

LAS **Vegas Life**

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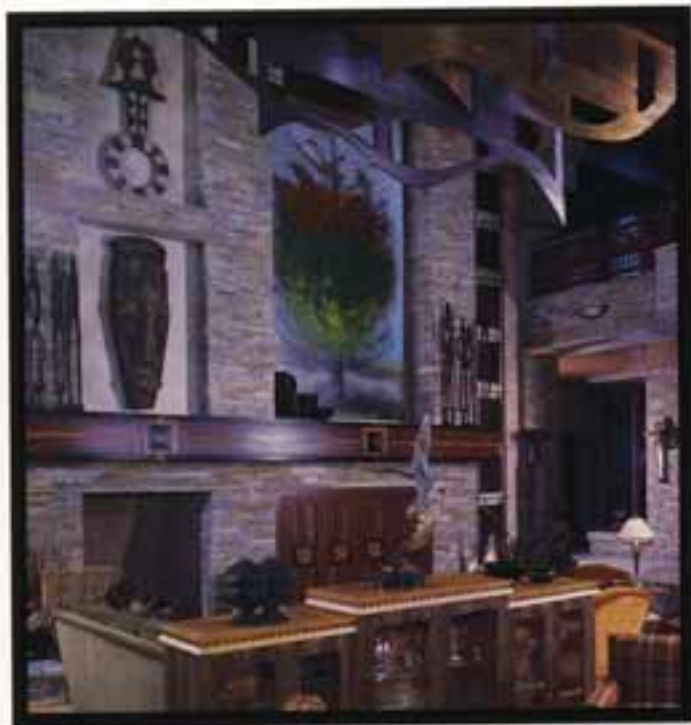
Show Rooms



Four luxurious living spaces
for four different lifestyles

by Emily Young

photography by J. Michael Beals



a pair of ornately carved side chairs echo the formal symmetry of the monumental cast-stone and travertine fireplace flanked by recessed cabinets. A black baby grand, dark-stained console tables and antiqued mirror stand out against a monochromatic palette of pale neutrals. Classical lamps and towering floral arrangements, which help evoke an earlier time and place, are set off by more contemporary touches such as the streamlined glass-and-iron coffee table.

Understated elegance aside, the Keaches insist that this regal-looking space isn't reserved for special occasions or adults only. In fact, Kathy says, many of the family's favorite moments together are spent right here. "Sometimes we all come in and sit and just listen to my son play the piano."

The Living Room as Lobby

Once their children leave home, many parents are content to downsize and park themselves in a rocker. Not so for the empty-nesters living in this Tournament Hills home in Summerlin. Since they're just as likely to invite a few friends over for barbecue as they are to host a big political fund-raiser, this couple asked interior designer Joel Kazar to give their cavernous great room both the intimacy and flexibility their social calendar demanded.

Architects Stephen Swisher and Ron Hall built the dry-stacked Idaho quartzite structure, and like them, Kazar was guided by his clients' taste for the Prairie style of Frank Lloyd Wright. "There was no way to avoid the strong Wright influence in the architecture," Kazar says. "But because this amount of stone can feel cold, I added wood." Lots of it. Myriad details warm the interior, including the 26-foot-high barrel-vaulted ceiling finished in Douglas fir, oak floors accented with cherry, mahogany, bleached rosewood and ebony marquetry, and an upstairs balustrade crafted from bold cherry grids.

What really sets this room apart, however, is a furniture configuration to rival the lobby of the Grand Hotel. Guests can take their pick of seating, much of it designed by Kazar, in five conversation areas. The replica tête-à-tête by the piano is

PREVIOUS PAGE: When the Keaches invite company over, they don't worry about tripping over playthings, because their children have their own den on the second floor. Designer Karen Butera King assembled roll-arm sofas and cabriole-leg chairs for a traditional setting updated with a massive fireplace and an enormous wall of glass. Says King: "It's lavish but comfortable."

THESE PAGES: Designer Joel Kazar organized this room to give his clients and their guests several places to relax. Above left: A foursome can sit in armchairs next to a custom cabinet filled with silver and crystal. Right: More people can gather on a fireside sofa or on seating by the glass panel doors. Everywhere, African sculptures, a painting by Chicago artist Brian Bonebreak, a sheet-metal mobile and other artworks echo the palette established by the quartzite walls and intricate wood trim.









