

## COFFEE TABLE

# Part-Time Resident, Full-Time Modernist

*A Dallas-based designer shares her restored Indian Wells home as part of her new book on modern interiors.*

BY LISA MARIE HART

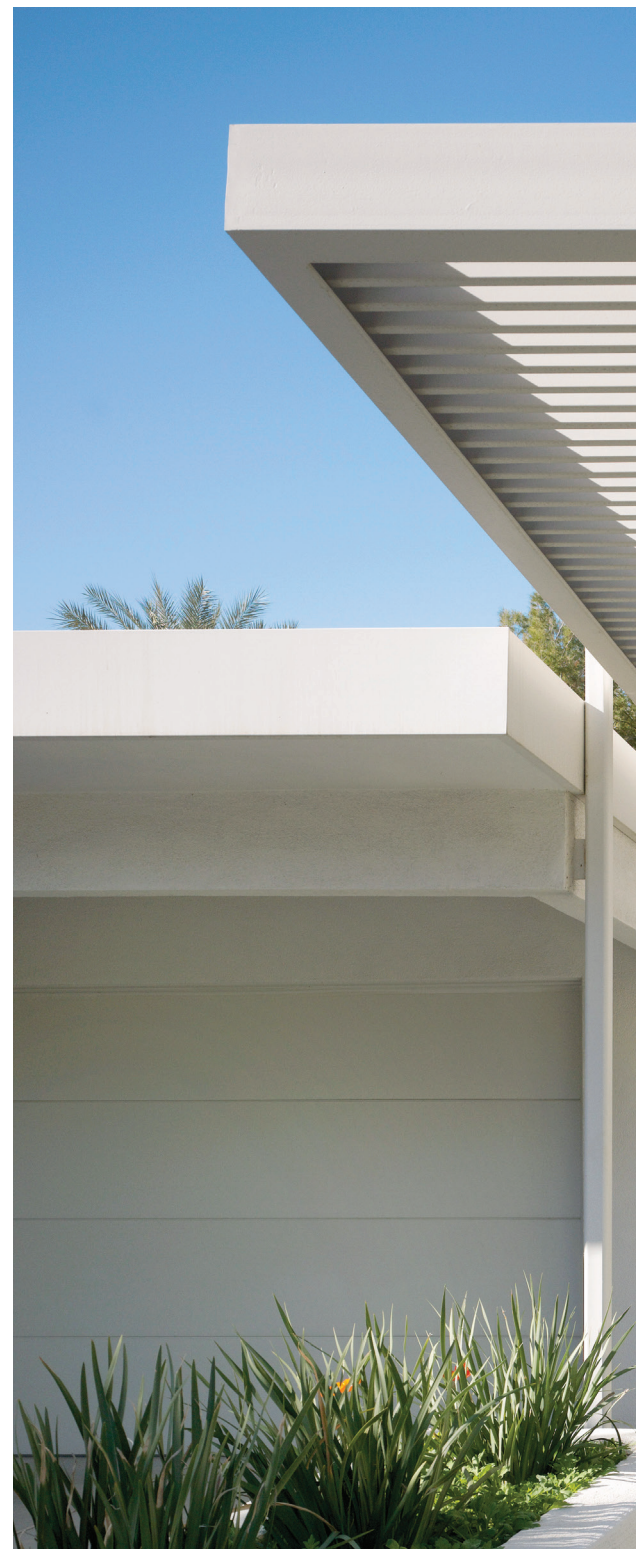
□ A new book by Emily Summers offers a stunning view into almost 40 years of the designer's collaborations with clients, architects, and artists. *Distinctly Modern Interiors* (Rizzoli, 2019) traverses her career, inviting readers inside her own homes in Dallas, Colorado Springs, and Indian Wells. From a contemporary city penthouse to a 1940s ranch, this AD100 designer explains the essential building blocks of a great modernist house: how the interior should reflect its setting, how to combine fine art with design, why the interior and architecture must be linked, how to build collections, how to modernize traditional homes, and how to restore existing modernist houses.

Nature ties into her modernist ethos and, as magazine editor Pam Fiori notes in the foreword, "There's not a residence in this book that doesn't have large panels of glass looking onto what beckons beyond, whether it be a small stand of bamboo, an open field, a majestic mountain," or (in the case of her 1960s-built Eldorado Country Club home) the sprawling green of a historic golf course.

