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PHOENIX HOME & GARDEN

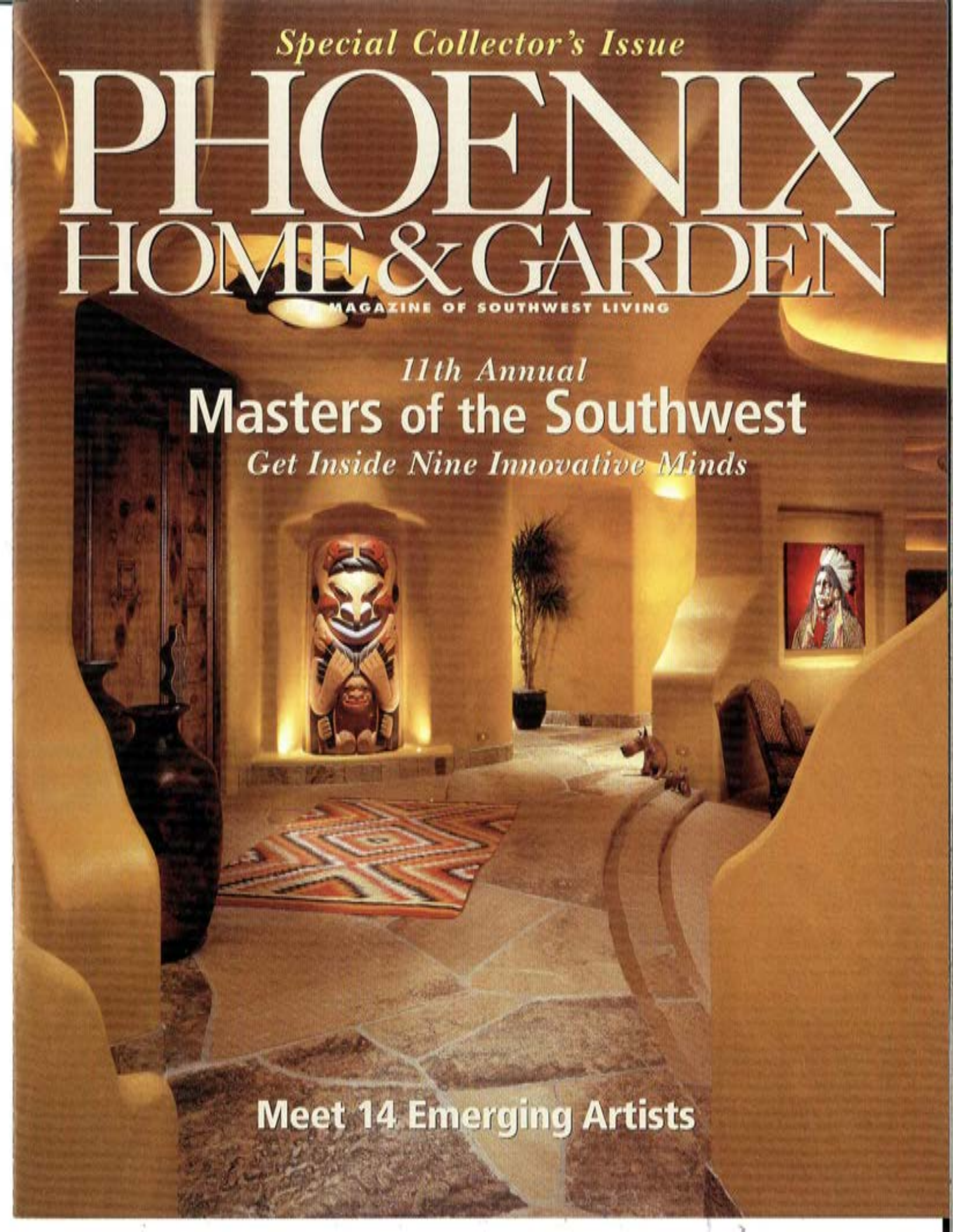
MAGAZINE OF SOUTHWEST LIVING

11th Annual

Masters of the Southwest

Get Inside Nine Innovative Minds

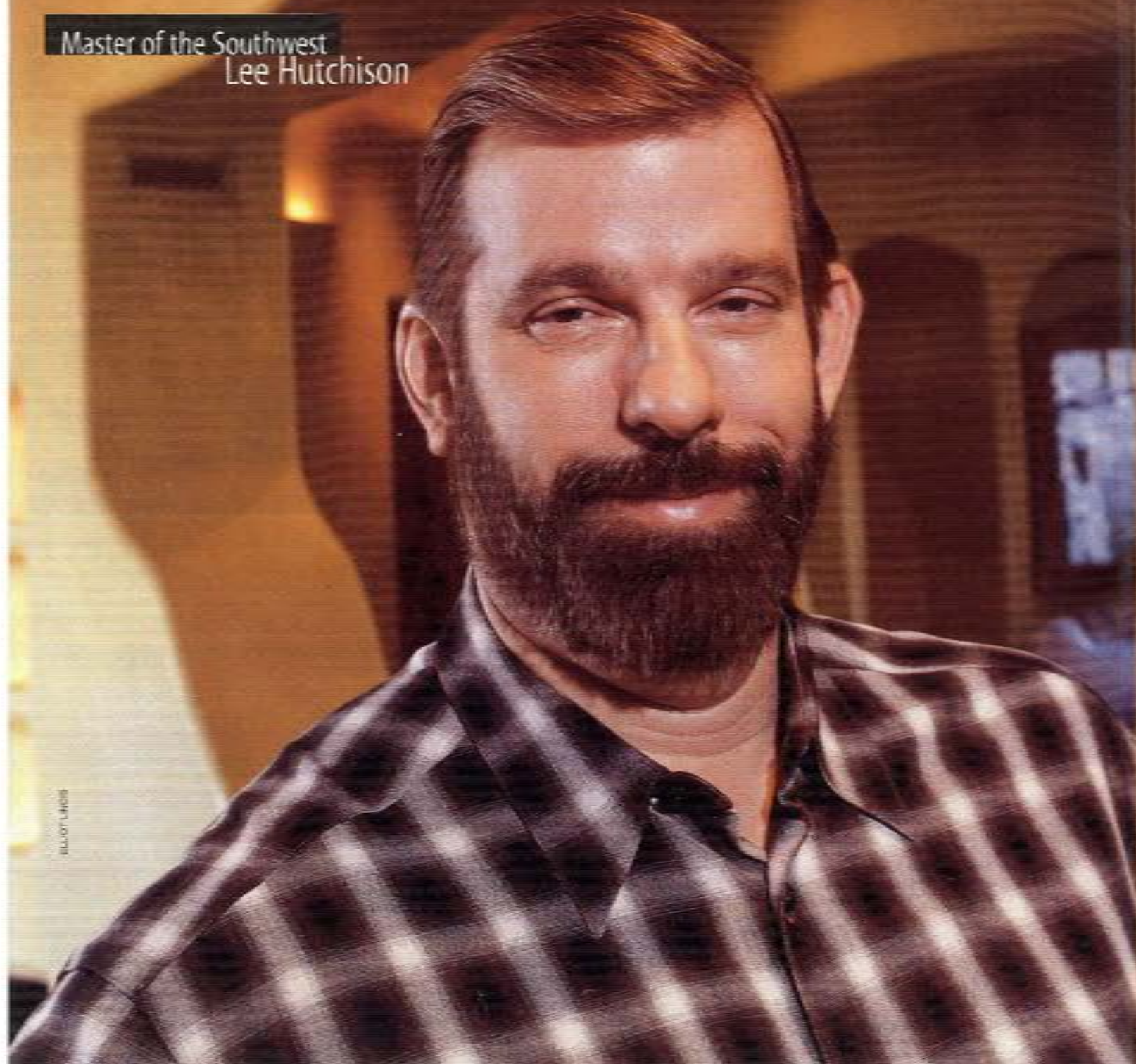
Meet 14 Emerging Artists



Breaking new ground

Text by Ann Patterson

Master of the Southwest
Lee Hutchison



ILLUSTRATION



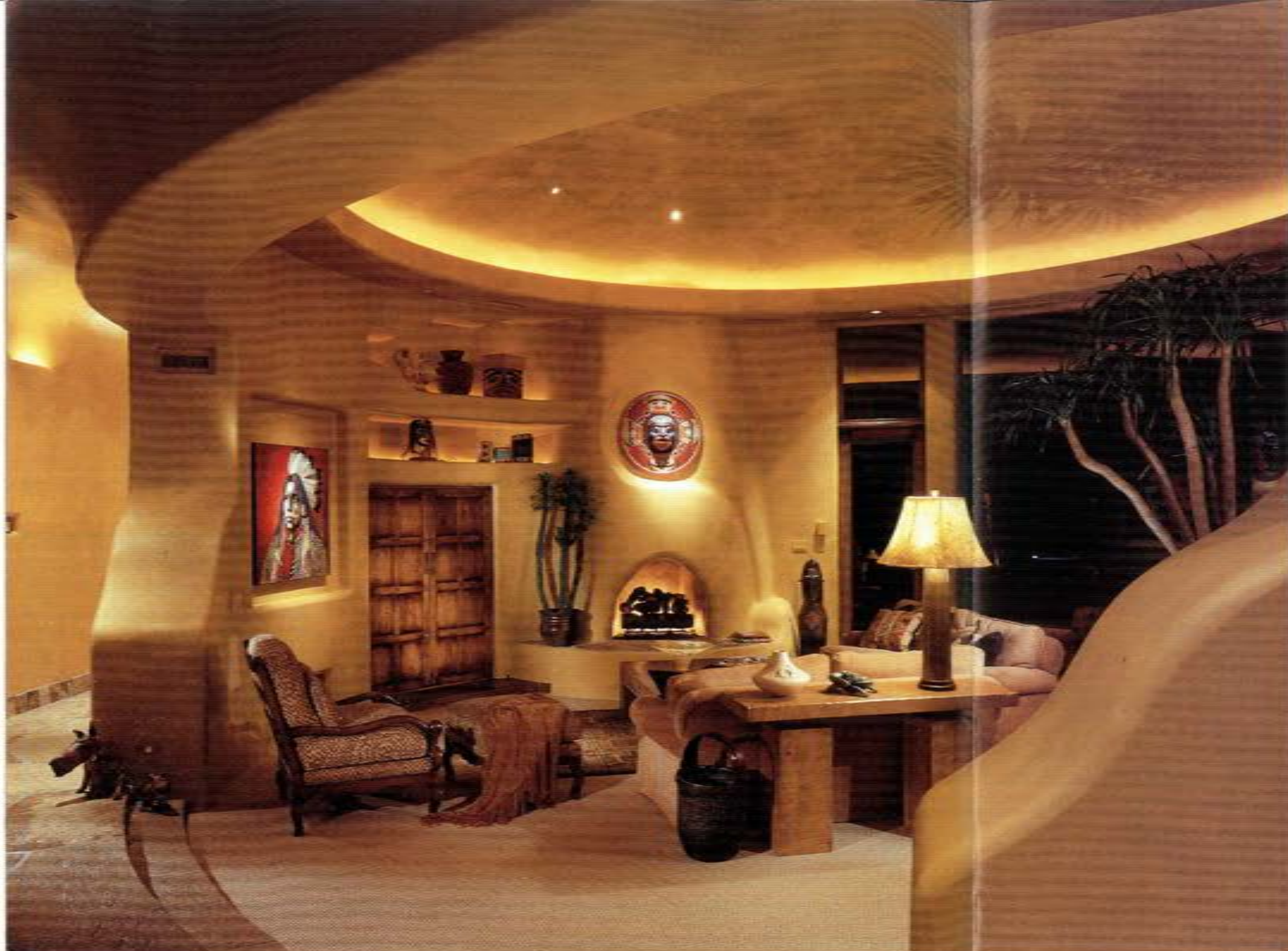
This page: Curves and color define this Scottsdale home, described by its creator, architect Lee Hutchison, as "organic Pueblo" in style. The long curved hallway connects public spaces with private.

In a Lee Hutchison-designed house, you're likely to see ceramic tile or wood plank, not as flooring, but as part of the ceiling.

