

Restoration Rescue

By Kristin Dowding
Photography by Lance Gerber

A restoration and renovation company teams up with an architectural historian to save a 1948 Herbert Burns residence from being stripped of all its character.

THIS GLASS FEATURE WALL WAS ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES THOMBOY PROPERTIES FACED DURING THE RESTORATION. WHEN THEY FOUND IT, THE HORIZONTAL SLATS HAD BEEN REMOVED ALONG WITH ALL THE GLASS. THERE ARE 66 PANES IN TOTAL, AND ONLY 25 PANES HAD THE SAME DIMENSIONS. TO GET THE GLASS INSERTS CORRECT, THEY HAD TO INDIVIDUALLY MEASURE EACH SQUARE, SINCE MOST OF THEM VARIED SLIGHTLY IN SIZE. "THE JUXTAPOSITION OF HORIZONTAL PLANES AND VERTICAL DETAILS MAKES HIS ARCHITECTURE INTERESTING," SAYS STEVEN.



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e recognize as a hero someone who demonstrates courage and saves the day. You could say that partners Jackie Thomas and DeeAnn McCoy, owners of Thomboy Properties, became heroes when they saved a 1948 Herbert Burns residence from demolition. After the house was nearly stripped of every signature architectural feature, Jackie and DeeAnn purchased the property and planned not only to renovate it, but also restore it to its past beauty.

Originally built for Dr. George Gillman and his wife, Sadie, this Palm Springs home was in the process of being completely gutted by a group of investors—who didn't appreciate the treasure they had purchased—when they ran out of money, and Thomboy Properties swooped in to save the day. "We got an email from a real estate agent wanting to know if we'd be interested in this property," says Jackie. "It was down to the studs, but it spoke to us."

ABOVE: THE FRONT OF THE HOME IS TRULY A PICTURESQUE SCENE FROM THE 1950S. EXISTING PALM TREES GUARD THE FRONT-LOADED POOL, AND FINE DECOMPOSED GRANITE PEBBLES SURROUND THE NATURAL CINDERBLOCK WALL. THE ENTIRE HOUSE HAS STUCCO SIDING WITH SANDSTONE STRUCTURAL SUPPORTS. "BURNS ALWAYS DESIGNED FLAT-ROOFED HOUSES," SAYS STEVEN. "HE HAD WIDE FASCIA MOLDING ON THE FRONT FACE OF THE ROOF, AND HOVERING BELOW THAT FOR A PART OF IT IS A SECONDARY ROOFLINE THAT'S NARROWER WITH BOLD, GEOMETRIC SANDSTONE PYLONS FOR SUPPORT."

OPPOSITE TOP: TO BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO THE EXISTING FIREPLACE, THEY HAD IT SANDBLASTED AND RECONSTRUCTED THE FLOATING SOFFIT. "IT WAS WHITE WITH RED PAINT ON IT WHEN WE FIRST SAW IT," SAYS JACKIE. YOU CAN EXIT THE ROOM FROM A 16-FOOT SLIDING GLASS DOOR TO THE LEFT OR A 12-FOOT SLIDER TO THE RIGHT. "IF YOU OPEN UP BOTH OF THE DOORS AT THE SAME TIME, THE FLOW IS AMAZING," SHE SAYS.



LEFT: BURNS IS KNOWN FOR USING ARIZONA SANDSTONE, NOT ONLY ON THE EXTERIOR OF A HOME, BUT ON THE INTERIOR AS WELL. THE SANDSTONE SLAB LINES THE ENTIRE ENTRYWAY, INSIDE AND OUT. THIS HALLWAY WAS NARROW IN THE ORIGINAL FOOTPRINT, SO THEY REFRAMED THE BEDROOMS TO MAKE THE HALLWAY WIDER BY A FOOT. THIS ALLOWED FOR AN INDOOR PLANTER THAT HAS DECOMPOSED GRANITE AROUND IT FOR A DECORATIVE FEEL. THEY ALSO FOUND TRACES OF THE ORIGINAL FRONT DOOR PAINT, SO THEY ATTEMPTED TO GET AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO THOSE COLORS.



OPPOSITE TOP: THEY CHOSE TEAK CABINETS FOR THE KITCHEN BUT ADDED A POP OF BLUE WITH AN AZUL TILE BACKSPLASH. THE REFRIGERATOR BLENDS IN WITH THE CABINETS, AS THE FRONT IS LINED WITH THE SAME TEAK, AND IT'S BLACK ON THE INSIDE. CORIAN® GRAPHITE COUNTERTOPS IN GRAY KEEP THE SPACE IN A DARKER PALETTE, WHILE THE MODLEY PENDANTS GIVE OFF A LIGHT RETRO VIBE.

RESPECT AND REIMAGINE

To say this project was a lot of work is an understatement, but this wasn't Jackie and DeeAnn's first renovation. They both left corporate jobs in 2010 to renovate Mid Century Modern homes in Palm Springs, and they've been living their dream ever since. "Our goal is to respect the beauty and simplicity of design from the past and reimagine it for the way people live today," says Jackie.



ABOVE: THE DINING ROOM IS OPEN TO THE KITCHEN AND LIVING ROOM, MAKING A TRIANGULAR FLOW THAT ALLOWS PEOPLE TO SEE EACH OTHER AND CHAT. TO CREATE PRIVACY FOR THE SLIDING GLASS DOORS, HUNTER DOUGLAS SPONSORED THE HOUSE AND PROVIDED SLEEK BLINDS THAT ONLY ADD TO THE DESIGN OF THE SPACE. "WE TRIED TO GIVE A NOD TO INNOVATION BY MAKING ALL THE BLINDS AUTOMATED," SAYS JACKIE. "BURNS LOVED TECHNOLOGY."

