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Straight lines and a minimalist materials palette define a modern North Scottsdale manor.

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FROM THE OUTSIDE, the unostentatious rectilinear home looks deceptively simplistic. Perched on a sloping 2.5-acre lot just outside the gated portion of Scottsdale's Troon North community, its clean lines and geometric forms contrast

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ABOVE The front entry, which faces due north, features a 10-foot-tall glass pivot door. Because the elevation doesn't get much direct sunlight, the three windows to the left did not require any shade elements. **PREVIOUS PAGE** A deep, stucco-clad overhang cantilevers above the two-story front entryway. The custom blasted block was made using only black scoria, a volcanic aggregate. Standard masonry units feature both red and black scoria.

with the organic softness of the desert plants and the undulating contours of Pinnacle Peak to the east.

But first impressions are often deceiving.

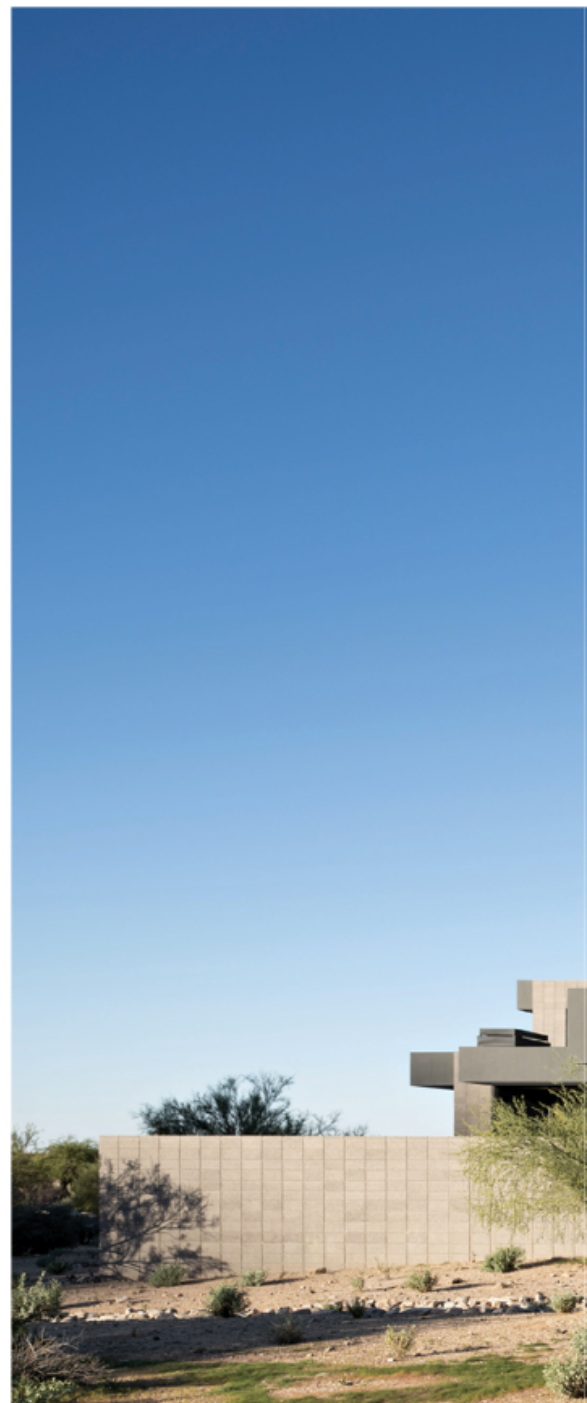
"Trying to do desert minimalism is hard," says *Phoenix Home & Garden* Masters of the Southwest award-winning architect Brent Kendle. "This house is basically rectangles of block, steel and glass, but it's how the elements combine that give it a restrained beauty."

The gradient of the landscape drove many aspects of the design, from siting to materials to structure. The property, from one end to the other, dips about 10 feet in elevation. And, like much of the rest of the neighborhood, it falls within a FEMA-recognized flood plain. "The FEMA requirement is that, wherever the house hits the highest part of the lot, the finished floor has to be at least 2 feet higher than the ground," Kendle explains. "It makes

sense on a level plot of land, but not when there's a descent because the water is obviously going to flow downhill."

As a result, on the home's south side, the finished floor is a good 5 feet above the desert surface. Instead of building a concrete base and topping it with a frame-and-stucco structure, Kendle decided to go with all block, inside and out. "We ended up with a home that looks more substantial but didn't cost any more to make," he says.

The northern front facade is marked by a series of tall, narrow windows, while cantilevered roof overhangs that float out over the Valley views shade large expanses of glass to the south. A dynamic two-story foyer divides the main social spaces—the great room and kitchen—and the more utilitarian areas, including the garage, laundry and lower-level master bedroom. A floor-to-ceiling Mondrian-inspired window and a custom steel, glass and walnut



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—BRENT KENDLE, architect



A meandering driveway approaches the home from the east. On the side of the four-car garage are three narrow inset steel vertical bands that contain slot windows. To the far left, a retaining wall conceals the pool.

RIGHT The house contains two master suites that face the south. A steel-and-glass balcony projects out from the second floor bedroom, providing the perfect spot for enjoying an evening cocktail. Directly below it, the lower level suite sits about 5 feet above the desert floor. A block wall extends beyond the interior wall, providing shade from the western sun. **BELOW** A large window wall pockets open to connect the great room to the pool patio. To the far left, the block retaining wall provides privacy without obstructing the views.



floating staircase set the stage. Block walls continue into the interiors, where they're complemented by porcelain tile floors and walnut cabinetry.

"The challenge with a home like this is that there's no forgiveness in the finishes," explains builder Jeff Lupien. "When you think about traditional design that features moldings, casings and different materials that overlap each other, the process becomes more forgiving. But here the margin for error is much tighter."

In the great room, a massive steel-wrapped fireplace is flanked by walls of glass. "It screens the neighbor's residence but then opens the room up to the beautiful

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TOP The focal point of the great room is a massive steel-wrapped fireplace, which camouflages the TV. The feature is perfectly situated on a glass wall to eliminate views of a neighboring home. Recessed slots in the ceiling hide light fixtures. **ABOVE** A breathtaking steel, glass and walnut floating staircase greets guests in the foyer. Beyond it is a two-story glass wall with a Mondrian-like frame design that offers direct sightlines to Pinnacle Peak. The exterior block wall extends inside, a nod to midcentury architecture.

vistas,” Kendle notes. The room’s expansive eastern window wall pockets open, connecting the space to the pool.

On the patio, a retaining wall that takes shape as a solid plinth from the front of the house rises a few feet above the grade and serves as a barrier, providing privacy from the nearby street and the surrounding neighborhood without blocking views of the mountains. A custom steel staircase leads to a spacious rooftop deck, which offers a 360-degree panorama.

“It was somewhat of a personal challenge to design something that is so simple,” Kendle describes. “There’s an efficiency of structure and economy, which speaks to me of midcentury modern architecture. So much of that style was based on trying to create something beautiful with the least amount of materials and moving parts. That’s what we strove to do here.”

For more information, see Sources.