"I think the ceiling is an important part of the overall design," Hutchison explains. "None of my houses has flat drywall ceilings. My designs tend to have lots of curves, lots of interesting floor and ceiling treatments. They're soft. I don't do too many straight lines."

The grandson of a southern Ohio home builder, this Master of the Southwest says he lives and breathes architecture. "My hobby?" he asks rhetorically. "My hobby is 60-hour weeks designing homes. I love it. I can't think of anything I'd rather do."

PHOTOGRAPHY



At age 52, Hutchison stands a commanding 6 feet tall. He works out regularly, a habit from his letterman years in a Columbus, Ohio, high school. He dresses casually, wearing a plaid open-neck shirt, corduroy pants and moccasins for this interview. He finds suits and ties uncomfortable, but says, in his defense, "My clients wear golf shirts and shorts."

Since graduating from Arizona State University's College of Architecture in 1974, Hutchison has designed more than 200 custom homes—500, if he includes the semi-custom houses he did while working for such Valley builders as Continental Homes and US Homes during the early years of his career. His homes

range in style from traditional Arizona Territorial to organic Pueblo to Mediterranean/Tuscan/Old World (a look the architect believes has gained acceptance here because the style offers owners "a sense of comfort and security"). Regardless of the style, he puts his clients' wishes first.

