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March 2005
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Desert Romance

By David M. Brown

Interior designer Beth McGehee infuses warmth and vitality into Arizona homes.

Arizona interior designer Beth McGehee planned on looking under a microscope for her life's work—but she ended up looking for the best interior designs for her many clients instead.

Dallas-born, Beth majored in microbiology and chemistry at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, but her roommate's love for interior design as well as personal self-searching changed her plans. "I realized I had an artistic side that wasn't going to be satisfied in the laboratory," she says. As a result, she began working as an



Photo Thompson Photographic

(Above) Beth fires up warmth and welcome in the kitchen of the Palermo model home with a variety of woods.



Photo Thompson Photographic

(Left) The entryway of the Palermo model home features beam ceilings; the kitchen, a detailed tile backsplash and wrought-iron chandelier; and the sitting room, built-in cabinets color-matched to the walls.

(Right) In the sitting area adjacent to the kitchen of the Palermo home, Beth created a warm eating and meeting environment centering on a Victorian-style painting of a pouting girl and her comiserating dog.



Photo Thompson Photographic



Photo Walt Sanders

Christine and Bob Zamora's home features a dining room that steps down from the entryway and opens up to a Tuscan-style courtyard centered by a fountain.

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“From the outset, our home spoke to us softly and beautifully—more like an old friend than a new house.”

interior-design consultant, picking out colors, textures and fabrics for various Dallas builders.

After moving to Arizona seven years ago, Beth is still striving to create interiors that immediately exude warmth, vitality and welcome. “I want to deliver a simple and elegant living environment which is comfortable, timeless and inviting,” she says. “And I believe you should be able to sense this on entering one of the homes whose interiors I have helped design.”

Because of her experience and reputation, Beth can change construction plans from blueprint to site: “If I feel

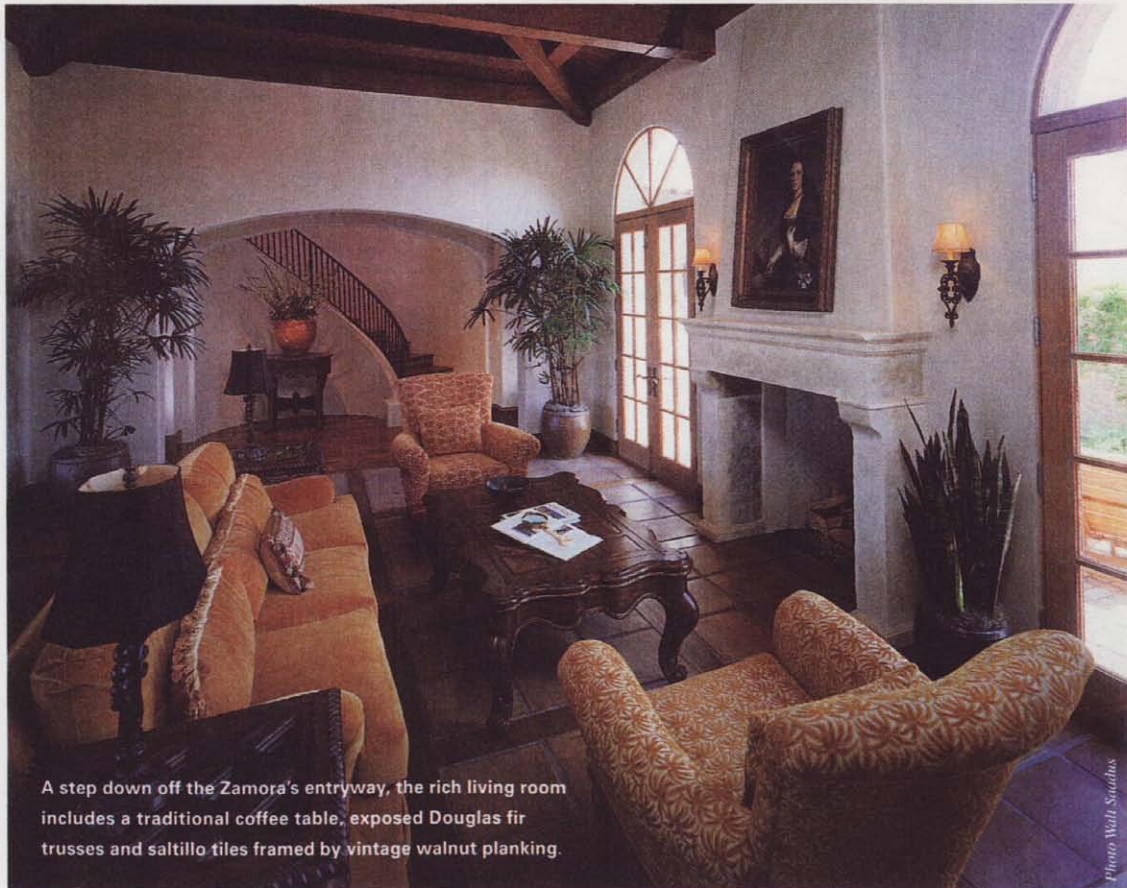
that I can make a change for the better interior design of the home and the greater comfort of the residents, I will,” she says. “I love making design changes as I’m going along.”

