

# An Artist's Adobe

*A Historic Home is Reimagined with Its Original  
Builder in Mind*

BY JACKIE DISHNER PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL WOODALL

Interiors with an artist's sense of light were a central characteristic of homes designed by artist-turned-architect Bill Tull. Remodeled almost a half-century later, this living space in an early Tull home has that same quality thanks to the current owners' vision for the house. Also evident is the couple's love of Southwestern art and pottery. For instance, interior designer Amy Lau showcases a collection of prized paintings and prints above an antique chest from Santa Fe, New Mexico.





**BEHIND A BOUNTY OF DESERT LANDSCAPE** bursting in color, texture and depth sits a beautiful adobe house that was once a crumbling piece of artistic history.

The mushroom-colored exterior, with its smooth stucco face and rounded corners, is made elegant with multiple parapets over the large Spanish Colonial door. Before it was rebuilt, it had been a “Bill Tull,” the third in a growing list of adobe homes the late artist-turned-architect designed in the early ’70s when adobes were making a comeback.

Three years ago, an eager Paradise Valley couple who were friends of Tull discovered the home in a local news-



**TOP:** At the home’s entrance, a natural desert landscape transitions into an enclosed courtyard. Handcrafted metal sconces and the adobe facade project “a little taste of Mexico.”

**ABOVE:** Pottery and paintings reflect the owners’ passions.





paper ad. It was the husband's dream to inhabit one of Tull's creations, and even before his wife saw it, he knew it was going to be their future house. In his eyes, Tull was the ultimate artist, both on the canvas and in adobe. An art connoisseur himself, born of a family of artists, the homeowner felt a kinship that couldn't be denied.

The husband and wife wanted the house badly enough that they were able to see beyond its disrepair—crumbling walls, cracked lintels and sagging vigas. In fact, they were enamored by the light. Lighting played an important role in Tull's designs, and he was known for his windows. "They may not all line up," his widow, Jo Ann, says, "but they framed the view, bringing the outside in."

The homeowners knew that, no matter what, they'd keep the windows as they were, enlarging them if needed, to take advantage of the natural light for their own extensive art collection, much of it Southwest landscapes.

When it came time to renovate, they hired builder Don Buol for what they thought would be a simple surface remodel. Once he got a look inside, however, the remodel turned into a rebuild that would include modernizing the home, bringing it up to code and replacing the air conditioning, wiring and plumbing, among other items. "We took it down to just a few walls, put our heads together, and kind of expanded and enhanced what was left," Buol says. "It was a huge project and took every bit of a year to finish."



A floral painting by Ed Mell, an antique bench and a replica of a Tull-designed sconce set a serene mood in the foyer.







Remodeling the home took a year, as most every space was reimagined, including the foyer. Shaped like a T, the room splits to lead either to living spaces or the master suite. While a large window, raised ceilings with bleached beams and a neutral color palette give the foyer a contemporary lightness, traditional materials, such as the flagstone floors, and period pieces, such as the oak altar and votive stand, lend an air of authenticity. The cabinet was a gift to the homeowners from Jo Ann Tull, widow of the residence's original designer.







The ceilings needed to be replaced, their wood vigas rotting and cracked, so the homeowners, seeking a lighter and more airy feel, decided to, literally, raise the roof.

Wood planks and recycled Douglas fir beams replaced the aging vigas in the public spaces, and a barrel-vaulted ceiling with pine vigas went up in the master bedroom. Once installed, the wood was bleached and

Vintage elegance graces the new master suite, in which a barrel-vaulted ceiling with bleached pine vigas replaced one that was low and dark. Interior designer Matthew Boland pulled hues from the heirloom rug for the bedskirt and the upholstered top of the Mexican modernist bench, which is a favorite perch of the family's dog, Lucy.







The sitting room adjacent to the master suite displays more of the family's collection of Southwest pottery. Builder Don Buol had the built-in shelves handcrafted on-site, repeating a well-known practice of Tull's.





waxed. Only the ceilings in the master closets, master bath and guest casita retain the low height that Tull preferred.

