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ZEN GLAMOUR

A COUPLE SEEKING A SENSE OF CALM WITH A HINT OF SPARKLE BUILD A HOUSE THAT EMBODIES BOTH TRANQUIL SIMPLICITY AND RESTRAINED OPULENCE.

WRITTEN BY **JORGE S. ARANGO** / PHOTOGRAPHY BY **NICK JOHNSON**

INTERIOR DESIGN / STEWART ALLEN, STEWART EDWARD ALLEN DESIGN
ARCHITECTURE / HUGH HUDDLESON, HUGH HUDDLESON, ARCHITECT
HOME BUILDER / GLENN FARNER, GEF DEVELOPMENT, LLC

Designer Stewart Allen set a glamorous Zen-like mood in the entryway with his own designs, including a bronze door and a white bronze-and-walnut burl console fabricated by Gregory Hay Fine Furnishings in Sebastopol, California. The lamps are by Marian Jamieson Furniture & Lighting, and the Waldorf mirror is by Quintus.



Practiced meditators believe in the life-changing power of inner stillness. Among its many other benefits, they say, it can also loosen fixed viewpoints and open us to other possibilities. California-based designer Stewart Allen, a meditation practitioner for 25 years, knows this to be true. Still, it was wondrous for him to observe the way the concept of stillness impacted the design of a Scottsdale home. In initial meetings, his clients—serial home builders with two grown daughters and seven grandchildren—wanted “something that relates to the desert, but with a very calming, spa-like and sophisticated interior,” says the wife. When they introduced the word “Zen” as a descriptor, the idea both pleased and mystified Allen, who asked, “Do you want a cup-of-green-tea-on-a-cedar-tray Zen?” To which the wife replied, laughing, “You know my taste Stewart. Let’s call it glamour Zen.”

Leaving their designer to ponder that dichotomy, the clients decamped to the Amangiri resort in Canyon Point,

Utah, for a vacation that would prove transformative. “When we drove up to the resort, it looked like it just emerged out of the desert,” recalls the wife. “It was so lovely, warm and quiet, with beautiful wood, lighting and stone details.” The place filled them with a sense of well-being and confirmed their instincts that their desire for a contemporary home that both reflected the environment and was welcoming could be achieved.

Having built about 30 homes with San Francisco-based architect Hugh Huddleson, the couple leaned on him again to manifest the serenity they hoped to achieve in earthly dimensions. Huddleson admits being influenced by one of modern architecture’s masters. “Frank Lloyd Wright has been with me since I was 6,” he says. “The stone in this house is a little like Taliesin, and there are also similarities with his Hollyhock House. But I was more interested in paring it down to geometric gestures, so it looked like abstracted boulders and rock ledges in the landscape.”

To create an organic house in keeping with the Natural Area Open Space that surrounds it, architect Hugh Huddleson combined walls of stucco and Oklahoma sandstone from Anasazi Stone Company. The cedar eaves are trimmed in blades of copper.

The living room's Sao Paulo sofa from Holly Hunt and the club chairs by Anees Upholstery face a fireplace and a grooved Petra Antiqua limestone wall from Cactus Stone & Tile. The custom coffee table is made of reclaimed walnut and wire-brushed oak, and the John Lyle Design Canon floor lamps sport shades fashioned by Allen.



The double-sided fireplace in the living room is clad in bronze-leaf limestone. From the sitting area on the opposite side, it's possible to look through the flames and out to the desert. The small wood chair is from the homeowners' collection.

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-STEWART ALLEN



A patio appointed with X500 seating by Alvy Visschedyk for Summit Furniture and a custom-designed coffee table, fabricated by Gregory Hay Fine Furnishings, opens out to desert views of saguaro cacti and ironwood trees. For consistency, all of the stone for the house came from the same quarry.

In the hallway, the limestone's lightly chiseled-chevron pattern and fluting create an eye-catching surround for the Imperial Blue granite stools, each cut from a single block and designed by Allen. The mixed-media painting is by Bob Joyce.