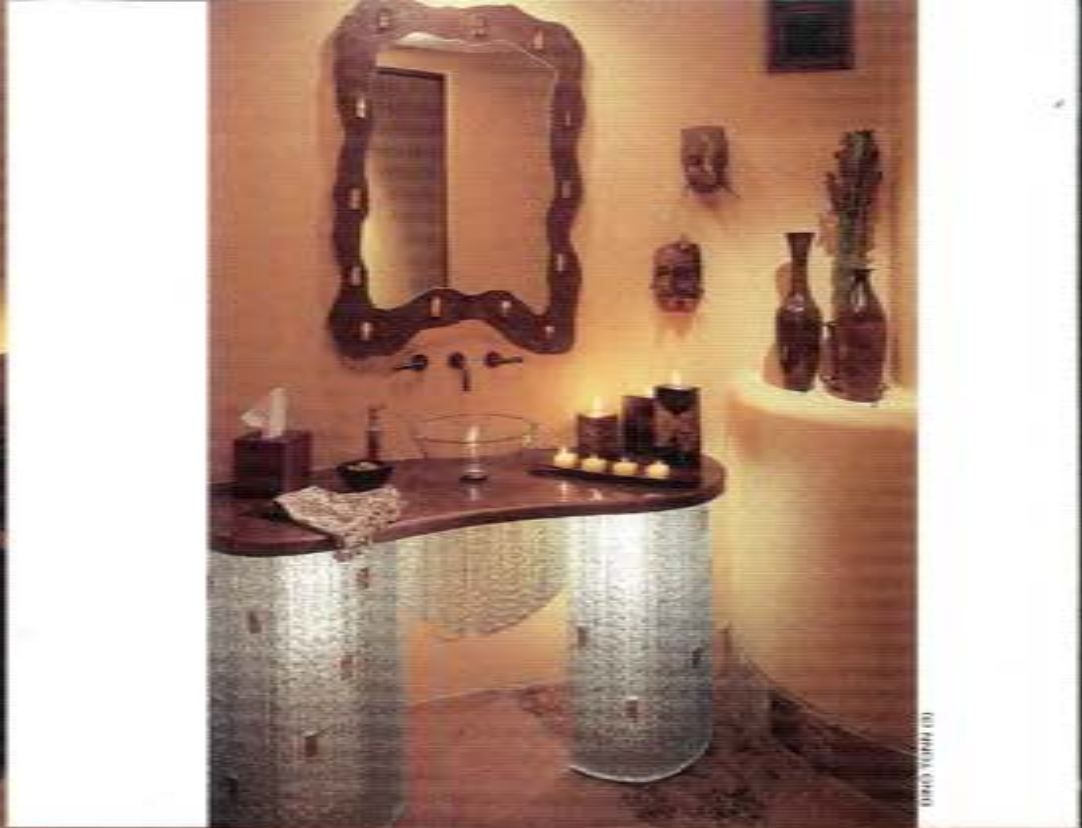
"It's their house, not my house," he says. "Sometimes architects build monuments to themselves. My most successful houses are those where my clients say, 'I feel comfortable here.'"

