

UTAH HOMES & GARDEN



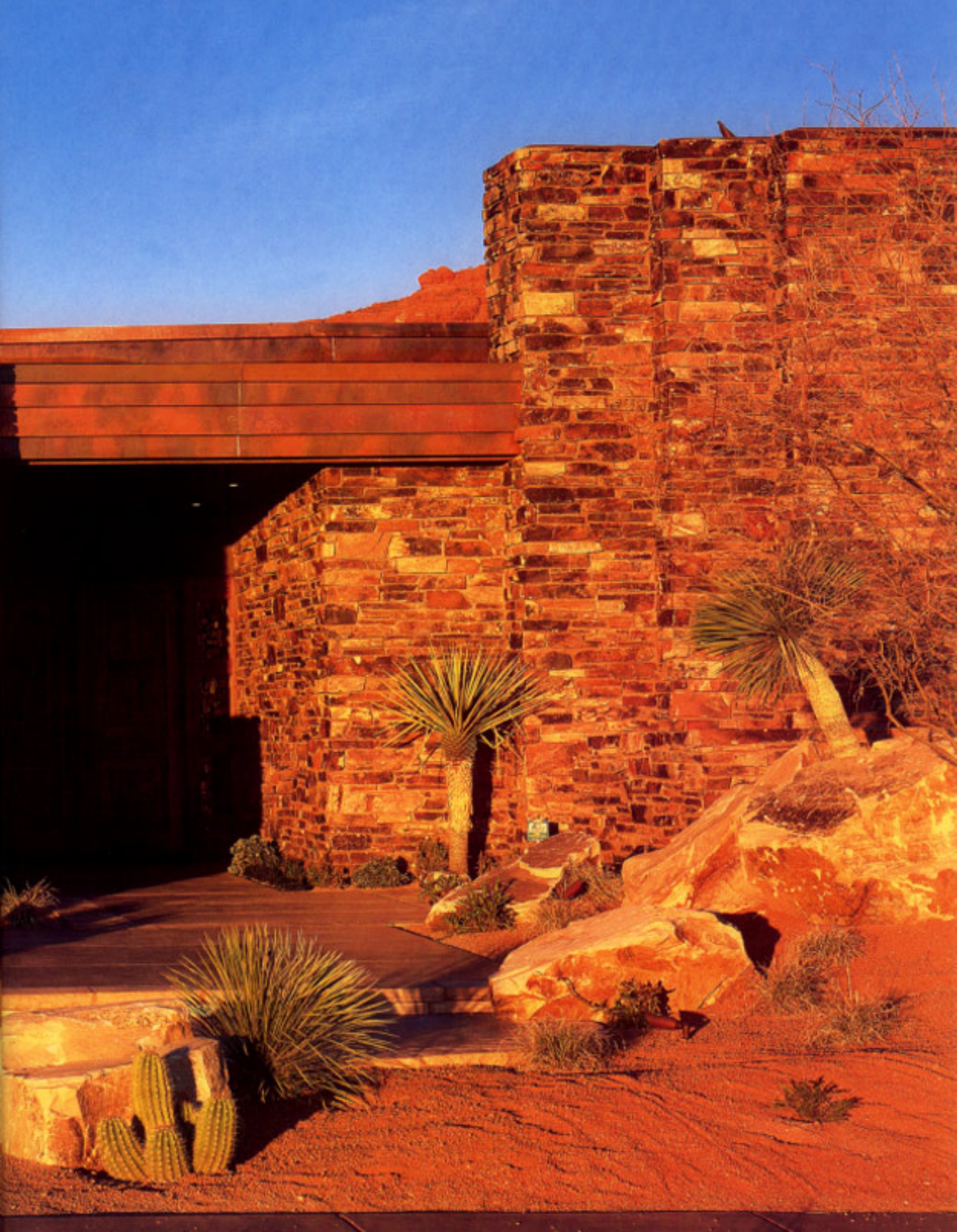
SUMMER 2001
\$4.95


A magazine about living well in Utah

M MODERN MIRAGE



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A photograph of a hallway with a rustic, natural aesthetic. The ceiling is made of dark wood with recessed lighting. The walls are light-colored, and the floor is a polished, light-colored stone. Several large, square pillars made of stacked, rough-hewn volcanic rocks support the ceiling. In the background, a framed painting is displayed on a wall, flanked by two dark, curved objects. To the right, a small table with a lamp and a chair is visible. The overall atmosphere is warm and earthy.