Summers has served as director of exhibitions and funding for the Dallas Museum of Art, and former President George W. Bush recruited her as one of 20 individuals to serve on the Washington-based Advisory Council for



— Published in February 2019 by Rizzoli, Summers' book is a shortcut into the process behind her layered but streamlined interiors.

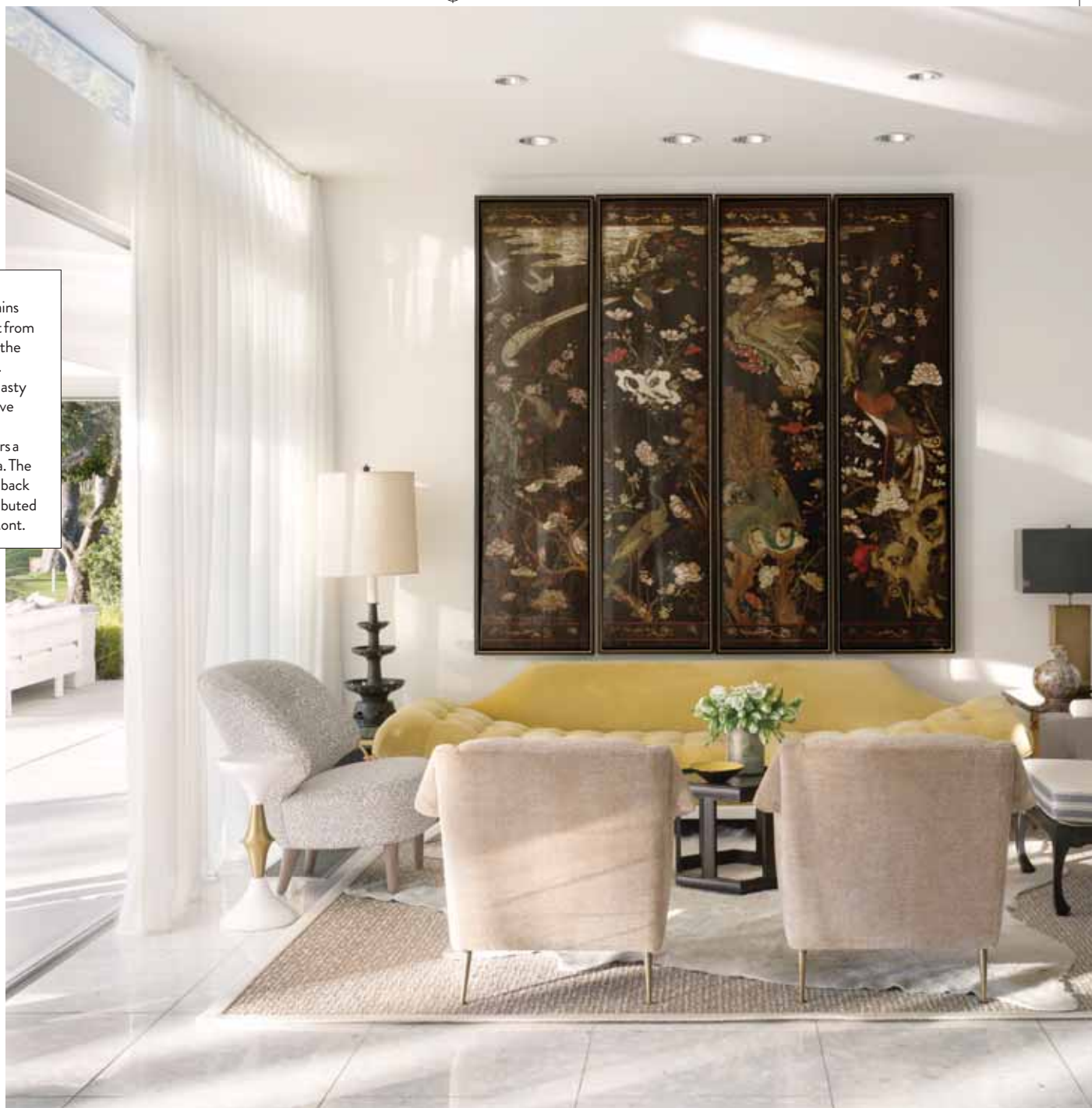


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Summers restored the original entry sequence, which leads from the motor court to a covered breezeway and up to the front door (to the right of the vine-covered screen).