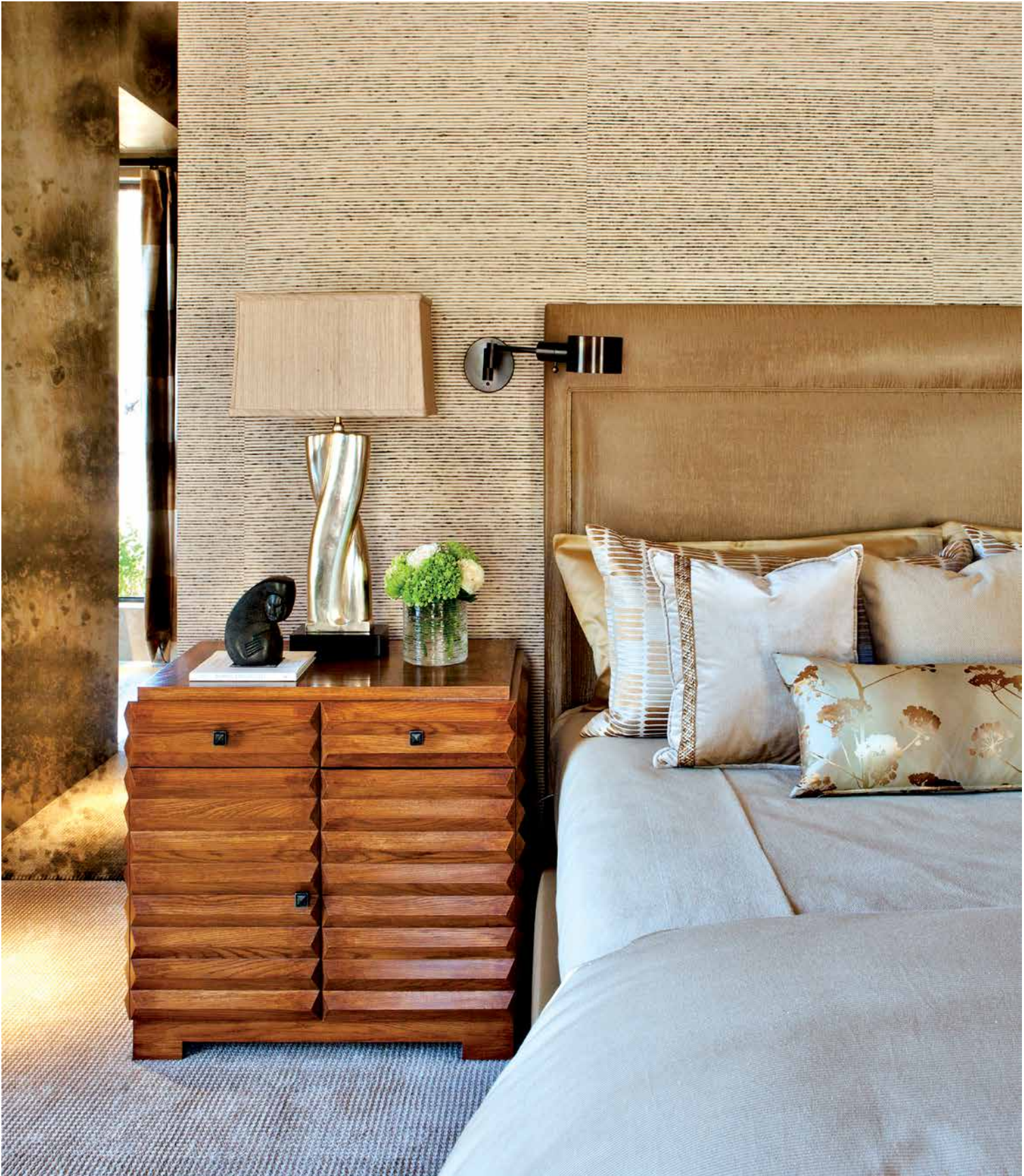
The resulting floor plan comprises several distinct zones that pinwheel off the living room. “The massing of these zones is similar in size to nearby boulders, and the profile of the house follows those features along the line of the adjacent ridge,” explains Huddleson. “The roofline mirrors the slope of the ridge.” Huddleson kept the material vocabulary abbreviated—limestone, white oak and cedar mixed with plenty of glass. “To blend into a landscape, a house should coherently limit its geometries to three or four notes,” he adds. One type of limestone used liberally on the vertical surfaces came carved with chevrons. “My eyes were on every piece as we cut it, because there is veining going through it that had to be matched,” recalls builder Glenn Farner. And when it came to wrapping the living room fireplace in the

