

The beehive fireplace in one of the bedrooms, for example, serves as focal point for the room not only because that is the character of fireplaces in most rooms but because here it is magnificently hand-painted by Scottsdale’s Timothy Chapman — from the earthen-tone base to the extruded flue. It’s agog with activity and excitement: blocks of contrasting earthen and sky colors, foliage, and lizards, and basketry textures. So alive is it that you almost miss the fireplace by admiring it.

“The fireplace is a combination of painting and mosaic — the latter including cowrie shells, animal teeth, and small bronze figurines,” says Chapman, who provided both adventure and authenticity in his designs. “The painted designs and animal figures borrow heavily from various tribal iconographies.” The extruded flue carries a lizard-like creature crawling ceilingward; there the viga extend the decorative elements up and across the ceiling. Still, while the viga are Southwestern inspired, Chapman has lime-washed them with designs distinctly tribal in inspiration, so the effect, again, is surprise: Here Brooks, working with Brown’s architectural details, detours and takes the less-taken road. (Similarly, in the living room, she uses grape stakes on the ceiling running perpendicular to the viga: She selected them instead of the traditional Southwestern latilla as they provide more of a tribal-hut theme.

The artwork to the viewer’s right of the fireplace, “Visiting Grandmother,” is by Luis Meque (1966–1998), also from the Zuva Gallery in Carefree. Its colors, textures, and tribal-inspired frame vibrantly echo those of the fireplace and viga. Its theme is, too, adventure and discovery:

Meque would visit his grandmother in the Mozambican countryside. His acrylic on laminate is a small, significant piece in the overall design. Take it away: The fireplace becomes too focal, too magnetic.

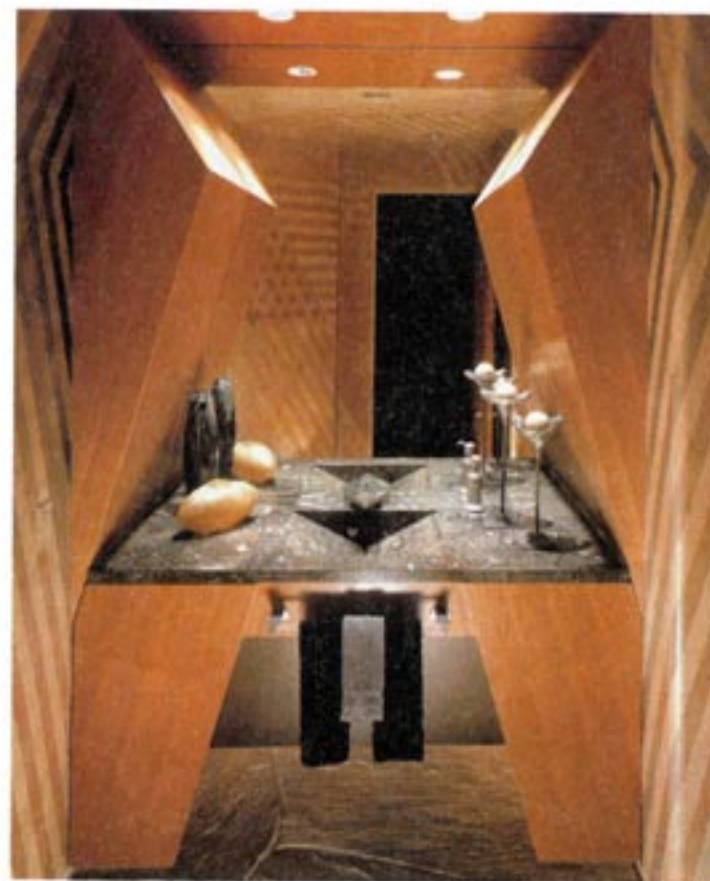
Characteristically, Brooks designs the rest of the bedroom with restraint: the walls are cream, the stained concrete floor carries a red Tibetan area rug, and the television cabinet to the viewer’s left of the fireplace is scrubbed alder. The four-poster “tusk-bed” features black-painted alder posts, providing a textural and color contrast to this fine bedroom, which simply refuses to sleep.

### Soft Contemporary in DC Ranch

Joe and MaryAnn Beckwith’s 6,000-square-foot DC Ranch home in North Scottsdale, looking into the McDowell Mountains, was built and designed by Scottsdale’s Fisher Custom Homes. The home is an adaptation of Contemporary Prairie with large overhangs, a low-pitched flat tile roof, and stone veneer, explains Tom Fisher, the company owner.

