

PALM SPRINGS LIFE

WINTER 2021

# HOME+DESIGN

## NATURAL WONDER

ORIGINAL  
STONE, COPPER,  
AND WOOD  
VARY THE  
TEXTURE AT  
A VINTAGE  
ELDORADO.





TWO FAMILIES AND THEIR BAND OF CLOSE-KNIT COUSINS CELEBRATE A NEW VERSION OF THE 1960S AT THEIR MIDCENTURY HOME IN INDIAN WELLS.

STORY BY LISA MARIE HART  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHAD MELLON

The golden age of wall-to-wall carpeting was still having its day in the sun — quite literally — when designer Jen Samson of Jen Samson Design toured her clients' home in Eldorado Country Club. "Carpet spanned from the living areas to the bedrooms, right up to the edge of the bathtubs and bidets," she says. "Almost the entire home was carpeted. But time had taken its toll."

The Laguna Beach-based designer would have loved to save the plush custom flooring in the living room. Its huge swirl of pastel colors had faded beyond repair. Same for the bedspreads and lampshades that matched the upholstered bedroom walls. "Though that is a design element I absolutely love, and it had been beautifully executed, it was dirty, musty, and peeling."

While much of the fanciful 1960s decorating had to be removed, almost as much was ripe for refreshing, reimagining, and repurposing. Samson's Orange County clients had admired her eclectic Instagram portfolio with that very notion in mind.

# SiBLiNG ReVeLRY





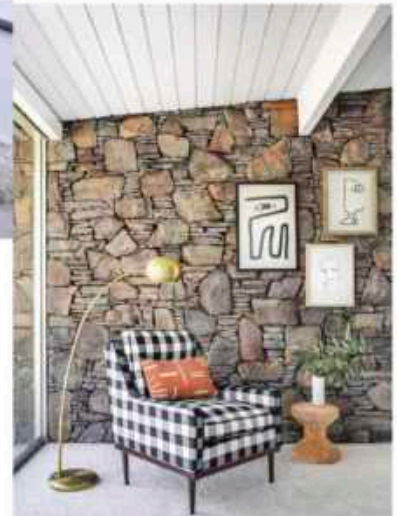
The great limestone walls, from the top, feature layers of tan, white, and light green, and some light green, and some tan. The walls face the home's courtyard and terrace.

**Appropriate from top:** The original design was for a home in all its glory. In the days before the Internet, Samson found a place in their town, Kandi in the 1950s, and she found it. She was on the hunt for a place that was as close to the desert as she could get. The great limestone walls, from the top, feature layers of tan, white, and light green, and some light green, and some tan. The walls face the home's courtyard and terrace.

The clients — a brother and sister, their spouses, and the six young children between them — had a time capsule on their hands. Conceived in 1965 by Ira Johnson, an understudy of architect William Cody, it was the sort of fairway-view home frequently passed down to grown children, adults with their own families who carry fond memories of vacationing in the desert with their parents or grandparents. Elaborately decorated in a period-perfect scheme, the home is often enjoyed for decades before the next gen applies their thoroughly modern tastes.

These rock walls and wood ceilings, however, were not inherited. "The two families were looking for something with true mid-century style," Samson says. "They bought it untouched and fully furnished, with items dating back to the home's original owners. You could tell it had been pristine in its heyday."

Samson gets a bit gushy when she explains the dream that is realized when a designer receives a call to recast and fine-tune a house like this one. "We had a rare opportunity to see and take in the original splendor of the home," she explains. "It left a definite





LIGHT, BRIGHT SPACES OPEN INTO ONE ANOTHER WITH EASE.



