

SIGHT SEERS

Three architect-designed houses—each conceived to take advantage of stunning views—prove that seeing the sights can be part of relaxing at home

Architect Joseph Baggs, AIA, created a cascading wall of glass that spills down the south facade of Osman and Catherine Siddique's McLean, Va., home. ▶



DRAMATIC DESIGN ECHOES A WOODED RAVINE

The 3-acre parcel of land in McLean, Va., was exactly what Osman and Catherine Siddique had been seeking for months. Located in a rural setting just minutes from the nation's Capitol, the site is secluded by thick woods yet blessed with stunning views across a steep ravine that travels down a long, gradual southern slope. "When we first saw the site we knew that, whatever shape our future home would take, it would have lots of glass and big open spaces to let us enjoy the natural sights—weather, seasons, and colors," recalls Catherine. The couple also hoped to take advantage of the southern exposure to help control heating costs, but they sensed that the ravine would present a design challenge.

They were right—and three years after they bought the land, the challenge was met by Washington, D.C., architect Joseph Boggs, AIA. "We chose Boggs because we liked his contemporary style and his approach to design as a sculpting of space," explains Osman. "He gave us a house that 'tells a story' about its relationship to the site, and at the same time is well organized for our needs."

In his architectural story, Boggs created a house that mirrored the site: Rather than filling in the ravine, or bridging the gap with a horizontal design, he let the structure grow out of the landscape itself. The result was a curvilinear, largely vertical form composed of two supporting volumes connected by a wall of glass. Oriented precisely to the south, the three-story glass facade makes the most of the sun's energy, while beautifully framing the dramatic outdoor view. A sculptural stairway spills downward like a waterfall between the volumes—a distance of about 30 feet. The staircase also acts as a visual extension of the landscape by echoing the path of the ravine.

"When you gaze over the tops of the trees," observes the architect, "you feel almost as though you're suspended in mid-air."

Symbolism and aesthetics aside, Boggs also used the shape of the lot to organize the house into a vertical hierarchy that's well-suited to the Siddiques' active lifestyle. The owner's request for spacious, entertainment-oriented living areas with separate guest quarters prompted Boggs to divide the 4,800-square-foot interior into three levels: formal and informal living and dining areas and a garage at the top level, master suite and children's bedroom on the middle level, and separate guest areas on the lower level. "The house is perfect for formal or casual entertaining," says Catherine.

The young couple's need for an affordable home led Boggs to specify standard but quality materials: vertical cedar siding, asphalt-shingle roof, plasterboard walls, and stock insulating glass for nearly all of the 96 windows. Even the glass wall carries few custom-cut panels. "It was quite a job to fit that many pieces together and still keep the wall secure and windproof," recalls builder Brad Lundberg, of Stevensville, Md. He solved the problem by welding metal tubing into the shape of each pane, and bolting the sections together to make a frame. Then he nailed lumber to the frame for strength and skillfully inserted the glazing.

Everyone agrees it was worth the extra effort to create the glass wall. The indirect passive solar gain and a return air grille that sends accumulated warmth to lower levels have helped keep the heating bills down. Even with the use of a backup system, the highest monthly bill so far has amounted to \$260.

The architect selected interior materials with an eye toward maintenance and decorating ease, such as *café-au-lait*-color carpeting that won't fade with the sun. Laminate counters and a ceramic-tile floor in the kitchen have also been a real boon to Catherine, who now keeps pace with two toddlers. The couple furnished their home simply, with sophisticated contemporary pieces. "The house has so many curves and so much light," says Catherine, "that we wanted to continue the theme with soft, rounded furnishings. We didn't want anything to detract from our views." ▶

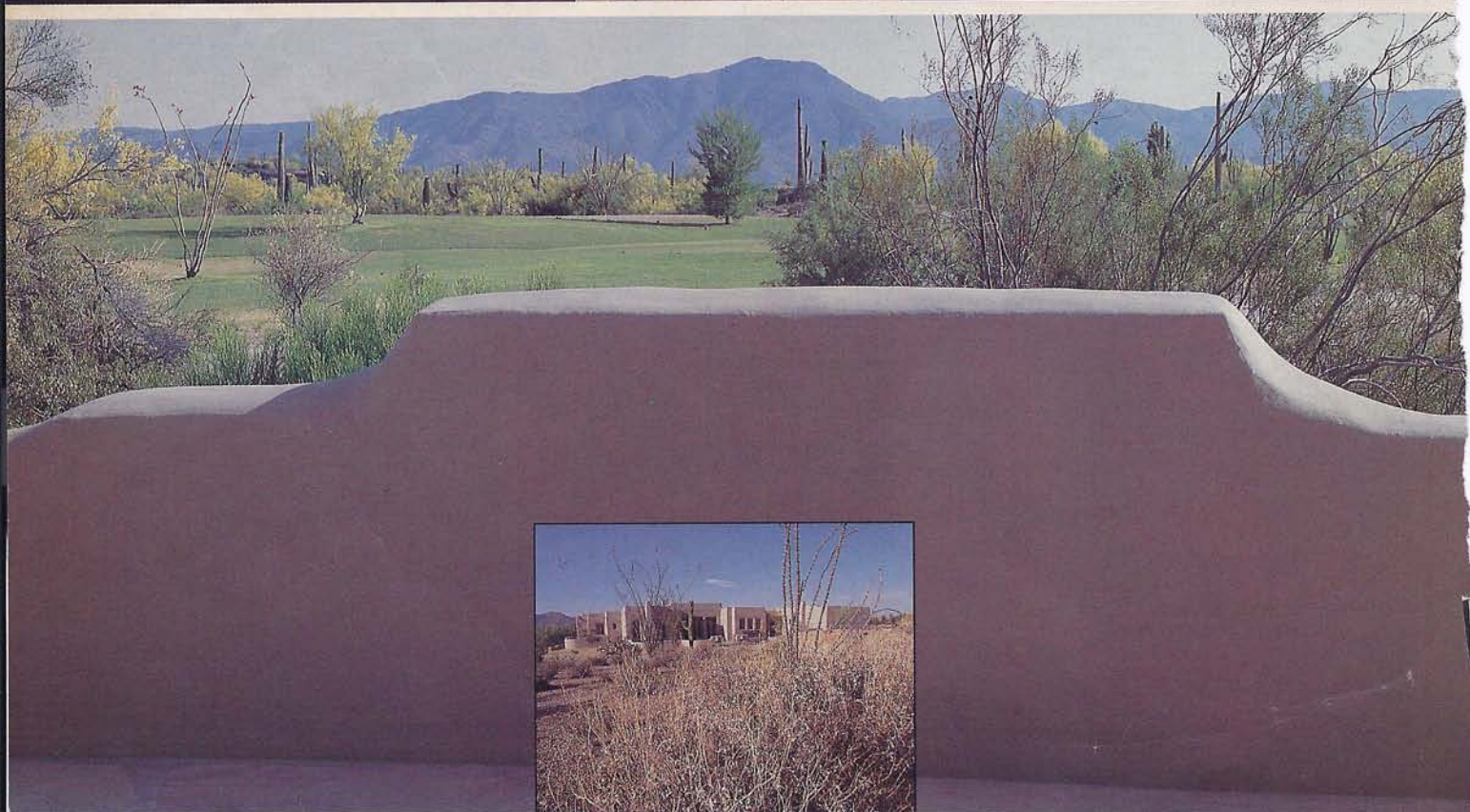
The graceful curves of the table in the dining room (left) echo the curve of the wall. Complementary tub chairs are upholstered in a soft white fabric with glints of silver thread woven throughout.