Billy and Beth Weinberger decided on museum-white walls and only a few bright accents to better showcase their art collection. "Red is my favorite color, so it was hard to keep things neutral for the art," Beth says. Left: Designer/contractor Bette Slatoff reserved the space above the fireplace for a Jeffrey Laudenschlägger sculpture. Her table of wood, glass and stainless steel, big enough for 12 people, is the perfect height for grazing around the television. Rhino Cart, a ceramic work by Charles Johnson, stands near windows softened by hand-painted Indian silk. Built-in shelves concentrate art pottery along a wall beside a canvas by artist Kris Molasky of Los Angeles. Above right: Prints by Red Grooms and Robert Rauschenberg flank a rare sculpture by Roy Lichtenstein above a stainless-steel shelf displaying smaller treasures.



the smallest, coziest spot; the largest allows a dozen or more people to mingle on the sofa, chairs and benches near the glass panel doors overlooking the golf course. Chenille, velvet and leather in harmonious neutrals introduce a wealth of sumptuous textures. Underfoot, plush rugs commissioned by Jacqueline Kennedy but never used in the White House anchor three of the furniture groupings.

The owners' art collection is nothing if not eclectic: While an African mask and tribal figures peer out from one wall, animal-shaped Balinese drums stand guard at the hearth. Atop a low hammered-wood cabinet facing the bar, a bronze of two ballet dancers by sculptor Richard MacDonald of Carmel, California, rests only inches from a less-refined "tramp art" box. And bringing the entire space down to a more comfortable human scale is local artist Burt Lancon's airy inmobile of copper, brass and stainless steel. "Everything works," Kazar says of the mix, "because it's all of the earth and hand-hewn." And, perhaps, because he's created a room simultaneously snug and grand.

The Living Room as Gallery

Before a job brought art collectors Billy and Beth Weinberger west from Cleveland, they dreamed of living in a loft in New York City. Now, with two grown sons out on their own, they've indulged in their fantasy without leaving Las Vegas. Located in La Mesa Estates, the airy open-plan house, which Beth says she's "been drawing on napkins for 30 years," was a collaboration with interior designer/contractor Bette Slatoff and architectural designer Jeffery Grover. Not surprisingly, its thoroughly modern ambience complements the couple's passion for contemporary artwork.

"We collect whimsical things that make us smile, and this house gives us the opportunity to live with art we really like," Beth says. In particular, the outsized living room features 22-foot-high walls, plus a skylight and clerestory windows treated to protect light-sensitive artwork from ultraviolet rays. Prints by Robert Rauschenberg and Red Grooms, a sculpture by Roy Lichtenstein and xerographs by William Wegman share space with canvases by former Las Vegas artists Michael McCollum and Michael Wine. Instead of a mantel, a wall-mounted steel





With families who hail from the American West, Gary and Susan Crowe asked Designer Leslie Perraguire to accentuate the frontier flavor of their living room. Left: Old rifles, Indian blankets and cowboy chaps add to the rough-hewn charm of a twig-covered entertainment center and matching bookcases. Leather sofas that took abuse from the Crowes' children when they were younger now boast a rich patina. Right: A William Matthews watercolor earns a place of honor near the kiva-style fireplace.

sculpture by Jeffrey Laudenschlager of San Diego appears to levitate above the fireplace.

Art pottery, the core of the Weinbergers' collection, is displayed on open shelving for close-up viewing. Among the many colorful pieces are a Pablo Picasso pitcher and a vessel by local artist Tom Coleman. "We built this place so we can continue to collect more art," Billy Weinberger says. "But sometimes we just move things around and gain a whole new appreciation for different pieces."

Interior details are noteworthy as well, starting with the see-through glass entrance sandblasted with a spiral motif. An Ingo Maurer chandelier of silver-coated paper gleams overhead, while Maurer's minimalist halogen lighting system offers a more interesting alternative to recessed bulbs. For formal affairs, a top converts the mirror-clad billiard table into a dining surface. More often, though, the Weinbergers and their guests gather on the beige silk sofa or red Ultrasuede easy chairs around the large, low table Slatoff designed for casual meals in front of the big-screen television. "When the TV's on," Beth says, "we consider it video art."

The Living Room as a Link to the Past

Anyone familiar with the inside of Gary and Susan Crowe's previous home, a prosaic one-story homage to Nantucket, would no doubt be surprised to see the couple's sprawling new digs. But close friends know that the Crowes—he's a third-generation Nevadan; she's part of a rodeo family from Idaho—have simply returned to their Western roots by way of their rugged-looking pueblo-style house in Summerlin's Eagle Hills. "My husband grew up hunting and fishing," Susan says, "and we both decided we wanted our home to evoke the openness, the largeness of Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone National Park."

Nowhere is that rustic, lodge-like spaciousness more palpable than in the living area that the architectural firm of Carpenter Sellers laid out to open to the dining room, bar, kitchen, breakfast nook and patio. Decorated with the help of interior

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buying art

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too, likes to see a third down, "with monthly payments for six months or so."

And why is art so damn expensive?

As Beckmann points out, what we think of as "art"—a painting, a sculpture—is really the end product of what art truly is: a creative process between artist, materials and ideas. It's hard to put a price tag on that sort of thing.