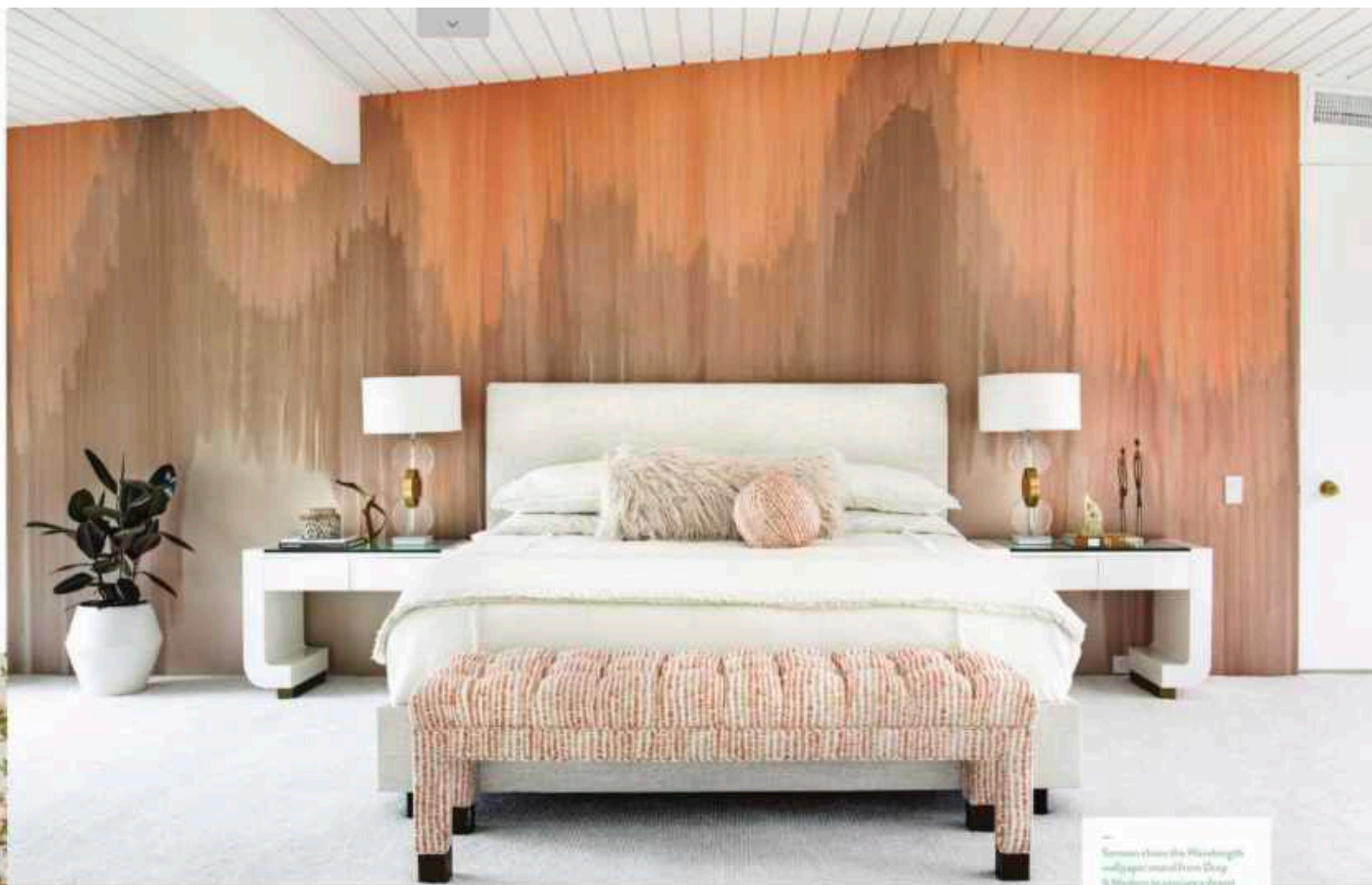
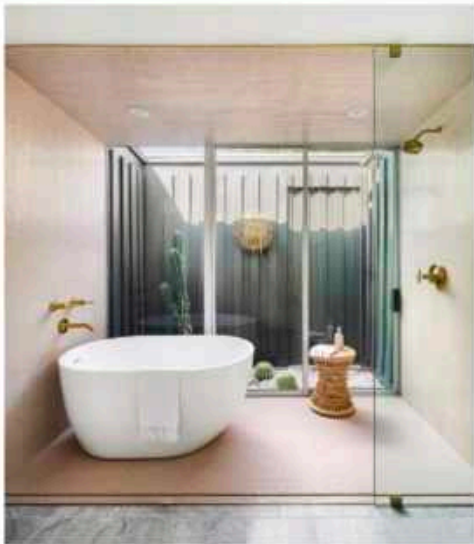
mark that helped to shape our vision and inspire us all.”  
 Rather than logging miles up and down Interstate 10, Samson glomped out at the nearby Sands Hotel & Spa to soak up the atmosphere and ease into the resort state of mind her clients wanted to feel in their new pad. What better a place to formulate the final touches for a fresh, down-valley home where two families could spread out and relax.  
 “It was easy to immerse myself into a desert state of mind for

