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Long, gabled rooflines give the home an unmistakable Mid Century Modern vibe. PVC pipes creatively cut on the front wall allow bits of the green shrubbery behind them to peek through. Randi had the landscaping redone in front and back, replacing the original gravel with DG (decomposed granite) to mimic sand. "My husband Allen added an abundance of desert landscaping and positioned lighting to accent plantings as well as the facade," says Randi. The Saguaros were a fortunate Facebook marketplace score; they got them for free. "Lucky find for us," she says. "It took 8 men and a \$1000 to move them, but still, such a deal."

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# POOLSIDE PARADISE

The search for a second home in Palm Springs led a retired couple to this respectfully renovated Krisel with gorgeous views and all the best of Mid Century Modern design.

By Laura Shimko • Photography by Oscar Flink





**FINDING THE PERFECT HOME** can feel like hitting the jackpot - especially when on the hunt for a Mid Mod gem. For Randi Merel and her husband Allen LeHew, this 1957 Krisel located in Palm Springs was just what they were looking for. Longtime fans of all things Mid Century Modern, the retired couple own another MCM home in the suburbs of Chicago. They visited Palm Springs on a Mid Mod pilgrimage and immediately began the hunt for a second home there. When they came upon this home it was love at first sight. After some time and work, they were able to purchase the home and continue the loving updates that had been started by the previous owners.

**top, left:** The front patio greets visitors with a pop of color and cozy vibe. “We wanted a lounge space where you could enjoy the Mountain View and sunset,” says Randi. “It’s a great gathering space for guests.” Turf softens the concrete hardscapes here and throughout the landscape design.

**above, left:** Randi carefully selected furniture to serve both style and function. “Since our home is also used as a vacation rental, we were sensitive to the money spent on furnishings,” says Randi. “Knowing that they needed to withstand excessive wear and potential damage, we selected contemporary furniture that reflects the modern vibe.” A mix of contemporary and vintage pieces, like the Noguchi coffee table, blend old and new together without sacrificing the essence of Mid Century Modern design.

**above, right:** The living room and dining room flow seamlessly together while still maintaining a soft distinction of spaces. Similar colors bring cohesion while careful placement of lighting and furniture creates separate moments. “It was important to have definition between the living and dining room while still having integration,” says Randi. “We were able to expand the feel of the living room by using FLOR carpet squares since they could be customized to any size that we wanted, maximizing our space.”



## FABULOUS FURNISHINGS

Selecting the right pieces for your Mid Mod home doesn't have to break the bank or require intensive searching for exquisite vintage furniture. In fact, if you are planning to furnish a part-time living space and/or vacation rental, it makes more sense to work smarter rather than harder. Randi Merel offers her tips for finding furniture that is both stylish and practical.

**Think Durable.** One of the fastest ways to notice wear and tear is upholstery. Randi suggests choosing sofas with removable cushions and with both sides finished just in case one side gets damaged. "Choose the fabric wisely with removable covers," she says. Get extra fabric when reupholstering in case it needs to be repaired later on.

**Buy New.** Rather than spending lots of time and money on purchasing authentic vintage pieces, consider buying new pieces made to look period. "There are several stores that design and sell mid mod style furniture, like CB2, Room and Board and West Elm, to name a few," says Randi.

**Fix It Up.** On the other hand, if you're able to spend time at flea markets or search Facebook marketplace for vintage pieces, Randi suggests looking for case goods and seating and sprucing them up. "With a little TLC you've got a vintage piece with little investment," she says.



The renovation work by Acme House Company CEO Mike Flannery includes a reimagined kitchen floorplan. “He utilized space in the hallway to place the ovens and additional cabinetry,” says Randi. “Some HVAC was relocated to an exterior closet which also allowed him to install a stackable washer and dryer.” Gorgeous blue glass tile is the same as the tile that surrounds the pool, drawing a connection between indoor and outdoor spaces.

#### WANTED: KRISEL

Passionate about Mid Century Modern design, Randi was on the board of a Chicago MCM preservation group, and continues to be very active in coordinating neighborhood tours and other events for Palm Springs’ Modernism week. “We love the clean lines, the abundance of glass windows and the connection to nature in Mid Century Modern design,” says Randi. “The sleek design of Mid Mod furniture speaks to us.”

When they toured this home during a Modernism Week event, they knew it was just what they needed. “We were looking for an Alexander-built, William Krisel-designed home that had clerestory windows, a view of the mountains and a clear site line from the front of the house to the rear,” Randi says. “As you walk in the front door, you can see directly out to the pool. Every room has a wall of glass and siding doors.”