same material, he discovered, “You couldn’t cut it on a 45-degree angle to create mitered corners because it’s very soft and chips.” His solution was to employ quirk miter corners (where the angled edges of the slabs are leveled rather than left sharp), and then fill the corners with siliconized grout.

From a materials standpoint, Allen sparked the Zen concept by introducing contrasting bronze-leaf limestone tile on the fireplace. He also insinuated subtle shimmer throughout in the silk rugs, gold glass tiles in the master bathroom, the bronze luster of leather wrapping the bar, metallic thread woven into the fabric of the dining room chairs, and custom bronze furniture pieces. “The bronze front door is my design and it sets the tone as you enter the home,” he says.

The glass backsplash tiles from Waterworks are a focal point in the kitchen, where Concept Cabinetry built custom oak cabinets. Cactus Stone & Tile provided the island’s quartzite slab in a leather finish and the polished granite on the perimeter counters. The Elaine pendants are by Paul Ferrante.

Gold-leaf glass tile by Ann Sacks glimmers radiantly against hand-troweled plaster walls and a granite vanity in the master bathroom. The sconces are by Bocci and the customized mirror is by Marbello Design. The luxurious tub is by Produits Neptune.



In the master bedroom, Allen designed the bed, which is upholstered in Kravet fabric. The wood furrows in Therien's Edinburgh commode echo the fluted limestone seen elsewhere in the house. The silver-leaf Torso lamp by Marian Jamieson is a sparkly contrast to the organic Kravet wallcovering.

John Munford's folding director's chairs pull up to Alwy Visschedyk's X512 dining table, both from Summit Furniture, in the outdoor dining area. The lounge chairs in the seating area beyond, also designed by Visschedyk, enjoy spectacular views of the Sonoran Desert.



Allen describes his aesthetic as simple. “I like it very clean, with a consistent element,” he explains. “For example, a wall color, a cabinet style or flooring. The client liked the idea of a thread of consistent finishes, so our intentions were to keep it elegant, clean and lustrous.” So the same white oak on the floors is used on the kitchen cabinetry, and the carved limestone, along with hand-troweled plaster, envelops every space, achieving a sense of calm that serves as a foil for the torrid landscape. “You walk from the coarse midday, from the scorching reality of the desert into a really soft oasis,” he adds. To offset the monochromatic environment, Allen introduced bold surprises, including a fireplace in the master bedroom with a black granite base that is swathed in copper leather, metallic glass-bead lamp shades in the living room, and

more ornate trims on pillows around the space. The subtle sheen of the material choices also shifts character throughout the day as it picks up and plays with the light. Unlike many of the other houses the couple have built over the years, they consider this one to be long-term. “Our other homes were just projects, but this one felt like it might be the last one we build,” says the wife. “So it became our residence, as opposed to some place we were just going to live in for awhile.” It took two years to get everything right, but the patience paid off and is reflected in the tranquility of the spaces. “It’s a sanctuary,” she concludes. “The desert is armored; almost everything is sharp. The beauty of our house is that the exterior relates to the environment, and the interior is the soft landing in the middle of it.”

The design for the back exterior was part of the architect's plan to integrate stacked-stone-and-stucco walls and railing-free water edges with the forms of the house so that the massing appears to grow out of the landscape. Huddleson designed the lap pool, which was installed by Emerald Pools and Spas.