

# Circular Logic

DEFT CHANGES AND 1960S FURNISHINGS RESTORE THE SPIRIT OF A ROUND HOUSE IN COLORADO SPRINGS

Renovation Architecture and Interior Design by Emily Summers Design Associates  
Text by Nancy Collins/After Photography by Robert Reck



AFTER

BEFORE PHOTOGRAPHY AND PLANS COURTESY EMILY SUMMERS DESIGN ASSOCIATES

BEFORE



For the Colorado Springs vacation home she shares with her husband, three children and extended family, Dallas-based designer Emily Summers, along with Jessica Stewart Lendvay, an architect at Summers's firm, restored the 1968 Round House to the original aesthetic of its builder and designer, Don Price. "I worked really hard to find furnishings of that period," says Summers, who raised the living room ceiling three feet and added clerestory windows. Nana folding doors.





A putting green on the roof? Golf fanatics, eat your hearts out! Six years ago Dallas designer Emily Summers, wife and mother to a golf-obsessed husband and son, scored her own hole-in-one when, at her daughter's behest, she took a serious look at a one-of-a-kind midcentury house in Colorado Springs, the longtime family vacation spot. "I was almost afraid," Summers recalls of her initial reaction to the circular, multilevel structure, built in 1968 and relatively untouched by its occupants for 40 years. "I knew it would be a tremendous project. Standing on the lawn, you could even see woodpecker holes around the outside. But once I was in the master bedroom—so high up you could only see trees...surrounded by an extraordinary 360-degree view...listening to bells ringing from the nearby Will Rogers Shrine of the Sun and looking out on the Cheyenne Cañon, literally on the doorstep—I simply couldn't resist. Except for an unfortunate addition closing off the breezeway in glass, the house was a little bell jar."

Albeit one calling for some complicated shining up—starting with raising the living room ceiling from eight to 11 feet.

RIGHT: A light palette plays off a restored walnut wall in a sitting area of the living room. Summers (above) found the Op art prints, by Joël Stein, in Maastricht, Netherlands. Like the table lamp, designed by Renato Toso, "they're from the exact year of the house," she notes.



AFTER





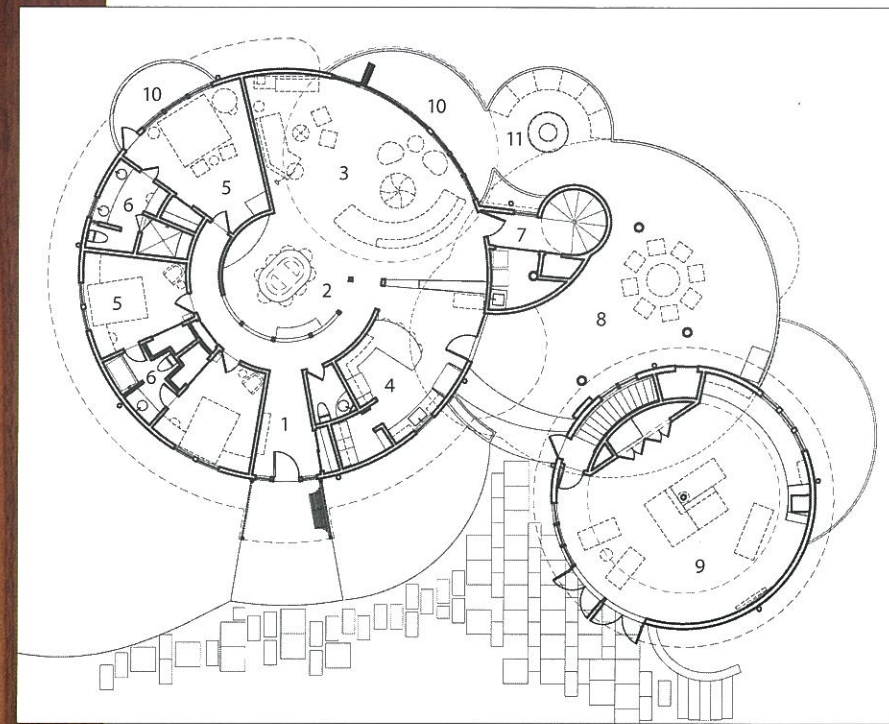
AFTER

Since the ceiling was “in a structure sitting on a giant mushroom pod,” explains Summers, “it took six months just to figure out the engineering.” With no original plans, she, along with architect Jessica Stewart Lendvay, of Emily Summers Design Associates, “ended up having to X-ray the pod. Our goal had always been to keep all the concentric circles while enlarging and expanding the outside decks.” They conceived a smaller, conjoining circle, complete with fire pit, that marries the living room deck and the previously sealed-off