The kitchen was also classic Tull: small. “Tull wasn’t known for his kitchen designs,” says the homeowner with a laugh. Because the wife loves to cook and the couple frequently entertains, expanding the space was necessary. Architect Peter A. Lendrum added four feet to the room, and New York-based interior designer Amy Lau contracted kitchen designer Robert Moric to create a functionally modern, sleek and efficient workspace fit for a chef. The project turned out to be three times what the homeowners originally anticipated.

Now an open space filled with whites and creams, the room practically blends in or “almost goes away,” notes Moric. Built-in floor-to-ceiling cabinets hide an automated steamer/oven, refrigerator, freezer and storage. Opposite, the range and sink areas form an L-shape with cabinets underneath. A large island buffet topped with white engineered stone and a raised, oak bar top serves as a gathering space, while oversized windows behind the sink open up to the wife’s garden courtyard, where she tends to the plants herself and the family dines alfresco beneath a grapevine-covered arbor.

While the renovated room’s contemporary design may seem counterintuitive to the home’s traditional Pueblo style, Moric says the new look allows the space to act more like a gallery, where the rest of the home’s



Replacing the original small kitchen was a no-brainer, but choosing a sleek, contemporary direction for the new one could have been a misstep. Not in this case. With bleached beams overhead, flagstone underfoot and walnut lower cabinets, the room’s minimal hardware, white quartz counters and stainless steel appliances integrate seamlessly.





The kitchen includes the dining area, which is embellished by one of the home's four original kiva fireplaces. Kivas were a Tull favorite.



details—beautiful ceiling beams, the kiva fireplace and the garden window view—stand out. “It’s functioning art,” he notes.

Leading to the TV room is a wall of built-in shelves that house the family’s extensive collection of early Southwestern pottery. Interior designer Matthew

Boland worked with Buol on the design of the shelves, which were handcrafted on-site, following Tull’s trademark policy of building on the spot.

Doors were another important element in Tull’s designs. He’d either find old doors in Mexico, or he’d design something of his own, says Jo Ann, who insists





her late husband would have loved the multi-glass-paned entrance door that was custom made for this home. Wrought iron and bronze hardware, chosen by Boland to match Tull's style, was added throughout the house.

Designer Lau worked with the couple to add the finishing touches and make the rebuilt house a home. "Bill Tull was prolific from the late '60s through the early '90s," she says, "so I wanted to find furniture and fur-

nishings of that period." She brought in tables designed by Mexican modernists and paired them with the family's antiques—most of them of Mexican origin, something Tull also loved. To add natural materials, which the homeowners requested, she added lamps made of silver and bronze and stone-topped tables.

Her biggest job, however, involved landscapes—the kind found on walls.



The homeowners created a setting ready for any occasion, from relaxing alone to entertaining friends and family. The TV room, for instance, provides ancillary seating to the adjacent living room and, through its French doors, a charming alfresco dining spot beneath a courtyard's leafy green arbor.



Natural light flows through a living room window, making a gold frame glow and adding dimension to the carved front of an antique cabinet.







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“They have an incredible art collection, so we spent a lot of time hanging it,” says Lau of the homeowner’s original pieces by such notable artists as Lon Megargee, Ed Mell, Oscar E. Berninghaus and Paul Pletka. Grouping the works by common theme or color scheme and using templates to check what fit best and where, Lau was able

to move frames around until she found the best layout for each room and hallway.

Of course, no Tull home would be complete without its private courtyards. Located in the rear, with jaw-dropping views of Camelback Mountain, the main courtyard serves as the perfect place to entertain family and friends.



**ABOVE:** An original bancho with new cushions entices in a latilla-topped niche.

**LEFT:** Tull built two kiva fireplaces outside; this one is next to the guesthouse.







Landscape architect Michele Shelor lined slot planters with Mexican fence post and blue torch cacti.

Landscape architect Michele Shelor says her job was to create “a little piece of Mexico” outside, so she chose native vegetation, including a variety of cacti and succulents, such as blue torch and Mexican fence post. A large ironwood tree in a raised planter anchors the space, while existing pots were arranged around the pool, beside the

two outdoor fireplaces and in front of the guest casita.