Today, her 17 years of experience in the home-building industry is apparent: Beth’s interiors at Superstition Mountain, a desert golf community about 40 minutes from Phoenix, are tactile and multi-textured, exuding romantic lushness while inspiring enjoyment. She says her homes make you feel like you are being embraced by a large, plush chair. “The more texture, the more intimacy. The more

diversity, the more inviting.”

In four homes at Superstition Mountain, by Scottsdale’s Anderson Homes & Design, she provides this enchantment. Foremost, Beth offers a comprehensive, layered and diverse background of finishes and floorings. “I like materials that provide texture, color and pattern to all surfaces,” she says.

For her, layering—the use of different textures and patterns one over another—is an essential component of this vitality. In the living room of Jude and Robert “Bud” Thurston’s Hacienda de Suenos home, she



A step down off the Zamora’s entryway, the rich living room includes a traditional coffee table, exposed Douglas fir trusses and saltillo tiles framed by vintage walnut planking.

Photo: Walt Stadhus



Photo: Mark Bosclair

placed a large and rich area rug over vintage heart pine flooring. In addition, she had a banco constructed, on which she set soft upholstery and plush area pillows. "Layering is ultimately how you end up with a home that feels right," she says.

(Above) Elegance and luxury are the themes of the master bathroom of the Hacienda de Suenos home. Centering the plaster-walled room is a ceramic oval tub where the owners can watch the fire in one of the home's six fireplaces or listen to the splashing of the spa.

(Right) Century-old reclaimed dark heart pine provides the flooring of 90 percent of the home at Superstition Mountain. On soaring ceilings, such as those in the living room, Beth has affixed beams, adding intricate stenciling on the ochre Venetian plaster walls.



Photo: Mark Bosclair

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"I like materials that provide texture, color and pattern to all surfaces," she says.

To emphasize tactility, she juxtaposed hand-painted ceramic tile with natural stone or clay products. On the patio of the 2,700-square-foot Palermo model home, she contrasted travertine in alternating running bond and herringbone patterns with step risers in colorful Spanish tile.

She also did this in the home of Christine and Bob Zamora. Their

(Right) For the living room of the San Salvatore home, Beth offers a Cantera stone gas fireplace, hewn-cedar ceiling beams, reproduction paintings of Old World masters and burnished urns.

Spanish Revival-style winding stairway combines hand-painted tiles on the risers with Moreno saltillo tiles on the treads. In addition, materials in Beth's palette are warmly conjoined, emphasizing complementary colors.

In the Tuscan-style San Salvatore model home, the kitchen features reclaimed white oak flooring in a parquet pattern, European-style alder cabinetry, granite countertops, a travertine tile backsplash and a furniture-style island



Photo Thompson Photographic



A Cantera stone gas fireplace centers the Thurston's living room. Hewn cedar ceiling beams, Venetian plaster and crackle-finish garden pots on a mesquite armoire add to the Old World warmth.

Photo Mark Binselar



(Above) Beth's design for the kitchen of the San Salvatore home includes rustic white oak flooring in a parquet pattern as well as European-style alder cabinetry, granite countertops, a travertine tile backsplash and a furniture-style island with turned wood legs.

with turned wood legs.

Similarly, in the Palermo model home, Beth placed an island with an alder top wrapping a Kohler double-bowl cast-iron sink and painted, antiqued maple cabinets, which sit on reclaimed heart pine from 1940s Virginia. The dark heart pine and alder mirror each other, while the lighter wood and the ivory-colored plaster walls keep the room light and unimposing.

Finally, Beth enjoys adding touches of paint, tile, cabinetry and draperies. "I like hand-applied glazes, the use of plaster and subtle variations in color," she says.

In the Thurstons' living room, this commitment to subtlety and Old World textures is apparent in the Douglas fir beams, the Cantera stone fireplace, the rich Venetian plaster, the crackle-finish garden pots on the mesquite armoire, the chairs slipcovered in gold and cranberry silk and the triple silk draperies.

The Thurstons purchased their home just four days after seeing it at a showcase event. "Everything Beth did made us buy it," Jude says. "From the outset, our home spoke to us softly and beautifully—more like an old friend than a new house."

Photos courtesy Superstition Mountain.

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