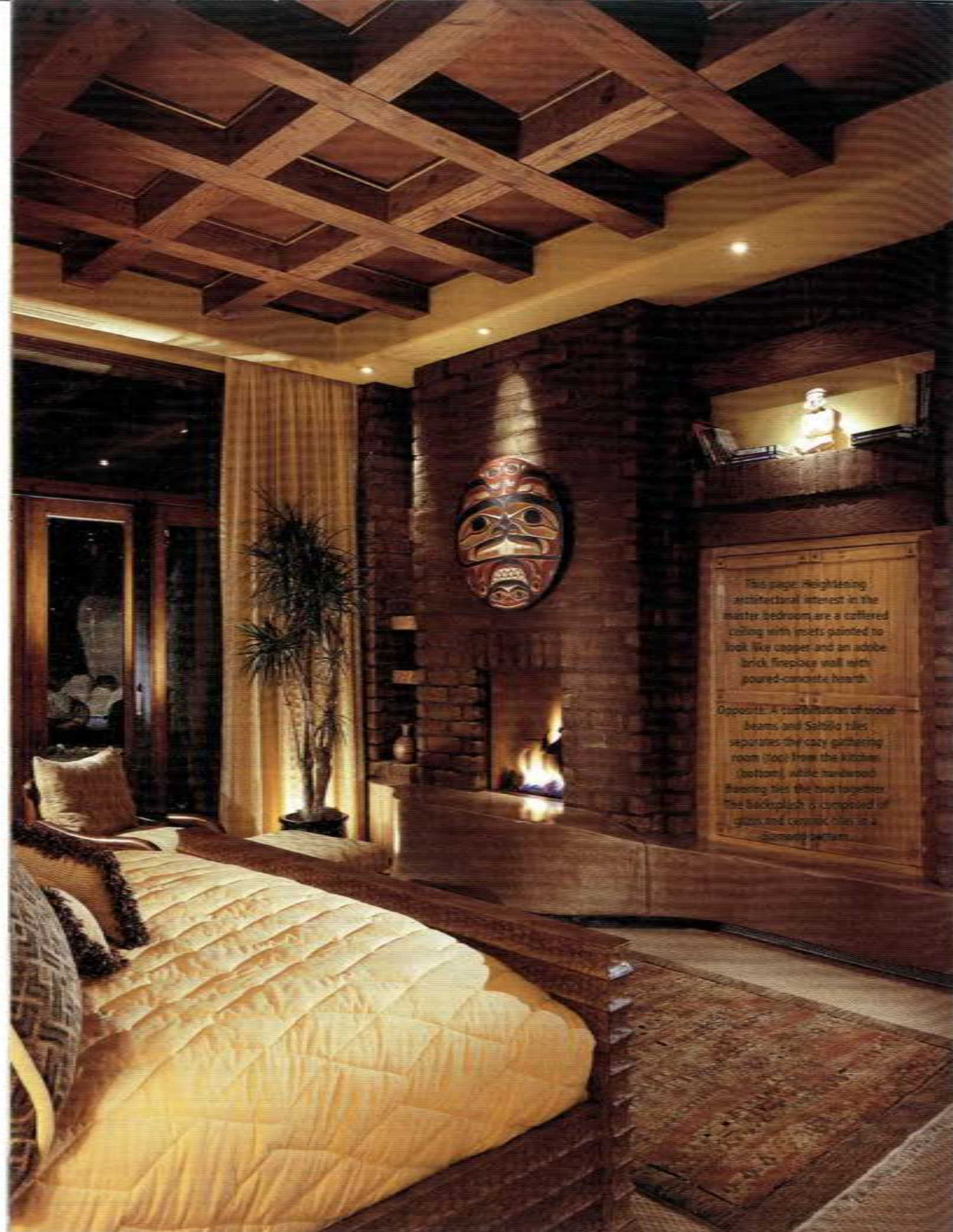
Hutchison's homes can be found in exclusive communities like Estancia, The Boulders and Desert Mountain. His 13-member firm, Urban Design Associates, founded in 1979, provides

Above: A raised beehive fireplace is the centerpiece of the living room, which features a domed ceiling with circular spots.

Right: In the dining room, plaster light sources appear to grow out of the wall. Other details include a metal three-paned window and a shell-like groin-vault ceiling.

Top: Les Hasboun incorporated display areas into every room, including the powder room. The glass vanity with hammered-copper countertop was designed by Reiss Drouot of Propp Inc.





This page: Heightening architectural interest in the master bedroom are a coffered ceiling with insets painted to look like copper and an adobe brick fireplace wall with poured-concrete hearth.

Opposite: A combination of wood beams and Salsillo tiles separates the cozy gathering room (top) from the kitchen (bottom), while hardwood flooring ties the two together. The backsplash is composed of glass and ceramic tiles in a diamond pattern.

design and construction administration services for homes selling from \$1 million to several million dollars. The largest house he ever designed—32,000 square feet—was never built. But Hutchison has finished several in the 20,000-square-foot range. "One had 12 bedrooms with extensive guest space," he recalls.

"A lot of people are moving here, and they're spending lots of money on architecture," he adds. "Most don't want to re-create what they had before."

Hutchison begins the design process for a custom house by conducting in-depth interviews with his clients. He asks them what they want, what they need and what they envision in the home they are proposing. "I don't ask them how big a dining room they want; I ask them how many people will be sitting at the table," he explains. "The key is that they do most of the talking and I do most of the listening."

The architect also does an intensive site study to identify washes, boulders, sun angles, views and significant plant life. He calls the initial interview and site study "the discovery process."

Next, Hutchison creates a concept. "The concept is a study in relationships—how the rooms will relate to each other. That's when we start talking about architectural character—style," he notes.

Finally, he shows his clients drawings of how the house will look. Unlike many architects, Hutchison uses felt-tip pens and pencils to render his sketches. He does not utilize computer-aided design. "Sketching is what works best for me," he says. His office staff then drafts final construction documents on their computers.