Inside, Brooks skillfully interweaves four materials to create a soft contemporary look consistent with the architecture. She combines wood, flagstone, granite, and copper throughout the house (with touches of glasswork). Each of the materials displays its essence as well as participates in the success of the total design. “The simplistic and creative style of our house gives us great pleasure,” MaryAnn says. “We especially feel proud when people walk into our house for the first time and comment on how unique it is and how comfortable the house feels.”

In the spectacular powder room, angled quartered cherrywood by sits on earthen-tone flagstone. Saban Marble & Granite of



ceiling in the main room that pitches from the central point to the windows as well as a radiused exterior wall — providing the feeling of a tribal hut. Boulders’ CC&Rs wouldn’t allow an extreme pitch, however, so the team created much of the tribal effect in other ways: with the dark-stained concrete floor, for instance, simulating a mud floor; and isolating the guest house from the main house — allowing the privacy and tranquility of the remote Serengeti.

Brooks blends a neutral Southwestern palette with a bright African palette, including designs and colors. It is as if she and the owners were saying to guests:

Phoenix fabricated the fossilstone countertop as well as the integral stone sink whose triangularity slickly reaffirms the room's angular theme. The juxtaposition of the woodwork and the countertop defines the room's "organic" spirit.

To provide more angularity and color complementarity, Robert O'Connell deftly painted the stripes on the walls. Further, recessed lighting shimmers on the wood angles and the countertop, creating a dramatic interplay of textures. Behind the cabinetry, the mirror almost hypnotically returns the image of the room: "You almost don't know what you're looking at," Brooks says. But the unpredictability and surprise is intentional — a bei studio trademark.

In the great room, this interplay of basic materials is played out expansively. Flagstone meets granite that meets copper and the quartered cherry wood enclosing the media center. For accent, the etched glass door with applied copper and black detail (by Props Inc. of Scottsdale) provides entry from and egress to the guest area of the house. Kevin Douds, the owner of Props, has riveted 23 copper panels in place — a contrasting grid detail to the otherwise "organic" environment. Further, Saban painstakingly curved the granite slabs in place, providing a seamless flow to the wall. Above, the ceiling soffit, with inset lighting, mirrors the curvature of the media wall.

The mahogany medallion above the fireplace, "Petite Kali Yuga," by Pascal, is from Niemann Hayden Fine Art — one of four such pieces by the French artist in the Beckwith home. Symbolizing polarity, especially male/female (e.g., the right side is natural, the left side stained mahogany),

the medallion offers geometrical interest to the massing of the basic materials generating the overall design. The restrained, neutral furniture was custom built as designed by Brooks. Most of the furniture in the home was built by S.R. Drost Manufacturing of Scottsdale. Note, for instance, the copper-finished sitting stools that complement the copper plates along the media wall.