this project. I truly am a daytime-cocktails-by-the-pool, hot-desert nights kind of girl!” she says, laughing. Having worked in the fashion world prior to interior design, Samson began her “deep love affair” with Palm Springs by stalking its vintage clothing shops, architecture, and design in the 1990s.  
 That passion let loose across more than 5,000 square feet of the new family home, with the owners’ desire to restore the original elements kept top of mind. To create a playful design

that was fun enough for young cousins while preserving the midcentury history that appealed to the couple, Samson turned inward. In the garage, in the bedrooms, and in every corner of the vast, Cody-esque great room. Everywhere she turned, the home provided its own vintage shopping experience.  
 What she couldn’t resurrect through professional refinishing and creative repupstering in luxe fabrics still served a purpose. Samson followed the trail of authentic clues in designing the

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 Old cabinets and mirror equipment resplend this wall when her clients purchased the home. Samson built out the breakfast nook to include a family-sized table and a banquette covered in black-and-white African Samsonite fabric from Igoufflow. She salvaged the same cutting bar seat from the garage and refinished it opposite. Roman chairs here provide additional seating.





flow, the color scheme, and a mix of modern pieces to blend with the home's originals she had brought back to life.

"The architecture naturally played a key role in the overall design, from the gently arched ceilings, which are an absolute showstopper, to the gorgeous copper fireplace." A shining piece of trim on the edge helped reveal its true identity. Samson thought it had been painted dark brown until she discovered that was merely a build-up of varnish. And the installation of smooth terrazzo floors felt even more fitting than the copious carpet that

seemed to weigh the home down.

Samson punched up the sorbet hues that had swirled through the living room carpet and across the bedroom walls to produce an upbeat, vibrant palette. Pale greens, mint, coral, pinks and oranges took on more saturated tones paired with modern pops of black and white to ground them.

Inside and out, she worked alongside David Wood of Big Wood Builders in Palm Desert to impart a joie de vivre the home hadn't seen since Lyndon Johnson was in the White House.

Samson chose the MacKenzie wallpaper from the Dray & Madson to create a dreamy sunset. She updated the existing nightstands and added bench accents from Top. A sliding table is a storage of pink jewelry. The West was wrapped up and over in the girl's bathroom. In their bedroom, Chelms & Little's Pastoral wallpaper forms a sweet backdrop for vintage furniture.





THE HOME'S LINES CONTRAST CURVES OF THE POOL AND FIRE PIT.

Wishful living and hanging in at the heart of this four-family vacation home, Santa Barbara Umbrellas is a great example in a restaurant-like setting of the home's original colors, **eggplant**. Nearly planted ponytail palms mirror the shape of Eldorado's Abasco in the distance. Samson installed an outdoor fire pit and surrounded it with plentiful succulents and plants by David Greco.

Updating the exterior included adding a zero-edge spa and a firepit while creating a zero-edge on the existing pool. For a decadent touch of quintessential midcentury charm, Samson worked with Desert Landscape Associates to run the plush lawn within inches of the pool's perimeter. The firm also cleared overgrown bushes and vines to make way for a clean, minimal desert-scape of succulents, drought-tolerant plants and ponytail palms. The orange Santa Barbara Umbrellas could be mistaken

for a relic that somehow withstood the sun's rays. Before their parents could take it all in, the kids were running from room to room, jumping on the beds, and pleading to go for a swim, even while the pool was filling with water. Rethinking a sun-faded, locked-in-time capsule was clearly the right choice. The home was Samson's first local project, but it won't be her last. She is currently part of the collaborative Desert Oasis Show House around the corner from Eldorado whose rooms will be

unveiled this spring. "I have always adored the glamour of Slim Aarons' images from Palm Beach and Palm Springs in the '60s and '70s. This home oozes that aesthetic," Samson says. "You can easily imagine Old Hollywood lounging poolside or sipping cocktails next to the fireplace. It was our goal to make this home fun and family-friendly while honoring the tangible vibe that was already there. The energy the house exuded inspired our direction."