THE CASITA, OR GUEST HOUSE, COMPLEMENTS THE DESIGN OF THE MAIN HOUSE WITH BLUE ACCENT WALLS, VINTAGE-INSPIRED FURNITURE FROM ROOM & BOARD AND EYE-CATCHING FIXTURES. THIS DINING ROOM FEATURES MORE FENIX® MATERIAL ON THE KITCHEN CABINETS, FOR A FUNCTIONAL DESIGN THAT WILL STAND THE TEST OF TIME.



They determined this residence was one of architect Herbert Burns' most lavish homes. It most likely sold in the 1970s or '80s, and the new owners added a small guest house that became part of the renovation. But to ensure they were getting the details right, Jackie and DeeAnn had to procure reliable resources.

PHOTOS FROM THE PAST

The only photo documentation of the home in its original state was the feature in the 1951 issue of the Los Angeles Times Home magazine. However, the images were blurry, so they decided to consult with an expert: architectural historian Steven Keylon, author of *The Design of Herbert W. Burns*. "We texted him asking if he knew anything about the property, and he called us as soon as we hit Send," says Jackie. "He was our silent partner on this project."

RIGHT: THE INDOOR BAR HAS TEAK WOOD CABINETS FOR AMPLE STORAGE THAT LOOKS BOTH VINTAGE AND MODERN. YOU CAN CATCH A GLIMPSE OF THE GREEN WELDTX WALL TO THE RIGHT OF THE VINTAGE-INSPIRED YELLOW CHAIRS. "THANKS TO STEVEN KEYLON WE WERE ABLE TO CONNECT WITH JEFF [NICHOLS] AT EICHLER SIDING IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA. HE EVEN CAME TO [MODERNISM WEEK] WITH HIS WIFE TO SEE THE FINISHED PRODUCT," JACKIE SAYS.





BOTTOM LEFT: THE BATHROOM FOR THE THIRD BEDROOM HAS A MONOCHROMATIC LOOK THAT LETS THE TEXTURE SHINE. "WE TRIED TO GIVE A NOD TO THE VINTAGE STYLE WITH SIMPLE, HARVEST-GOLD EXTENDED SUBWAY TILES," JACKIE SAYS. THE FLOORING IN THIS BATHROOM AND THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE IS TERRAZZO, ASIDE FROM THE CARPET IN THE BEDROOMS.

BOTTOM RIGHT: "WE HAVE FUN WITH OUR POWDER ROOMS," JACKIE SAYS. BOLD BLUE RESIDES ON THE WALLS AS WELL AS THE VANITY. THE VANITY IS MADE FROM AN INNOVATIVE MATERIAL CALLED FENIX NTM®, WHICH IS LIKE AN UPDATED VERSION OF LAMINATE. IF IT SCRATCHES, YOU CAN HEAT IT AND RUB AWAY THE SCRATCH, WHICH MAKES IT KID-FRIENDLY.

Being an expert on Burns, Steven was more than familiar with his architectural style and had kept an eye on this property ever since he moved to his own Palm Springs Burns residence in 2016. "I had taken a lot of pictures in the first phase where it wasn't gutted," he says. "They were also able to measure details in my house to compare." Armed with Steven's photos, the grainy magazine images and some pictures the Burns' family gave to Steven during his book interviews, they set to work on the extensive renovations.

SIGNATURE LOOK

The goal was to reintroduce Burns' signatures. "There were little details missing that had to be replicated," says Steven. Arizona sandstone columns and walls, a rib glass wall, a floating soffit, the pool and the secondary roofline were the most important items on that list.

The challenge then became resourcing the outdated materials, such as sandstone and Weldtex (a striated or combed accent wood panel), but they were able to source original Burns materials where they could and replicate them where they couldn't. "Burns used redwood from the early 1940s as slats in the ceiling, and we were able to fill in the holes," says Jackie.

TOP: "THE BEDROOMS WERE ALL LARGE FOR A HOME OF THIS ERA," SAYS JACKIE. THEY TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THAT AND FILLED THE MAIN BEDROOM WITH BEAUTIFUL PIECES, SUCH AS THE HARTLEY BED, HUDSON NIGHTSTANDS AND DRESSER FROM ROOM & BOARD, JOHNATHAN ADLER PENDANTS AND COWHIDE OTTOMANS. THEY ADDED A TRANSOM WINDOW ALONG THE GRASSCLOTH WALLPAPERED WALL TO LET LIGHT IN THE ROOM, AND ITS LOCATION PROVIDES PRIVACY.

OPPOSITE TOP: THE ACCENT WALL IN THIS CASITA ROOM HAS A FAUX GRASSCLOTH DESIGN MADE FROM VINYL. "WE KNEW IT WOULD BE USED AS A POOL HOUSE, SO WE WANTED GUESTS TO BE ABLE TO GET IT WET," SAYS JACKIE. THEY ALSO ORDERED CARPET TILES FROM FLOR IN BLUE AND WHITE HUES. THE PATTERN ALLOWS YOU TO REPLACE ONE SQUARE AT A TIME, IF NEEDED.



A HISTORIC FUTURE

Now, the home represents the best of Mid Century Modern style with updates for modern living. "It's the best example of Desert Moderne from the 1940s," says Jackie. "It takes advantage of the natural desert beauty and outside living."

From the start of the project, they made it their goal to have the restoration completed by Modernism Week 2020 so it could be a showcase home, and they succeeded. "Now we want to pursue a nomination to make it a Class 1 Historic Site," says Steven. They not only worked to bring back a piece of history, but they were also a part of making history. 🌀