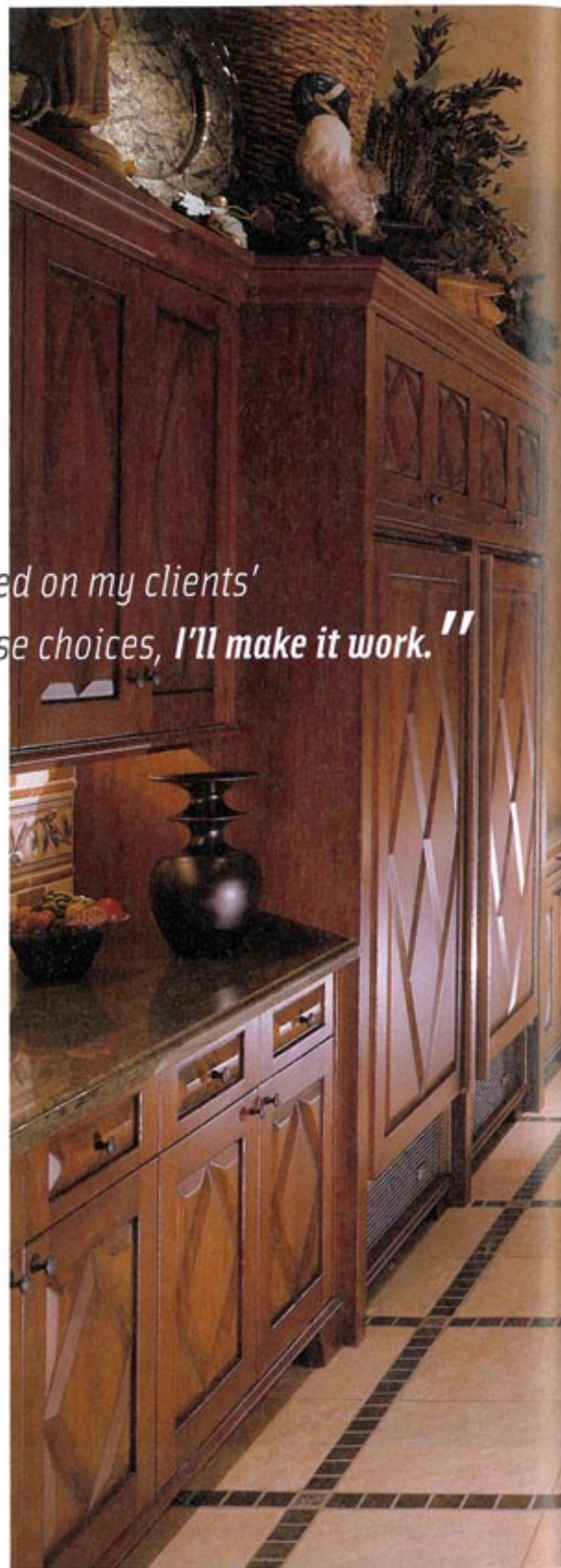
### Old World in New Scottsdale

Brooks was recently asked to deliver Old World elegance to a 6,000-square-foot newbuild in Estancia in north Scottsdale. Designed by Jeff Biever, the home,

*"That's my job — to create based on my clients' choices. From those choices, I'll make it work."*

purchased as a spec, features custom work by a number of Valley artisans to provide a rich, aged, hand-crafted interior design. Legendary Fine Finishes created the rich Venetian plaster walls used in various colors for various effects throughout the interior as well as applied a three-color lime wash to create the appearance of an aged villa on the exterior. Rich Heys of Heys Precision Woodworks in Phoenix crafted the Honduran mahogany cabinets and

*\*below: Soft Contemporary: Beckwith Residence - In the great room of the Beckwith home in north Scottsdale's DC Ranch, Brooks skillfully combines four basic materials: flagstone, granite, copper, and quartered cherrywood, which encloses the media center. For accent, Props Inc. of Scottsdale has etched the entryway glass door with applied copper and black detail.*



front door — the latter with hand-tooled designs and scroll work. On the front door, for instance, Heys mirrors the arch-shaped doorway in his design as well as the mosaic pattern that sits in the gauged cream-colored flagstone.

The kitchen is rich, elegant, yet warm, inviting, a place where, just looking at it, you expect to smell the wafting aromas of saucy Pasta Primavera or Veal Marsala. Central to the aged, Old World spirit is the millwork of Heys in the alder cabinetry:







*\*above: Old World in New Scottsdale - Kitchen Brooks cooks up Old World elegance in an Estancia home in north Scottsdale with Venetian plaster work by Legendary Fine Finishes of Scottsdale; cabinetry by Heys Precision Woodworks of Phoenix; granite countertops; and a focal-point Tuscan-inspired Cantara stone range hood.*

Note the radiused work on the island, how it mirrors the curve of the granite-top. The computer-cut groovework in the softly antiqued wood establishes a triangular/rectangular theme that is mirrored in the squared gauged-flagstone floor. The granite countertops — called Uba Tuba granite — offer color and textural contrast. Square pieces of the countertop border the flagstone with pewter-color medallions at each corner; these medallions are also evident on the cook-top wall. The focal point

of the room is the Tuscan-inspired range hood — formed from soft Cantara stone from Mexico. Above it is an Old-World style charger. Further, Brooks picks up the semi-circle of the clerestory window in the range-hood facade.

The owners, who contracted with Brooks to design the interior because of her success in another of their homes, are thrilled with New World happiness about the Old World results. “Janet created an interior that was so much to our liking,

taste, and way of living,” one of the owners says. “She captured our character in the house -- so much so that our guests believe we have lived there all of our lives. Janet brought our spirit to life by listening to what we said. The result is everything, and more, than what we dreamed of.”

Brooks is also pleased: “Here we’ve paid tribute to a style or period,” she says. “That’s my job — to create based on my clients’ choices. From those choices, I’ll make it work.” \*