Walled off from the formal dining area, yet open to the roof and breakfast room, the kitchen (below) is both compact and efficient. Laminate counters and cabinet fronts wear a wood trim that complements the ceramic-tile floor.



The upper level enjoys spectacular vistas through the treetops while reaping the warmth of the winter sun. A bridge (right) from the spacious living room to the dining area (see plan) allows dramatic inside views down the staircase.





SCULPTED ADOBE MELTS WITH A DESERT LOCATION

Against a backdrop of the majestic Lone Mountains, the distant lights of Phoenix, and the peacefulness of the Arizona desert all around, the adobe home of Zane and Virginia Barnes nestles close to the ground. Almost a part of the landscape, the house quietly surveys the scene from sun-warmed patios and from cooler regions inside. Architecturally, the structure has all the density, security, and natural insulating quality of the traditional adobe. But its sculptural shape, contemporary Moorish feeling, and exciting form are the personal imprint of its designer, Paradise Valley artist and sculptor William F. Tull. "The rounded corners, undulating walls, and simplified Moorish openings, such as arches and domes, all suggest motion," explains Tull, "a sensation I tried to capture in stucco and plaster. I like to feel that a

house is part of nature," he adds, "growing up and out of the ground, its planes and shapes and colors changing with light and time."

The connection to nature and sculptural simplicity are what initially attracted the couple to Tull's artistry in 1982, when they decided to build on their 3/4-acre site in Carefree, Ariz. All they really wanted was a simple house with "lots of places for enjoying the peaceful beauty of the Sonoran Desert," recalls Virginia.

Before planning the layout of the 3,500-square-foot design, Tull considered the sun and wind exposure as well as the

spectacular views, and placed nearly all windows and doors on the north and south, in line with prevailing afternoon breezes. He located the *pueblo*, or great room, in the center of the plan, opening it directly to the north and south patios through a full-length window and five French doors. All of these are screened against insects with an unusual Tull design: a wood frame holding fine screening between two rows of staggered vertical copper tubing, in a herringbone pattern.

The house is constructed of 12-inch-wide sun-baked adobe bricks, with most of the walls about 2 feet thick. Unlike the massive, exposed *vigas* of the pueblo-style adobe, this lighter, more open design seldom displays its spruce beams, allowing walls and ceiling to flow together sculpturally. To carry the fluid, finished look to the exterior, contractor John Mechem sprayed the stuccoed surfaces with



Like a part of the desert landscape, the sculptured adobe in Carefree, Ariz., that artist William F. Tull designed for Virginia and Zane Barnes keeps a low profile (inset). The south side faces distant Phoenix and Scottsdale; the northern view (below, left) takes in a golf course and mountain range. The owners decided against a formal dining room, so a faux-goatskin table (left) sits at one end of the main room, with an antique English drop-leaf table (right) at the other end. Rounded corners, arches, and curves, such as the mini-dome that holds the ceiling fan, are a hallmark of Tull's contemporary designs. Interior designer Nancy

two coats of primer, then rolled on the final coat, in a rosy-taupe color, by hand.

The colors of the desert were a natural choice for the fabrics and furnishings as well. Interior designer Nancy Kitchell, of Kitchell/Newlon in Scottsdale, selected colors from a handful of rocks Virginia had gathered on the property. "I blended their favorite colors to make the interior feel 'deserty' but comfortable, using light, textured fabrics that feel rugged rather than fragile," explains Kitchell. The designer also mixed moods and styles, combining contemporary furnishings with antiques and reproductions. For the owners, the effect is a soothing blend of old and new: "Each time I come home," says Virginia, "there's something that speaks to my soul. That's why we call our home *Adobe Sueño*—our Adobe Dream." ▶



Kitchell mixed contemporary and antique furnishings, including a leather-top, iron circular table (top, right) she designed herself. The honey-color of the poplar floor and the butcher-block island in the kitchen (above) soften the white environment.