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Sheer curtains  
diffuse light from  
the patio in the  
living room.  
A Qing dynasty  
screen, above  
a gondola  
sofa, anchors a  
seating area. The  
horseshoe-back  
chair is attributed  
to James Mont.



Historic Preservation. We spoke with Summers about her affinity for the desert and the design choices made for her fairway retreat — where club members have been known to hit golf balls into the pool.

**How did you choose the location?**

When my husband's parents came to Palm Springs in the 1960s to play the Bob Hope Classic, they fell in love with Eldorado Country Club. Our current home sits two doors down from the house they built in the '70s. As a young married couple with small children, we would come to the desert every year for the big Easter events at the club.

We had an opportunity to join after our children graduated and were grown. Steve is a marvelous golfer. I stay in touch with the office while I'm here. I love to play golf, too, even though I'm not a very good golfer.

**What draws you to the desert?**

I love Palm Springs and its beautiful climate, but I have also gotten involved in the architecture and design community. I was a good friend of Steve Nash [former executive director of the Palm Springs Art Museum]. I ended up having a lot of good associates out here and a lot of friends. I'm very busy, but I make it out for different events and tournaments.



I pretend that I live in L.A. and that I just drive over for a long weekend, but instead I get on a plane from Dallas.

**Any happenings you always fly out for?**

I always try to get to Desert X, and I never miss a Modernism Week. What Modernism Week does to educate the people who come to Palm Springs to experience this pocket of architecture is incredible. I love the home tours and have been able to take several that incorporated Arthur Elrod's interiors. I'm also a huge fan of the double-decker bus tour. You're like a voyeur looking over those hedge rows and into the wonderful homes in the best parts of

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old Palm Springs. Of course, I love the Palm Springs Art Museum's Architecture and Design Center, of which I was a founding member.

**Does the area play into your design?**

The area does influence my design. I've been a modernist my whole life. I fell in love with the Bauhaus in college and have followed contemporary architecture throughout my career. The desert is the perfect place to see the great



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A fountain bubbles in Summers' "courtyard oasis." Her dining room, she says, is "very Space Age."

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icons of architecture: Lautner, Elrod, and Neutra — all in one place.

### Which project most excited you to showcase in the book?

I have two favorites. The most personal is the project in the Highland Park area of Dallas. We restored the house, which is by a very good MIT-trained modernist architect named Bud Oglesby. My client, also a dear friend, had studied ceramics at Mills College and had become a collector of fine ceramics. We collected pieces from all over the country and in Europe and showcased them throughout the home, which gave it a special focus and more personal expression. The second is the contemporary house of concrete planes, glass, cantilevers, and landings designed by New Mexico-

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An Edward  
Wormley bench  
sits at the foot  
of the bed in  
the orange  
guest room.



based architect Antoine Predock. Working with Predock on this fantastic Dallas house with an art collection was a turning point in my career.

### Let's talk about your fairway home's interior.

I am fortunate to be a designer because I already had a lot of these pieces. I absolutely love early modernist furniture like Warren Platner and Pierre Paulin, so I had a lot of those pieces in my inventory. Almost every single thing in the house is from the same period as the house, even the artwork, like the Jim Dine. The wicker chair by Marc Newson is the outlier. I love that piece and had wanted one.





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A vintage Max Sauze Orion chandelier from 1967 hangs above the kitchen island, beyond which is an enclosed garden. The counter stools were designed by Harry Bertola for Knoll.

It's probably from the '90s. But otherwise it's a period house that had very little period architecture left.

**So, this was an extensive renovation?**

Despite having been designed by William Cody, it was being sold as a tear-down. The house had some unfortunate additions in the 1980s. It had a change of the entry sequence and a red mansard roof. The roots of a jacaranda tree had pushed up the tiles of the living room floor. All my work throughout my career has been collaborative with good architects, and for this home it was Lance O'Donnell, who has restored a lot of Cody homes. He was extremely helpful

in understanding how to restore the house back to the way it was built in the '60s. He was wonderful about finding the [replacement] sliding doors and restoring the clerestory windows. He added beautiful outdoor metal breezeways that created shade and were a great addition. Lance has been an influence in the desert because he understands all the requirements of being a modernist — and he's easy to work with.

**Do you finish a project then keep on designing?**

We finished renovating it in 2009. I haven't changed it that much since. But I'm starting to think about it.