INSPIRED BY THE elements,
VOLCANIC rocks AND
COOLING waters



LEFT: Stone columns create an openness inviting flow between the plush living room and the gallery-like hallway. Asian accessories helped the owner, a native of Indonesia, to feel right at home, as did the courtyard pools and water gardens

ABOVE: As instructed by her customs, the blooms are all white.

IT WAS A PLEASANT SPRING AFTERNOON IN THE DESERT, THE KIND OF DAY WHEN the skies are piercingly blue and the air feels neutral, absent heat or chill, weather that locals cherish before the three-digit Dixie temperatures inevitably kick in. Premature, it seemed, for those swelter-induced sensations, when the highway appears to be vaporizing before your eyes and pools of water flash repeatedly on the asphalt—too soon to see a mirage—but at first glance, that is what this house appears to be.

In essence, the home is a mirage, as its form sprang from both the desert landscape and the imagination. Like layers of rock marking distinct millennia of time, this house in St. George's Entrada community is a dramatic sculpture of natural materials, stacked together in plateaus of lava and cliffs of sand-hued stucco edged in copper. A nod to Frank Lloyd Wright, the structure blends with the natural landscape and is built into a hillside (actually the hillside was built behind it), with only one story visible to passing motorists on its western side. From the east, the top floor of the two-story façade hovers above a disappearing-edge pool that completely hides the lower level.

As is the case with most custom homes, this one was built by many talented professionals, including architect Raymond Jones, Denton House Interiors and multiple subcontractors in between. But this is a story about



J.D. Thompson, general contractor and driving force behind what the home stands for aesthetically, as an artistic statement and a symbol of the new direction in southern Utah homebuilding.

The owners of this desert palace had always liked Thompson's style and workmanship; he built two homes they previously owned. While in Singapore, the

RADIANT sunlight DANCES ON stone AND cliff

owner drew a rough sketch of the plans for the house on a cocktail napkin and passed it along to Thompson. Choosing the location was easy; as a young kid from Bountiful, the owner used to hitchhike to St. George to golf, so naturally, the area was his first choice for a retirement playhouse.

Thompson started building houses in the 1970s in the Bay area, then moved to Kalispell, Montana, to work on homes of cedar and river rock. After moving to St. George, he did some projects for Terry Marten in the Kayenta development, where the rules about the lot

size and footprint and color of the houses are very strict. As a result, the 150 or so Kayenta homes can hardly be seen from the highway, as they blend in so well with the desert environment. Thompson says these philosophies of low-profile building stuck with him and have shaped his opinions regarding growth and development in Southern Utah.

"But over the years," he says, "I've also figured out what works, what makes people feel at home—peaceful. My work's been in ten consecutive home shows, where 20,000 people pass through each time, and I listen and pick up a lot of keys about what they like."

If Thompson doesn't sound much like your average contractor, it's because at heart, he's not. He studied art and zoology with ambitions to be a biological illustrator and is the unusual breed of contractor who asks, "What causes drama in a house?"

"I wanted to be in the medical business, but as soon as I got out of college I started building," he says. "These houses are my expression."

All over the Entrada house, one can see Thompson's sense of form and color, as well as the way he incorporated and fulfilled the residents' wish list.

First of all, the owners wanted to add some Eastern

ABOVE: Contractor J.D. Thompson strives to build homes that appear natural in their surroundings. This house was named Amandari, meaning "a place of peace and harmony." It seems to fit. RIGHT: As a teenager, the owner often hitchhiked from Bountiful to St. George to golf. Now his pastime and those emerald courses are right out his back door.