However, the home which at the time was owned by Mike Flannery, CEO of Acme House Company, was not for sale. Not only was it being used as a vacation rental, it was in essence a flagship rental property for Acme. But she didn’t give up. In time and with some charm, Randi and Allen were able to purchase the home for themselves to use part of the year and rent out the rest of the year. “We were persistent,” Randi laughs.



**top:** Walls of windows and glass doors provide ample view of the pool area outside, and highlight the Mid Mod architectural staple of the flow between indoor and outdoor spaces. “Flannery’s idea to have an accordion window over the sink truly connected the outdoors from the bar to the kitchen for easy entertaining,” says Randi.

**above:** Just outside the kitchen, this patio area acts as a cozy connection between indoor living spaces and the open pool area. “The vines growing on the posts of the house are Jasmine and provide fragrant flowers during the month of April,” says Randi.



**top:** “Outdoor spaces are exceptionally important in Palm Springs,” says Randi. “In our case, they have actually tripled our living space.” Sculptures by Dustin Gimble provide a visual break and add interest in the lounging area poolside.

**above, left:** A vintage dresser, sourced from the Palm Springs Vintage Market, adds depth with its rich stain, a contrast to the saturated sunlit courtyard just outside the large glass windows and door.

**above, right:** A pop of cheery yellow from the FLOR rug in this guest bedroom adds instant brightness and reflects the sunny conditions outside. The pendant lights are vintage Venini by Massimo Vignelli.