breezeway. “However, since the living room ceiling and overhang formed a perfect circle with the deck,” she continues, “the entire circle had to be lifted. While the eight-foot ceilings truncated the view, now when you walk into that space, it explodes upward. With an old house, there’s so much you can’t predict that you often wind up making decisions on the spot.”

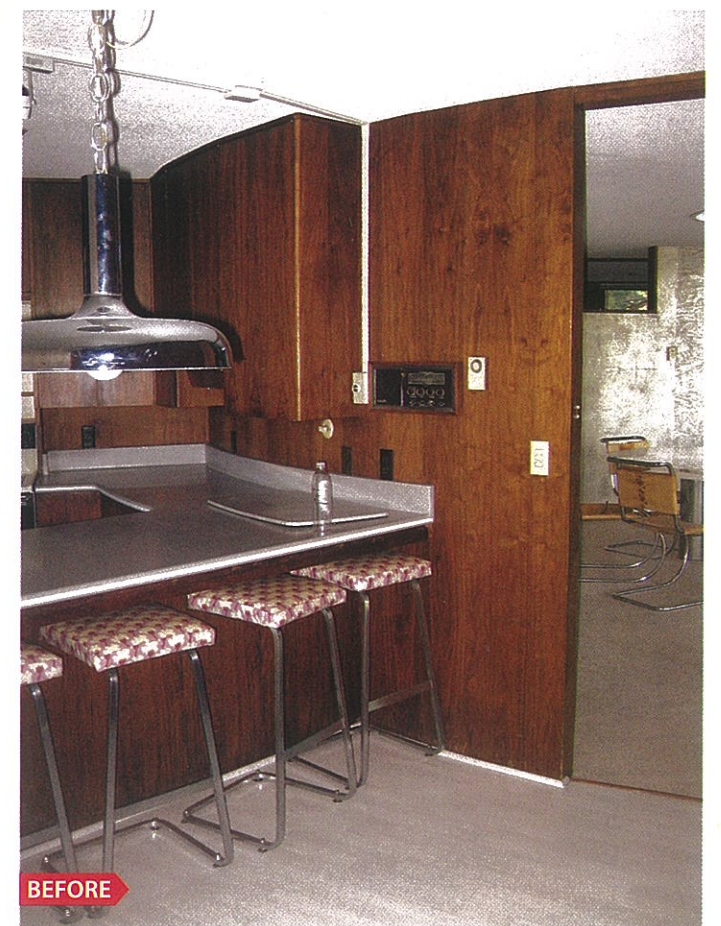
And, in the case of Summers’s modern reinvention of an organic ‘60s building, all the right ones. The heart of the house

remains the original staircase, based on a Mies van der Rohe prototype. Reaching the top, one is rewarded by stepping into the glorious master suite—cum—tree house, an homage to high-kicking foliage outside and in, thanks to a shimmering green floating wall. “I wanted the room to feel like a complete open circle with the outside,” says Summers, who was assisted by project design manager Delphi Luna. “So to re-create that sensation, I photographed the shadows of the native pines and firs and had them silk-screened onto



- |                 |                          |                  |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1 ENTRANCE HALL | 5 GUEST ROOMS            | 8 DINING TERRACE |
| 2 DINING AREA   | 6 GUEST BATHS            | 9 FAMILY ROOM    |
| 3 LIVING ROOM   | 7 STAIRS TO MASTER SUITE | 10 DECKS         |
| 4 KITCHEN       |                          | 11 FIRE PIT      |

ABOVE AND RIGHT: Summers brought the walnut cabinets in the kitchen back to life, added green glass-tile backsplashes and reshaped the bar/counter to echo the circles of the structure, as seen in the first-floor plan (top right). She bleached Douglas fir for the floors throughout. “The walls were already a dark wood, and I wanted a lighter feeling in the house,” she says. “I wanted a contrast.” The ceramic bunny cookie jar is by Momoyo Torimitsu. Jenn-Air range, refrigerator and dishwasher.

