



# Hidden Valley Ranch

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Two designers,  
living and working together,  
put some dressing on it ...

**M**ary Ann Hesseldenz was living in Hastings-on-the-Hudson, N.Y., in 1998 when she began looking for a second home in Tucson, where she had family. After touring a slew of Spanish colonials, faux-Tuscans and slump-block Southwesterns, it just wasn't clicking.

"While leaving a neighborhood, we drove by a low-slung, cool 1960s ranch house set back off the road," she recalls. "I yelled to the agent, 'That is the house I want!'" She replied it wasn't for sale and I went back East. Two weeks later the agent called and said the woman who lived there had died and they wanted exactly what I could afford. So I bought the house





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The Baker-Hesseldenz house is on a one-acre lot with killer views of Sabino Canyon and the Catalina Mountains. Behind the massive stone wall is the carport, and the white rock roof is original. The couple changed the trim from Frank Lloyd Wright red to brown and painted the front doors orange after a trip to Palm Springs. At one point William Holden had a vacation home in the neighborhood.

Bifold doors closing off the entryway from the dining area were removed, opening up the house and the views to the back yard the minute you step inside. The red gaming chair was designed by Hesseldenz's son when he was 12, while in the dining room a Heywood-Wakefield Wishbone table is surrounded by vintage Burke pedestal chairs. The Victorian chandelier once hung in the homeowner's studio conference room but now adds more bling to the hand-painted drapes original to the home.

via FedEx without even seeing the inside. I joked that if you pay an agent 8%, they will 'take care' of the tenants."

The 2,300-square-foot ranch had been a model home for the Hidden Valley tract in the foothills of Tucson. One of only three mid-century modern neighborhoods in the city—El Encanto and Indian Ridge are the others—the house was designed by Wes Miller in 1960. Hesseldenz, then a fashion designer, was married to a contractor at the time, so she figured any interior surprises could be easily remedied. The realtor silently worried that her client would think the expansive stone wall in the living room too dark and be unhappy with the lack of updates; little did she know those were pluses.

The first years were spent removing tired elements like the gold shag carpet that covered the cement slab and the pink mohair wall-to-wall in the bedroom. In 2001 Hesseldenz moved to Arizona full time, and a few years later met her professional and domestic partner, Scott Baker, a 40-year-old furniture designer. Together the two have restored and updated the house further.

Previous spread: The scale of the acrylic sofa by Hesseldenz, with its see-through backrest designed to sit in front of a window, was taken from vintage Knoll pieces. In another view, a photo by Joyce Tenneson hangs next to the open fretwork metal divider that replaced a portion of the wall between the dining and living rooms.

Below: Vintage pieces bought at yard and estate sales include a tall table lamp next to a Danish modern armchair, a green Eames Aluminum Group chair and a tambour-door cabinet that holds the TV. Scott Baker designed and fabricated the cherry media cabinet with ebony pulls beneath the large white painting.



# “My style of furniture design typically has more of a vintage flare”

## Designing Spaces

As Baker + Hesseldenz, the couple designs commercial and residential spaces; he's the onsite project manager and she's the office project manager. After 20 years in fashion, Hesseldenz, 48, has segued into furniture and interior design full time. “My fashion background informs my design aesthetic: I still love fabric, and I still design a room as a collection—everything is a unified group,” she says.

Past projects at their home include removing bifold doors in the entry, razing a wall separating the living and dining rooms, interior and exterior paint, improved lighting, and building an outdoor poolside bar. A poured epoxy flagstone floor now covers the concrete slab, winding throughout the public rooms of the house and out onto the patio. They find that the floor treatment holds up to their three dogs: a Jack Russell terrier, a dachshund and a Boston terrier/pug mix.

“They use this surface a lot in restaurants; it's super durable and doesn't stain,” says Baker. “If you drop anything with oil in it, natural stone really stains.”

The couple work well together but do have slightly different aesthetics. “As a furniture designer, I have a tendency to design things that are long and low; midcentury houses are kind of like that—you don't have lofty ceilings and everything is sleek and streamline,” Baker explains. “Some of the pieces in the house now have more of an Art Nouveau look that I did originally for a show. The stereo cabinet under the painting in the living room is where I'm ultimately going stylistically—simple, with a little bit of an Asian aesthetic.”

“My style of furniture design typically has more of a vintage flare,” Hesseldenz adds, “while Scott's is more urban modern. I use acrylic a lot,



which is from the midcentury era.” The two collaborated on a walnut cocktail table with an illuminated '60s burlesque photo on the top, seen in the living room, while a gold side table with pull-out mirrored shelves was done by Hesseldenz for a design competition.

## Next Up

Their current joint project is a kitchen remodel, now about 75 percent done. A previous '70s makeover with dark wood laminate cabinets and gold countertops was initially mitigated by removing some hanging upper cabinets, painting the cupboards gray and installing a glass countertop on the peninsula. Now, keeping the same footprint, version 2.0 calls for modern Euro-style quartersawn walnut cabinets custom built by Baker, paneled appliances—they're not big fans of stainless steel—and replacing a solid door with glass to bring in more light. CaesarStone was spec'd for the final countertops, but when temporary white laminate counters were installed, the couple liked them so much they've decided to forgo the manufactured stone.

“At \$120 a sheet we saved a ton of money with laminate,” Hesseldenz says.

In the reading area of the master bedroom, Hesseldenz designed both the sofa, which is upholstered in dog-friendly white vinyl, and a Scoop table, lit by a Gerald Thurston wall lamp. Vintage movie posters add some period color to the neutral scheme.

Opposite: the frozen-in-time bath is on the punch list for future projects.

## These midcentury homes really have style



A peeling 1917 dress form is a focal point in the chocolate-hued hallway off the bedrooms.

The cherry hallway cabinet with Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts influences was designed by Scott Baker, while the Asian armchair near the doorway is a \$5 yard sale find. A louvered door, here open to the bedroom hallway beyond, can be shut to close off private areas during parties.



"The new upper cabinets are going to be white lacquer with a walnut detail and open shelving for our collection of vintage barware. A mirror backsplash, which only cost \$345 including installation, looks very high-end, clean and modern; the only drawback is when the kitchen is messy it looks twice as messy."

### Period Style

Hesseldenz mentions her parents epitomized swinging '60s style—her dad looked like a Rat Packer, her mother was a tearoom model and together they were voted the best-dressed couple in Indianapolis—so the pleasure she finds in her vintage home is perhaps genetic. "We wouldn't describe ourselves as midcentury purists, but in addition to the architecture, our other love of the period is the lifestyle. It was a time where the home was the hub of entertaining with friends and family," she says.

"Homes were designed with a flow that worked: people could wander inside and out and still be part of the group. Cocktails were served in proper glasses and hors d'oeuvres were lovingly displayed on servers. When Scott and I entertain, we like to choose a vintage cocktail to serve for the night and we use our collection of cocktail glasses. These midcentury homes really have style, while retaining a warmth and inviting nature that draws people in." 🍷

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*Like the vibe of this home? We recommend The Vintage Home by Judith Wilson for more great out-of-the-box interior design ideas; see page 23 or [atomic-ranch.com](http://atomic-ranch.com).*

The slab floors in all of the bedrooms received a white wash and polishing in lieu of the flagstone epoxy treatment elsewhere. Here in the master bedroom, a West Elm bed shares the space with a Lightolier pole lamp, a gold-tone Scandinavian table lamp on the night table and an Isamu Noguchi bamboo lamp on the Danish buffet serving as a dresser. The gray satin drapes add warmth to the room and speak to the homeowner's fashion background.