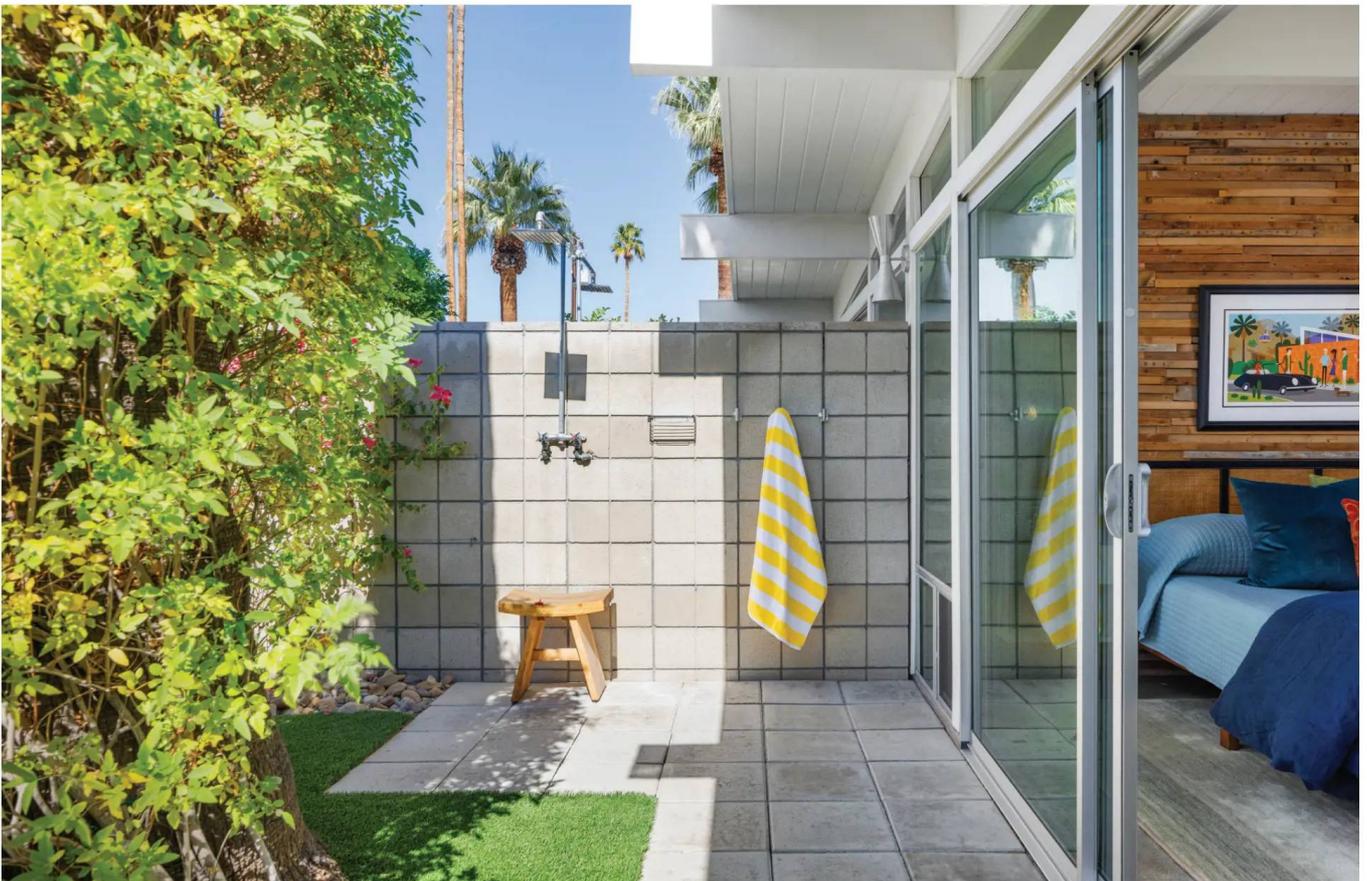


### FROM DRAB TO FAB

By the time Randi and Allen got the keys, the home had already been through an extensive but respectful renovation to bring it up to date and out of disrepair. “[When Mike bought it,] it needed a serious upgrade,” says Randi. “Cracked concrete, overgrown landscaping, dated and dirty appliances.” In 2015, Mike worked in partnership with West Elm to breathe new life into the home.

Over the course of 18 months, Mike and the West Elm team made several big changes to the home. Some of these changes were updates, while others were restorations of the original design. For example, Krisel designed the home with several clerestory windows, but due to the cost of glass at the time of construction the windows were closed in with plywood instead. Mike opened up these plywood coverings and restored the original clerestory windows throughout. “This enhancement brings in an abundance of light and incredible mountain views,” says Randi.

Extending living spaces outside is a hallmark of Palm Springs Mid Mod, and this backyard is no exception. “We’ve utilized the house’s overhang to offer covered seating for conversation and relaxation, a dining area with lighting and a bar table complete with fire feature for more ambiance,” says Randi.



above: Outdoor showers, a feature suited for the desert setting of Palm Springs, accompany each guest bedroom of the home in each of their private courtyards. "Five showers, no waiting," Randi says.



above, left: The hallway bathroom’s ceiling is raised to follow the slope of the roofline, with the addition of a skylight to brighten an otherwise dark space. “Allen designed lighting for the skylight alcove to create a wash of light on the tile accenting its texture and providing ambience at night,” Randi says.

above, right: Iconic and unmistakably Mid Mod, breezeblocks inside the primary bathroom were another creative addition by Flannery during the renovation process. They are standard breezeblocks cut in half, and provide a visual transition between indoor and outdoor. The shower door opens out onto the patio space allowing access to the pool, and blurring the line between inside and outside living spaces.

below: The primary bedroom boasts an eyeful of the pool outside. Artwork from local Palm Springs artist Kippi Leonard provides the palette inspo for the space. “We had a lot of fun matching pillows and accessories to the artwork,” Randi says.





The clear eyeshot from front of the home to back was a major selling point for Randi. Clerestory windows provide abundant indoor light as well as additional visual connection between indoor and outdoor spaces.

Two other major changes include extending the primary suite by 200 sq ft, allowing for a walk-in closet and expanding the primary bathroom with double sinks, as well as private walled courtyards extending from every bedroom. “The courtyards are equipped with outdoor showers, a fire feature and their own private entrance,” Randi says. “It is perfect for relaxing, reading a book or taking a nap.”

#### OUTSIDE IN

As with most Mid Century Modern home designs, the architecture and design of this home hinges on the seamless connection between indoor and outdoor living spaces. This is most evident in the clear sightline from the front to the back of the home; walls of windows and sliding glass doors act as a thin veil separating outside from inside. “As you walk in the front door, you can see directly out to the pool,” says Randi.



Because of this, the interior palette draws much of its inspiration from the exterior views. Aqua is a base color throughout the home, a nod to the expansive pool in the backyard. Yellow is another predominant color, reflecting the sand and hot desert sun. “It is a bold accent that works well in moderation, and then we used subtle shades of green such as chartreuse and olive to neutralize the impact,” says Randi. “Yellow evokes feelings of happiness and is very Palm Springs.”

With its outstanding views, beautiful outdoor gathering spaces, and unmistakable Mid Mod flair, this Krisel construction is the perfect second home and part time vacation rental serving the very best of Palm Springs Mid Century Modern architecture and design. ✨