



Desert ESCAPE

Northworks Builds A Modern Retreat In Joshua Tree

BY KENDRA BOUTELL | PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK DAVIDSON

ALTHOUGH JOSHUA TREE'S STARK LANDSCAPE and remote location were a departure for Northworks Architects + Planners, they embraced it when creating a desert retreat. The Chicago based firm with satellite offices in San Francisco, Philadelphia, and Jackson, WY, is best known for their portfolio of elegant urban dwellings, rustic agrarian getaways, and contemporary reinterpretations of classical styles. For their clients, art collectors who also create, they built a modern home inspired by an appreciation for nearby Palm Springs' mid-century architecture and the untamed alien beauty of Joshua Tree.

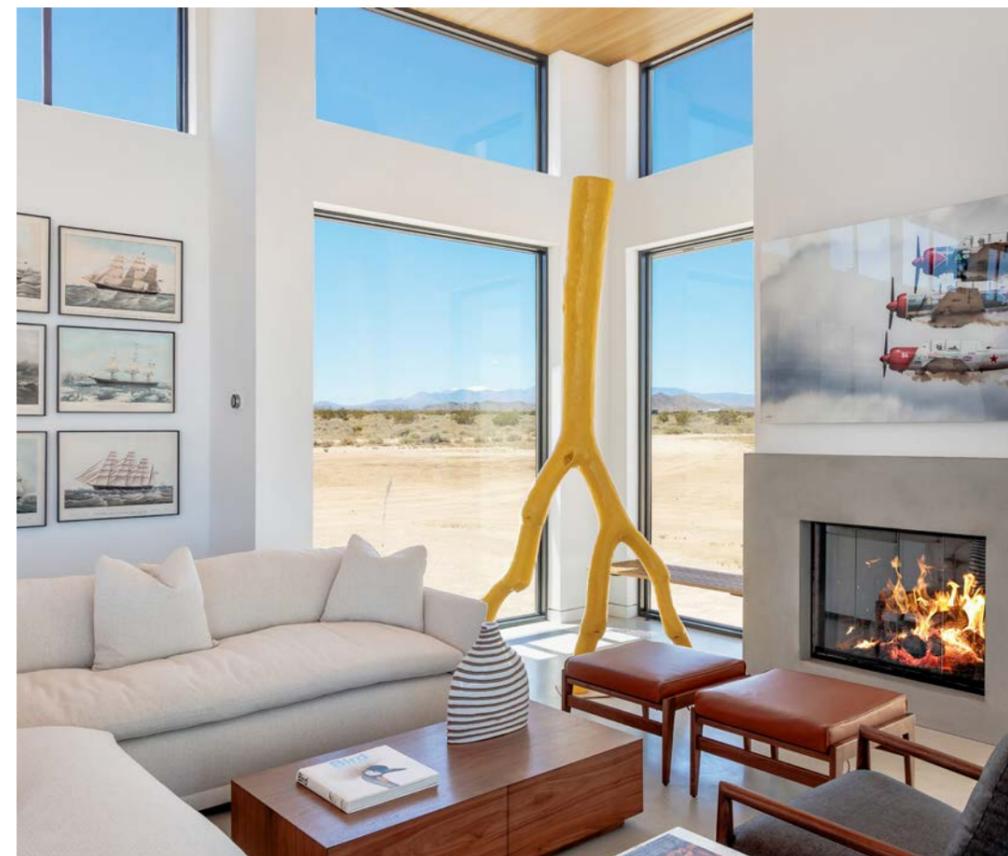
Northworks founding partner Bill Bickford, along with partner Robert Berner, director Molly Douglas, and principal Rachel Thompson, incorporated their design concept into the surrounding terrain. The streamlined concrete, steel, and glass structure maximize the views of desert, mountains, and sunsets, while screening out the harsh weather conditions throughout the 3,000-sq. ft. house. For the interiors, Northworks selected materials to complement the scenery beyond; wood plank ceilings and slightly metallic tiled walls reflect the natural vistas.

Entering through a terrace, the Great Room features



ABOVE In the Writer's studio, Northworks selected a classic Florence Knoll executive desk with four-star steel and polished chrome base. They mixed this with another mid-century staple, a management chair designed by Charles & Ray Eames.

LEFT The living room highlights a pair of mid-century benches from a Mies van der Rohe apartment building in Chicago. The benches mix easily with a contemporary low profile sectional sofa, and a pocket coffee table designed by Lee Mindel.



14' high ceilings and large sliding doors that direct the gaze to a yucca palm on the property. Northworks' open floor plan centers on the dining table flanked by the living area and kitchen. A pantry segues into an outdoor kitchen and entertaining space. The bedroom wing, which abuts the living room, includes both guest and master suites, terminating in a dramatic glass-enclosed Writer's Studio cantilevering off



ABOVE Walnut twin beds designed by Sean Yoo with built-in drawers keep this guest room clutter-free. Centering the beds, an industrial styled nightstand wrapped in sheet metal adds extra storage. Gunmetal finished desk lamps provide illumination.



LEFT Metallic black tiles form the shell of this bathroom. Northworks chose concrete for the countertops and floors with Douglas Fir T&G wood ceilings. Matte black and pewter metal finishes harmonize with the tiles.

OPPOSITE From the terrace, the clients can watch Joshua Tree's sky change from brilliant sunsets to starlit nights. The retreat's modern architecture merges with the landscape of rugged mountains, boulders, and desert flora.



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the main structure. Northworks separated living and functional areas with a breezeway. A solar photovoltaic array with a back-up battery system powers the home hidden out of sight at the rear of the building along with the water storage tanks, mechanical spaces, and greenhouse.

To keep visual continuity throughout the retreat, Northworks acted as the interior designer on the project, choosing iconic

20th-century silhouettes to reference Palm Springs. A neutral color palette provides the backdrop for the homeowners' art collection, including a bold yellow Joshua Tree sculpture by metal artist Steve Shigley. While the architects created a place for their clients to focus on the arts, it was a symbiotic relationship. Douglas says, “As art collectors, they had an appreciation for architecture and gave us the artistic freedom to make their vision come to life.” **CH**