

Minimal, Modern, Masculine

Written by David M. Brown

Valley entrepreneur Max Biberger converts nanoparticles into energy products. Fittingly, he charged his design team to convert his Scottsdale home into vibrant 21st-century space.

In 2002, Biberger purchased an approximately 3,500-sq.-ft. two-level and began transforming it into a home where he could feel comfortable, stretch out in the family room on his motorized De Sede recliner and watch sports — especially after he returned home from the rigors of international business traveling.

Determined to create spaces that were distinctively his, he retained Scottsdale interior designer Claire Ownby and high-end remodeler Jack McDade, also of Scottsdale, who served as the general contractor on the two-year-old home.

Ownby and McDade remodeled much of the three-bedroom-plus-office home in 2002, including the kitchen, the master bath, the guest bath and the powder room. At the same time, they changed the flooring, lighting, paint and interior door hardware; contracted a new entry door; installed a built-in barbecue designed by Ownby; and added a water feature and landscaping to the pool area. Ownby Design returned at the end of 2002 to furnish the home, completing the project the following year.

Biberger is an entrepreneur specializing in start-ups. In addition to his current work in the energy sector, he has built equipment for the semiconductor industry and has also measured products for water chemistries and conservation. He travels primarily in Europe and Asia—mostly to Japan, the country that has most influenced him aesthetically. Because of this, he was guided by a minimalist palette and requested dark hardwood floors through the home as well as lacquered wood in his contemporary kitchen.

“Max told me he wanted something unusual, something different from what he was accustomed to seeing in the United States,” notes Ownby, an ASID-award-winning interior designer. “His minimal and contemporary taste was evident from the beginning.”

Out With the Old, in With the Minimal

First, the J.R. McDade Company removed all the finish flooring and reinforced the upstairs to accommodate the new hardwood planks selected by Biberger and Ownby. In the kitchen, the company removed the countertops and appliances and, in the bathrooms, the tubs, showers, vanities and cabinets. Then McDade installed new flooring, countertops, tile work and cabinetry while subcontracting the electrical, plumbing and painting. The floors are “Mocha” travertine, and the oak planking has been stained to a deep coffee color.

While a contemporary look was the primary goal, Ownby added softer materials, rugs, furnishings and an off-white Frazee “Moonlit” paint for most of the interior. As a result, the Biberger home offers welcome and warmth as well as clean, crisp lines. “Our primary focus was to maintain the modern look while providing a comfortable space to live in on a day-to-day basis,” she says.

The kitchen and adjacent breakfast niche offered the design and construction team the most challenges — especially as the owner uses the breakfast niche more than any other area of the home, excepting his upstairs master bedroom.

“He enjoys the light that floods the space in the mornings and often reads here for extended periods of time,” Ownby says. Biberger has also found that this is where his guests congregate while he’s in the kitchen preparing food. To accommodate them, she provided a round table from Copenhagen in Scottsdale — large enough for five comfortable club chairs. Designed by Ownby and created by Feathers Design in Scottsdale, the chairs are covered in supple black leather for comfort. Also softening the room are natural fiber shades and maple valances stained in a chocolate hue.

By contrast, the Biberger kitchen is modernist and contemporary. Central to the design are the cabinetry and the island—all installed by McDade. Monroe, Wash.-based Canyon Creek Cabinet Company manufactured the dark brown stained maple cabinets with three-dimensional pitched drawer fronts. The front face of the island also features these cabinets with sandblasted glass inserts. Sokee, from Nagoya, Japan, manufactured the complementary black piano-finish cabinets on the wall. Both styles reappear in the living room bar nook, where two metal stools (that bounce when sat in) were acquired from Thingz in Scottsdale.

Installing the already finished millwork required meticulous care, notes Jack McDade, principal of McDade, as it scratches easily and the finish is difficult to repair.

Some of the eclectic touches in this room include “Absolute Black” granite countertops, with two component sink basins from Franke and a Ladylux Plus faucet from Grohe.

To expand Biberger’s entertaining capacity, Ownby acquired three Copenhagen island counter stools with brushed-aluminum backs. Above the island are three candle-shaped Fire pendants.

Built into the millwork are a Sub-Zero refrigerator, freezer and wine chiller; Gaggenau ovens, cooktop and hood; and a hideaway microwave by KitchenAid.

For Living Well

While the living room isn’t used daily, Biberger wanted to maintain the minimal look with a central piece of furniture for entertaining. Ownby designed a living room sectional for six and had it fabricated by Feathers Design. From here, Biberger and his guests enjoy views through picture and corner windows to the pool and barbecue area with its wok fire feature.

Across from the sectional, travertine tiles matching those elsewhere in the home make up the hearth. For the fireplace, Ownby designed a stainless steel surround. Transitioning this to the sofa is a glass coffee table from Scottsdale Copenhagen. Here, Ownby softened the

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surrounding hard surfaces by supplementing the design with natural fibers, like cotton on the sofa and jute on the area rug.

Above the sectional sit multiple instances of box art by local artist Linda Kall. To contrast with these, as well as to further personalize his home, Biberger hung one of his large encaustic pieces above the fireplace — an abstracted image of trees in grays. Photos are hung in the family room and at the focal point at the second-floor staircase landing. “I have been into photography since high school, mainly nature photography,” he says.

Opening to the living room, the dining room also accommodates up to eight people. “The size of the room could not support large dining chairs, so we opted to use smaller-scaled chairs and upholstered them in soft ultra-suede,” Ownby says. She designed a large wood square table which rests on a stainless steel cube base and is topped with thick clear glass and had it fabricated locally by David Aquilar. “[It] allowed the minimal feel of the rest of the house to show through while maintaining the openness the room needed,” she says.

Creating different moods, an Italian Bobino.9 fixture offers delicacy, too, as do the sheers that can be drawn by way of a cable system for intimate dinners. Adding color is an oil on canvas by Diana Clauss purchased from Bentley Gallery.

Biberger is extremely satisfied with his new home — and men who work in nanoseconds aren’t quickly pleased. The remodel provides him space that is minimal, functional, contemporary and, most important, comfortable.

“We were able to take an amazing home and give it the personal touches and style that complemented the owner and his lifestyle,” McDade says. “Everyone agrees that this was an amazing combined effort, and we are all proud of the results.”