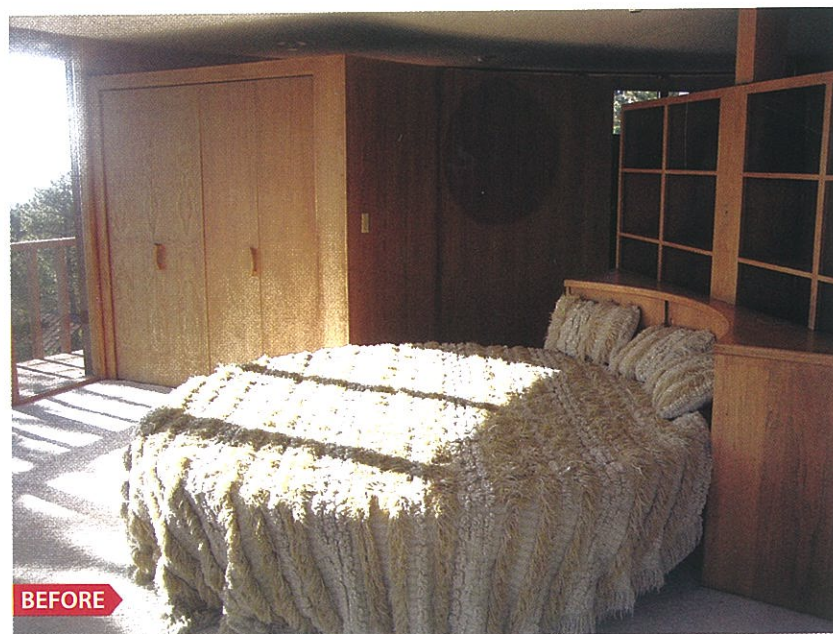


BEFORE





ABOVE AND BELOW: The master bedroom's custom round bed is part of Don Price's original design. The panoramic view, through a copse of firs and pines, takes in the southern Rocky Mountains and downtown Colorado Springs. Drapery sheer, Brunswick & Fils. Groundworks fabric for throw pillow on Eames lounge chair. Of the house's ambitious concept, Summers says, Price "was doing it for himself. He could take risks." RIGHT: Just off the master terrace, she installed a putting green on the roof of the living room.



mirrored panels." Adding to the fanciful ambience is the freestanding stainless-steel fireplace as well as—shades of Hugh Hefner!—a luxuriously decadent built-in circular bed from the original design. "My kids were shocked that my husband and I would sleep in a round bed," chuckles Summers. "But all we needed was a new mattress." Perhaps best of all, the master suite is mere steps away from the putting green atop the living room roof. "Doesn't everybody have one?" jokes Summers, who

thought it the perfect idea for the men—and grandchildren—in her life.

With the 6,000-square-foot structure up to 21st-century speed, the interiors, meanwhile, reflect the spirit of '68 with period pieces like the half-moon sofa, so large it had to be upholstered on-site by the previous occupants. The designer took the sofa off-site to re-cover it. "To get it out I had to cut it in three pieces," recalls Summers, who loved the shape because it "followed the contours of the house.

And though we were able to restore the walnut walls, we knew we couldn't copy them on the floors, always covered in shag carpeting. So instead we opted to lay down bleached Douglas fir."

Though two years of refurbishing taught Summers to be prepared for anything, what she hadn't anticipated was the bliss of living life in a circle. "I don't think we ever realized how fantastic it would be to live in a round space," she muses. "I'd always heard that a circle, if not the most cost-

effective to build, is the most efficient use of space because you control the volume. And living here you realize just how right the proportions are. You never feel like a small person in a great big house. Sitting on the sofa, instead of being in a straight line, you're always looking out at something."

Summers pauses. "The wonderful thing about round spaces is that they do not make you feel spread out because you are always coming around...coming back...to something...back to *each other*." □