LEFT: Though Denton House Interiors did a beautiful job designing the master suite, it would be difficult to compete with the breathtaking views of vermillion cliffs leading into Snow Canyon. RIGHT: The main feature of the family room is a custom temperature-controlled wine room that holds sixteen hundred bottles.



influences so one of the owners, who is from Indonesia, could feel more at home. This was accomplished, first of all, in the outdoor patios that are accessible from every bedroom, including guestrooms, where tropical plants and water gardens bloom. In keeping with Entrada's building policies, the landscaping surrounding the house had to be minimal-to-none and remain congruent with natural plant species of the Great Basin-Mojave desert. But inside these enclosed courtyards, they had a little more freedom and created lush and fragrant pockets of paradise.

Thompson and his wife, (and biggest fan) Sue, are close friends of the owners and knew their style; they gathered Indonesian artifacts, talismans and sculptures for them, mostly from Amandari in Las Vegas.

The most striking feature outside the house is the double-infinity negative edge pool. Like a shimmering holographic disk, the pool appears to flow right into a duck pond on the adjacent golf course or, from the opposite side, into the glass of the home's grotto-like lower level.

On the exterior, Thompson uses the patina-treated copper edging to begin a motif that continues throughout the house. Almost Aztecan but reminiscent of Prairie Style, the tri-leveled, graduated-step design is mirrored in the baseboards, moldings, all doors and other custom wood





Emanating light, the house glows as if still warmed by the setting sun. In the pleasant St. George climate, the owners can look forward to serene nights like these almost year-round. The infinity-edge pool is double-sided. Here, it gently cascades into a rock-lined fountain and smaller pool. On the opposite side, the water appears to be flowing into a duck pond on the adjacent golf course, but is actually recirculated.





embellishments, all of which were designed and built in Thompson's shop by skilled craftsmen under the direction of carpenter Bob Harris.

Thompson believes that if you use all natural materials in an architecturally correct fashion, "you can't go wrong," and that visitors to this type of home will instinctively feel more comfortable. All of the wood floors, for example, are natural unstained Brazilian cherry. The hallway floors are Italian limestone and the kitchen countertops are celadon granite. The dominant exterior material, stacked in pinnacles that meld with the rocky vistas, is black quartzite that was taken from a quarry near the Utah/Idaho border. "The quarry owner had never seen his rock laid this way," Thompson says.

To see all his ideas come together, Thompson partnered with like-minded Raymond Jones, whom he describes as "more of an artist, too." Jones, an architect for thirty-three years who had done mostly commercial projects until he

WATERCOLOR skies MAKE PERFECT scenery FOR A DIP AT dusk

started working in St. George, has worked exclusively with Thompson for the last seven years. Jones says, "J.D.'s a large contributor to the details. It's unusual for a contractor to have as much design sense as he has. Sometimes contractors and architects have an adversarial relationship but not in this case."

A former two-term president of the Southern Utah Home Builders Association, Thompson was drawn to this Entrada project with its dark wood and stone because it was a departure from the regular St. George style—his St. George style, anyway.

"I've been lobbying people for years to use the right colors—not white! In some communities, all you see are big, white looming structures. In the desert, you can see things from far away that aren't hidden by trees," he explains. "Now, at least some homes have adopted our style—an upgrade of the Santa Fe style, not so rustic with more precision."

Yet, as he says the words, Thompson looks over his shoulder at the movement he may have catalyzed—albeit a positive one. J.D. Thompson the artist and designer, not the contractor, sees competition—but welcomes it.

"Now I feel like I need to keep moving. I've just got to keep one step ahead." 🌿



Exterior features of the home include the courtyard gardens, pool, soaking tub, fireplace for those occasional chilly nights and a patio with a built-in barbecue. In short, a desert paradise.