While the home is nothing like the original, says Jo Ann, it does maintain the essence characterized in the old Mexican-style adobe homes that Tull so loved, “and if Bill were alive, he’d be absolutely thrilled.” So are the homeowners. 🇲🇽





## SOURCES

**Architect:** Peter A. Lendrum, FAIA, Peter A. Lendrum Architects, Phoenix, (602) 228-6125. **Builder:** Don Buol, Nighthawk Custom Builders, Glendale, (602) 697-0797. **Interior designers:** Amy Lau, Amy Lau Design, New York, [amylaudesign.com](http://amylaudesign.com); Jamie Lendrum, ASID, Studio L, Paradise Valley, (602) 228-6883; Matthew Boland, MMB Studio, Scottsdale, [mmbstudio.com](http://mmbstudio.com). **Kitchen designer:** Robert Moric, Scottsdale, [bulthaupaz.com](http://bulthaupaz.com). **Landscape architect:** Michele Shelor, AIA, Colwell Shelor Landscape Architecture, Phoenix, [colwellshelor.com](http://colwellshelor.com). **Custom doors and gates:** Door Works, Scottsdale, [doorworksusa.com](http://doorworksusa.com). **Flagstone flooring:** Fossil Creek Quarry, [fossilcreekstone.com](http://fossilcreekstone.com). **HVAC:** Cool Touch, Peoria, [cooltouch.us](http://cooltouch.us). **Lighting:** Sunstate Electric, Phoenix, [sunstateenergy.com](http://sunstateenergy.com). **Lighting** (exterior sconces & fire screens): Ted Woods, Gilbert (retired). **Masonry:** LB Masonry, Phoenix, (602) 992-7459. **Plumbing:** Quail Plumbing, Phoenix, [quailplumbing.com](http://quailplumbing.com). **Windows:** Jeld-Wen, Phoenix, [jeld-wen.com](http://jeld-wen.com). **Drapery** (custom linen Arabel fabric with decorative tape and trim by Kravet):



[mmbstudio.com](http://mmbstudio.com). **Upholstery:** Classic Custom Upholstery, Scottsdale, [classiccustomupholsteryaz.com](http://classiccustomupholsteryaz.com). **Courtyard furniture fabric** (Kravet, "Polo Texture" in Driftwood): [classiccustom-upholsteryaz.com](http://classiccustom-upholsteryaz.com). **LIVING ROOM—Sofa** ("Harmony" by Theo soft chenille upholstery) **and swivel chairs** ("Hampshire" fabric from Knoll Luxe, accented with hand-embroidered "Queen Anne Vine" textiles by Chelsea): [arudin.com](http://arudin.com). **Sofa pillows** (custom woven leather by Lance Wovens): [altforliving.com](http://altforliving.com). **Coffee table** (Pepe Mendoza):

[houseofbludecor.com](http://houseofbludecor.com). **Side table** (19th century French elmwood): [robuck.co](http://robuck.co). **Mohogany chairs:** [parada54.com](http://parada54.com); upholstery ("Marais" by Anne Kirk Textiles): [altforliving.com](http://altforliving.com). **Rug** (Nusilk): [altforliving.com](http://altforliving.com). **MASTER SUITE—Bed** (custom upholstered in Dohghia textile), **lamps, loveseat** (Angelo Donghia in Tiger Imports distressed leather), **rugs and doors** (antique Mexican sabino wood): [mmbstudio.com](http://mmbstudio.com). **Side tables** (Roberto and Mito Block mahogany paired with lapis lazuli stone tops): [parada54.com](http://parada54.com). **KITCHEN/DINING ROOM—Cabinets** (walnut horizontal veneer), **countertops** (white quartz stone, engineered), **appliances** (Gaggenau), **tall cabinets** (Greige Seamless laminate), **integrated sink faucet, backsplash** (stainless steel), **floating shelves and bar top** (walnut): Bulthaup Scottsdale, [bulthaupaz.com](http://bulthaupaz.com). **Dining table** (custom rift sawn oak) **and chairs** (CH24 Wishbone chairs): [carlhansen.com](http://carlhansen.com). **Bar stools** (reproduction Jean Prouve tabouret haut by Vitra): [mmbstudio.com](http://mmbstudio.com). **TV ROOM—Coffee tables:** [shiprockssantafe.com](http://shiprockssantafe.com).