With a firm belief that architecture involves teamwork, Hutchison sees himself as a conductor directing a team consisting of a builder, landscape architect, interior designer and sometimes a structural engineer, with his clients as principal partners.

"When I talk about my work, I use the word 'we,'" he notes. "A couple of people in my firm have been with me for 20 years. Practicing architecture, because of the size and complexity of the projects, means working as a team."

Featured on these pages is a 5,200-square-foot home recently completed for a retired couple from New York. Hutchison describes the residence as

organic Pueblo. That is, it incorporates the curvilinear lines of New Mexican pueblo Indian villages and, at the same time, blends with its natural Arizona surroundings. "It's a style I developed over time as a response to the desert terrain, and to my clients' lifestyles," he explains.

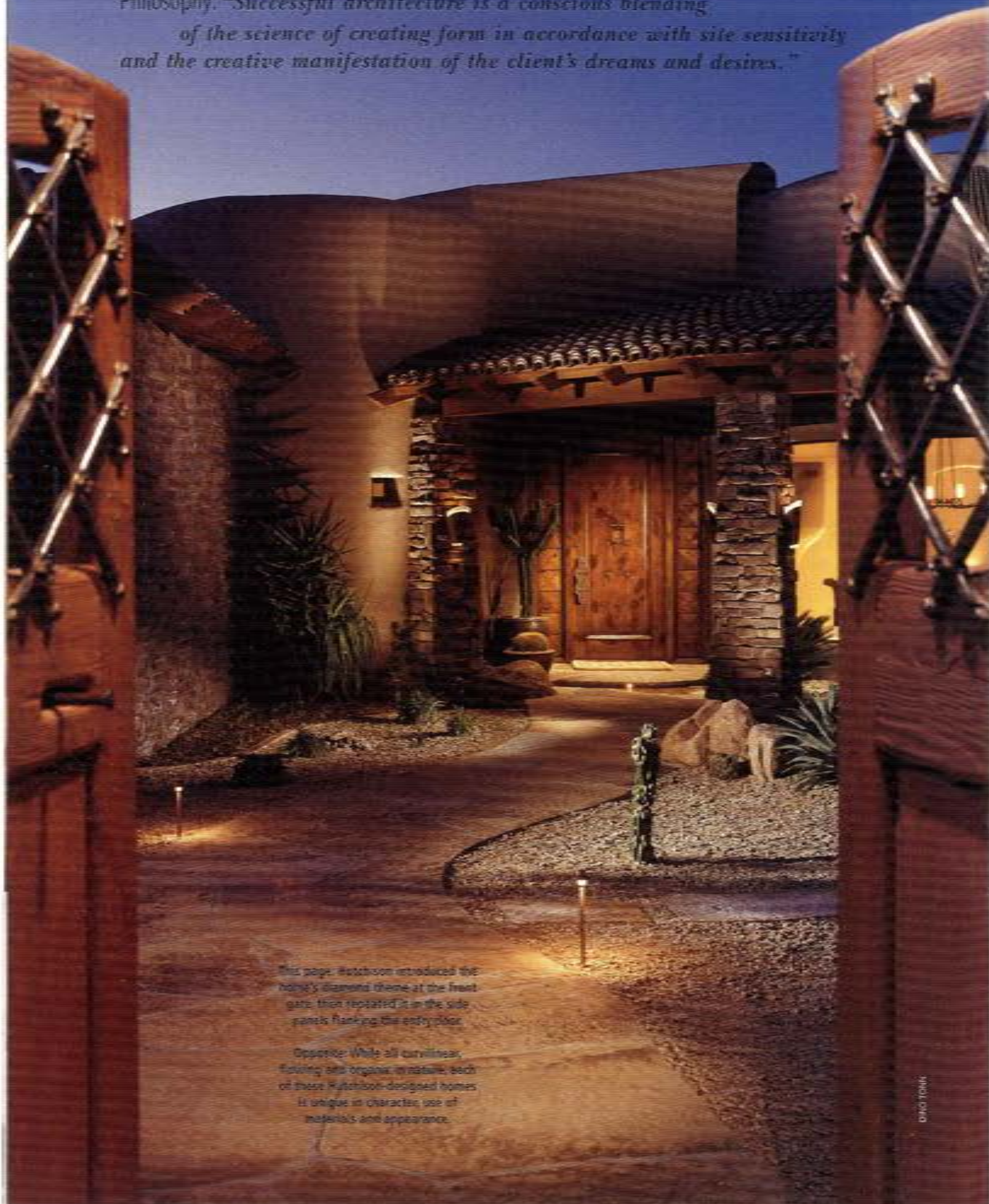
The house also illustrates Hutchison's trademark ceilings. The great room features a domed ceiling. The dining room has a groin-vaulted ceiling. The master bedroom contains a coffered ceiling with faux copper insets. And the family room boasts a beamed ceiling with Salsillo tile between the beams.

