

By Hannah Roberts

Photography by Angie Agostino

Best-Laid Plans

An unexpected meeting of Eichler enthusiasts paves the way for a whole new generation of midcentury masterpieces.





FLOOR-TO-CEILING WINDOWS ALLOW DESERT EICHLER GUESTS TO RELAX IN CARL HANSEN & SON CHAIRS AND TAKE IN PALM SPRINGS' MARVELOUS CLIMATE. AIR PLANTS FROM LOCAL VENDOR JUST MODERN BRING THE OUTSIDE IN, WHILE AN ORIGINAL MODFIRE-DESIGNED FIREPLACE KEEPS THINGS COZY ON COLDER NIGHTS.

"WHY DIDN'T EICHLER EVER BUILD IN PALM SPRINGS?" was the question that started it all for Troy Kudlac of KUD Properties and his wife, Amy. In 2013, the couple found themselves in the middle of a good crop of midcentury property renovations. While they enjoyed the work, they had begun to see a change in the structure of the market, and didn't see aggressive growth in the repositioning of properties. Soon, they started researching building "something significant and modern ... something to pay homage."

In the three Desert Eichler homes that have been completed to date, every material has been carefully chosen to dovetail practicality with historical context.



In the course of their research, they asked themselves why Joseph Eichler never built in Palm Springs. After all, his aesthetic would suit the desert so well. “Eventually we started thinking, ‘How cool would it be to build houses like this?’” Troy explains. They began researching how to license Eichler plans, and in the midst of their efforts, they attended a screening of realtor Monique Lombardelli’s documentary *People in Glass Houses: The Legacy of Joseph Eichler* at Palm Springs Modernism Week. After the film, Monique gave a short speech, commenting, “I love these Eichlers so much—they have so many great qualities. I want to see more built.” At that point, Troy and Amy exchanged bewildered looks. How did she know?

Troy went up and introduced himself afterward, and the rest is modernist history. Monique had already done much of the ‘leg work,’ going through archives and meeting with Eichler owners, the Eichler family and architects’ families. “It really felt like riding her coattails and bringing the dream to fruition,” Troy says. The couple struck up a partnership

with Monique, giving KUD rights as the exclusive Eichler builder in Palm Springs, and the yearlong process of getting a digitized, hand-drawn set of plans and bringing them up to code began.

The process of translating Eichler’s vision to new terrain while maintaining a proper level of reverence bore its own set of challenges—as well as the questions of what modern updates they could make without compromising on authenticity.

“Steve [Shields of Shields Residential] and I teamed up to walk neighborhoods in Orange [County] and knock on Eichler doors saying ‘Hey, nice house,’” Troy says. “Everyone was so friendly in the neighborhood and liked each other—we took what they loved, hated and changed about their own homes into account while building.”

With these additional perspectives in mind, Troy put on his “Joseph Eichler glasses” and set to work making the plans Palm Springs-friendly. “We took the windows down to sliders since it’s not the Bay area. We took out the wall



IN THIS BRIGHT, MINIMALIST BATHROOM, THE CUSTOM SHIELDS RESIDENTIAL STORAGE UNIT COMPLEMENTS THE KERF-DESIGNED BATH VANITY, WHILE THE GROHE COSMOPOLITAN SINK FAUCET AND SHOWER HARDWARE KEEP THINGS SLEEK.

dividing the kitchen and the living room in the Claude Oakland MS-234 model. It just made sense—I think Joseph would do it today.”

For clients Mary Humfeld and Sonia Manganaro, the thoughtful adaptation of the Eichler aesthetic has been the icing on the cake. “We love everything about [our] house, but if we were forced to narrow it down, it would [first] be the atrium that is the center of the house—it’s truly an outdoor and indoor experience. It gives you a feeling of living in an oasis in the middle of this magnificent desert!”

The Palm Springs inspiration wasn’t restricted to the architecture, either. “We don’t farm our trades out of the area,” Troy says. “We source locally from Modern Home, Just Modern, Ferguson and others for plumbing, lighting, staging ... we also choose finishes that are either original to Palm Springs, or original-inspired.” In the three Desert Eichler homes that have been completed to date, every material, from walnut to slab to quartz, has been carefully chosen to dovetail practicality with historical context.



IN THIS ARTFUL A-FRAME EICHLER, ARTWORK FROM KELLY LEE AND FRED MOSER’S “POOLSIDE REUNION” COLLECTION PLAYS NICELY WITH AN EQUALLY COLORFUL CREDENZA FROM THE HUNT VINTAGE.



A GLASS HOUSE IN THE DESERT LOOKS EVEN MORE GLORIOUS AT NIGHT—JUST ONE OF THE REASONS WHY THIS PARTICULAR DESERT EICHLER WAS THE SITE OF ATOMIC RANCH'S MODERNISM WEEK SOIRÉE. ORIGINAL "I LIKE EICH" WORK FROM ARTIST AARON ESKRIDGE SERVES AS A STYLISH NOD TO KUD'S REVERENCE FOR THE ARCHITECT.

"In our minds we got the best of both worlds," Mary explains. "Our home is built from the original architectural plan obtained from The Berkley Archives with brand new infrastructure and updated features. We had seen a lot of properties that were beautifully designed but on their last legs in terms of their structures, roofs, plumbing, etc. Frankly, buying something with known (or unknown) issues wasn't appealing to us.

"In a way, it was an even more authentic experience," she adds. "After all, when Midcentury Modern homes were originally being built in the '50s and '60s, people were moving into brand new homes that were ultra-modern, ultra-new and ultra-exciting. You would have been able to smell new construction—which is exactly what we experienced." 🌿

“The atrium gives you a feeling of living in an oasis in the middle of this magnificent desert!”

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