"I usually base it on what I've sold similar pieces for in the past," he says. He also factors in parts and labor, research time and his own educated sense of what each piece is worth.

"We'll tell the artist if we think it's too much or too little," Stanford says. "But we can't ask him to change his prices."

How much does the gallery tack on?

According to Maly, a piece you buy from Art Encounter for \$500 probably cost him \$250 or \$300. The gallery's cut varies at Smallworks. "The last few shows we've done we haven't made anywhere near 50 percent," Stanford says. He declined to identify a specific markup, because there isn't a specific markup. "It varies on almost everything," he says.

A nonprofit gallery typically keeps even less, 20 percent or so.

Can I try to haggle 'em down a little?

You can try all you want. Just don't expect it to work. "We as a gallery are pretty much set," says Maly. "We rent the spaces to the artists and they set the prices. So it's pretty much as marked."

Or else expect it to work. "Sure, we'll negotiate," Stanford says. "Some things we can haggle on better than others; some things we can't. But we're not offended if people want to talk price."

What if I get it home and it icks up my house? Can I take it back?

Smallworks: Yes, within 30 days.

Art Encounter: Buyers have "a reasonable time," 48 hours or so, Maly says. "They should know that quickly if it's not working."

Sounds like we're on our way to a little economic impact!

Indeed. "We've seen some signs of improvement," Stanford says. "Such as sales. We've had some!" ♥

drive by architecture

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that from the outside. Outside, it's a basic tract job, one cookie-cutter house in a neighborhood like a cookie sheet.

Inside, the walls and cabinets are painted bright, interlocking colors. Art hangs on the walls. The furniture is whacked-out custom stuff (a stainless-steel table, a crazy-leaning drawer unit). Part of the floor is simply the foundation concrete, stained. Even their daughter's room gets in on the fun with different colors splattered on the walls and ceiling.

So, within this utterly conventional shell exists an utterly customized environment. In a town where the housing choices amount to picking a variation on the same theme wherever you go, it's a valuable reminder. It points the way to decorating individuality in our CC&R'd-to-death suburban fastness: Pick up a paintbrush and a bucket of, say, red—better yet, splatter that paint around. Peel up some carpet. And maybe touring architects will stop by your house, too. ♣

super structures

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Anchoring the east end of this overhang is a red, two-story fin with a large square cut out of it. As opposed to the trendy nonbearing walls projecting out of other buildings around town, a concession to contemporary fashion, this element actually contains a hallway, running from the reception desk past the conference room, and a stairwell. It's a functional focal point, not a gratuitous one.

The opposite end of the building is now balanced by an addition, its southern windows gridded internally with a shade system, and its blunt west face clad in corrugated metal, which reflects heat away from the building while balancing the exterior textures. This is one of those very few buildings in America actually improved by an addition, versus suffering a subtraction from its original design.

All three of these are buildings to which I'll return with a sense of longing fulfilled. None of them substitute over-scaling for intelligence in a presumptive attempt to impress, a mistake made as often in New York and Los Angeles as along the Strip. These are structures coherent in their shape and function; they

offer compelling detail up close and serve their purposes humanely in an environment hostile to humans—but none of them were achieved easily, each requiring a unique developmental process. The Thomas residence benefited from the cooperative intelligence of a client who is himself a design professional. The county complex took years for a public commissioning body to select an architect, another kind of acquired knowledge. And the office building had to answer as a show-place to clients as well as be a performance space for its inhabitants.

I would guess that Las Vegas has a higher ratio of available funds to building projects than any other city in the world as we go into the next century. Instead of leading the world in architectural stage sets catering to the lowest common denominator of media-inspired fantasies, it can afford to become the most aesthetic and efficient desert city on the planet. Or so these three buildings compel us to hope. ♦

show rooms

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designer Leslie Parraguire of Colours Inc., the smooth white adobe walls, heart pine floor and tongue-in-groove Douglas fir ceiling form the perfect backdrop for dark leather sofas, a set of comfortable wing chairs and rich burgundy, forest green and navy textiles. The built-in media cabinet, fashioned out of pine and willow twigs by a craftsman in Utah, holds a reproduction Frederic Remington bronze. A William Matthews watercolor of two grizzled ranchers hangs in a niche beside the beehive fireplace. Above, lodgepole pine rails that local artisans tied with rawhide ring the room on the second floor, which affords an excellent view of the wrought-iron and mica chandelier topped by an elk-hide tepee.

Here and there, memorabilia such as Gary's childhood rocker, his father's antique rifles, friends' used chaps, an old branding iron and a Navajo blanket lend an air of lived-in authenticity. These objects are more than mere stage props or museum artifacts, however. For the Crowes and their two young children, they're tangible connections to the past. As Susan puts it: "Las Vegas used to be a dusty cowboy town, so we wanted a home in keeping with its history." And their own. ♦