"Unusual ceilings are definitely a signature of Lee's," agrees Bess Jones, an interior designer who collaborated with the architect on this project and on more than 20 additional upscale homes. "He's very creative. Nothing is a problem to him architecturally."



DINO TONIN (3)

Philosophy: "Successful architecture is a conscious blending of the science of creating form in accordance with site sensitivity and the creative manifestation of the client's dreams and desires."



This page: Hutchison introduced the home's diamond theme at the front gate, then repeated it in the side panels flanking the entry door.

Opposite: While all curvilinear, flowing and organic in nature, each of these Hutchison-designed homes is unique in character, use of materials and appearance.

DAVID TORNY

Other features include a closet "as big as a bedroom" and a burnt-adobe fireplace with poured-concrete hearth in the master bedroom; a master bath set in a granite surround with a chiseled edge matching the vanity tops; a radial burnt-glazed window and glowing plaster light sconces in the dining room; and, in the great room, what Hutchison calls a preacher's bar—designed with pocket doors to allow owners to hide the liquor should the preacher visit. The house also boasts four fireplaces and multiple niches for displaying the owners' collection of Pacific Northwest artwork.

Hutchison likes to introduce themes in the homes he designs. A diamond motif in this one begins at the front gate and continues at the front door, where side panels exhibit a raised version. Diamonds appear again in a tiled kitchen backsplash, a handsome rug in the entry, a bedroom ceiling and in a border around the preacher's bar.

"It adds a lot of character to the house," Hutchison says. "We don't do this just to be different. We're interested in the way the house feels, and we use the most effective means we can to achieve that."

"Good architecture combines balance and rhythm and is pleasing and inspiring to look at," he adds.

To Hutchison, this home exemplifies one of the trends he sees developing in Valley home design: a spacious great room balanced by the addition of a small, cozy "hearth room" with a fireplace located adjacent to the kitchen.


A member of the American Institute of Architects, Hutchison has won numerous awards for his residential designs, including Gold Nugget Awards from the Pacific Coast Builders Conference and *Builder* magazine, and honors from the National Association of Home Builders. His work has been featured on six *Phoenix Home & Garden* covers.

Hutchison and his wife, Laurel, have been married 27 years. She works full-time in his architectural office. Following family tradition, the couple's daughter, Jessica, studies architecture as a junior at Arizona State University, while sister Joely is an ASU freshman honor student.

The family enjoys traveling. Last year they journeyed to Rome, Florence, Milan and Venice, where Hutchison marveled at the careful detailing crafted by Venetian architect Carlo Scarpa. Next up is a bicycle trip through France.

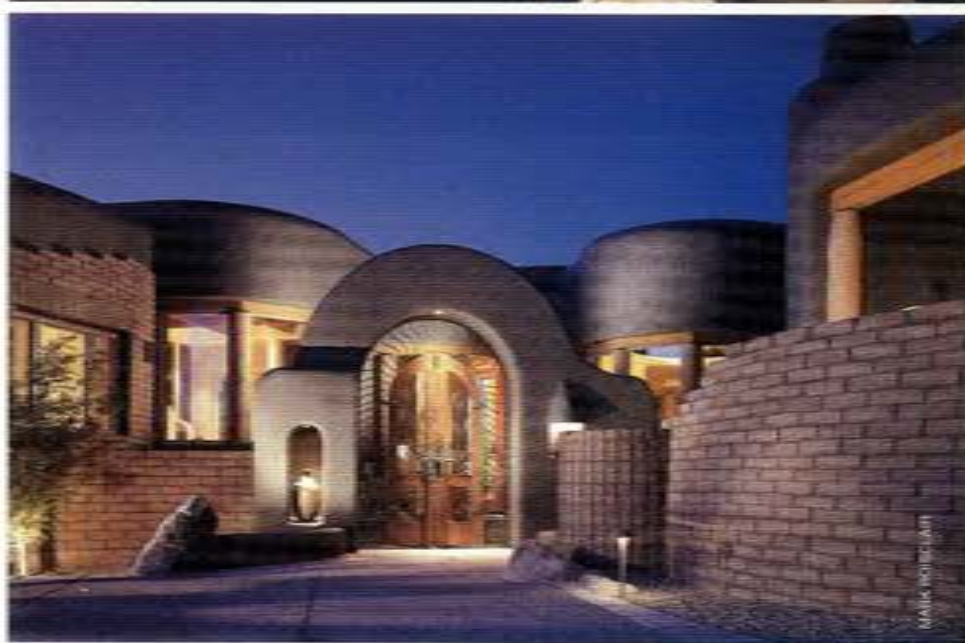
Will traveling abroad affect Hutchison's designs?

It probably will, he replies.

Whatever inspiration this Master of the Southwest draws from overseas is sure to leave its mark on Valley homes of the future. 



DAVID TORNY



MARK WILHELM



DAVID TORNY



These pages: Each Hutchison-designed patio carries the same unique character found throughout the homes into the outdoor space.

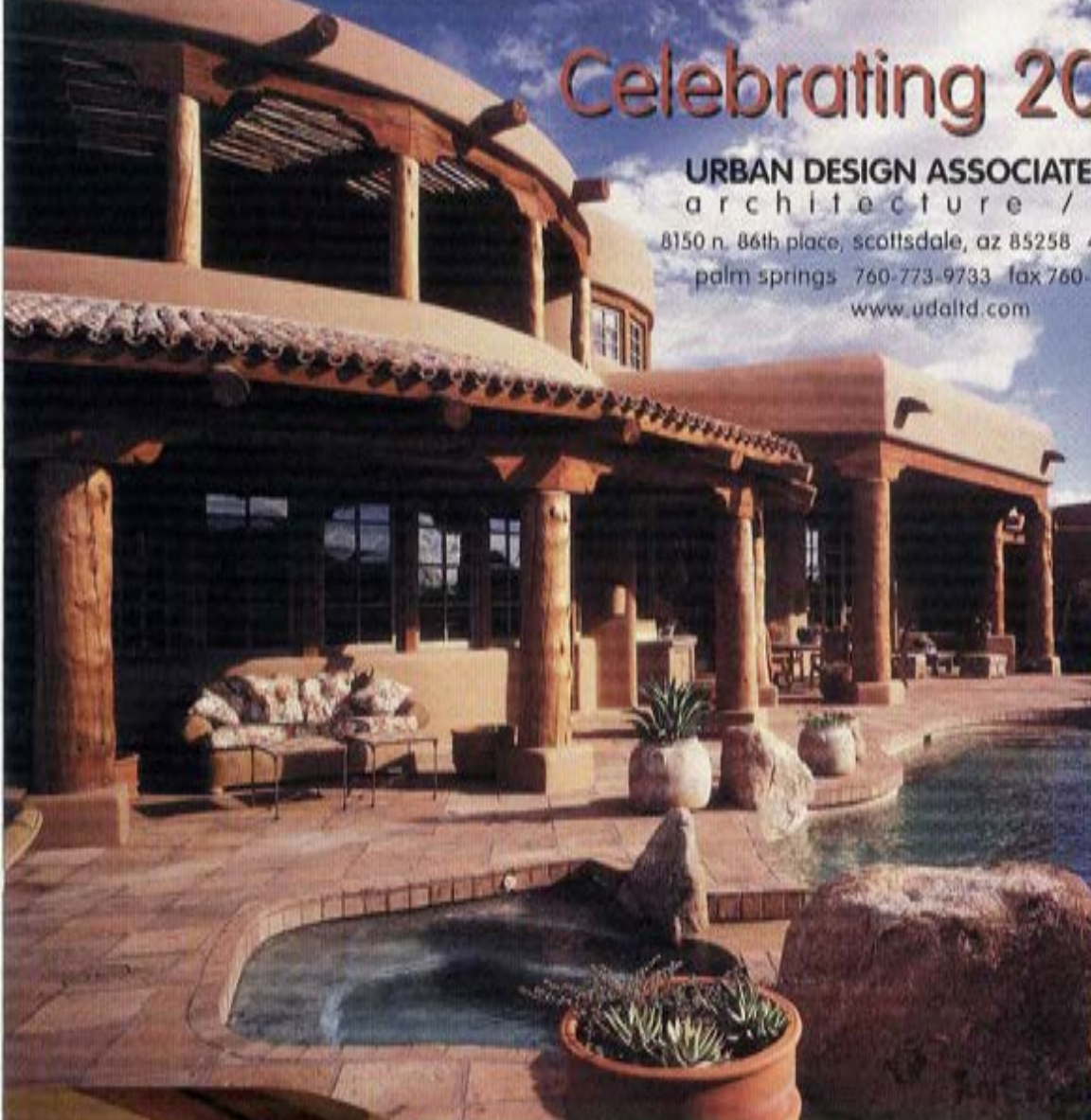
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