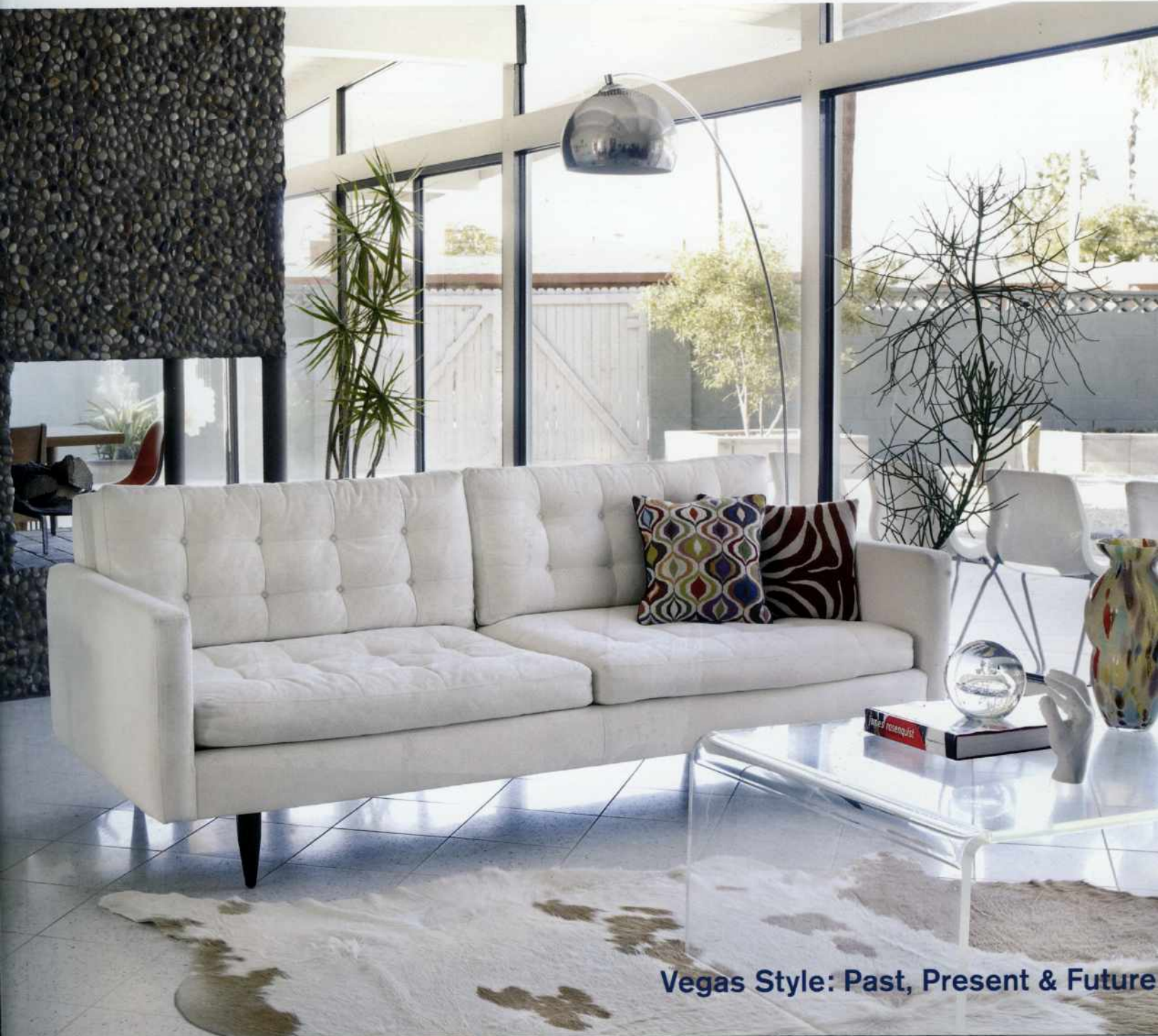




INTERIORS  
+  
EXTERIORS  
+  
DETAILS

lasvegas home&design



**Vegas Style: Past, Present & Future**

At Canyon Edge, Zen Interiors owner and founder Thomas Burger (bottom right) employed sleek geometric forms highlighted by splashes of modern art.



## Model Maestro

*A transplant from the Big Apple, the Zen Interiors frontman taps East Coast cool to heat up Sin City*

Nearly three years ago, Thomas Burger moved from Manhattan to Las Vegas with the intention of retiring. Little did he know, that's not exactly what fate had in store for him.

Although he had already purchased a home, Burger allowed a real estate broker to show him some properties he might like because of their contemporary design. Turns out, that assumption was right on the money.

"I fell in love with Canyon Edge in Henderson," says the founder and owner of Las Vegas-based Zen Interiors. Burger agreed to help the developers, Alpha Land Development, complete the models for the community, ensuring they would be kept in line with a modern aesthetic. "Out here, it seems difficult to do," he explains. "They start out contemporary, but end up Tuscan. When they were ready to kick it into high gear, they called me."

Story by LISA BROWN + Photography by FRANCIS GEORGE





Stone, wood, and marble flooring were hand selected by Burger from across the globe, including Turkey, Italy, and India. Yet the decorative rugs and other accessories came from a different source. "Remember, this is a model home with a very small budget for decorating," he says. "I used pieces donated from my collection so that I could give the developers a big bang for their buck!"

The process began with a rethinking of the homes' spatial planning to allow for larger rooms, taller ceilings, breathtaking views, and the inclusion of previously under-utilized spaces, such as the top part of the 30-foot-tall garage. "Unless you're going to build a rocket ship in your garage, you don't need it," Burger quips. "We were able to add in a considerable amount of extra room by rethinking the architectural drawing. That's where a designer comes in handy, if he's worth his salt."

In addition to capturing a significant amount of additional square footage, the redesign enabled the homes to flow more smoothly. Instead of having the windows facing the next door neighbor, they were relocated to capitalize on a view of the Strip, courtesy of a mountainside perch.

"The mountain itself is beautiful," Burger adds. "The developers took several years to plan out the placement of the homes."

The four models distinguish themselves from the more prevalent Vegas fare by maintaining a modern vibe. "They're very sleek, very Manhattan-looking on the inside, and of course I guided them in that direction as I am a Manhattanite of 25 years," says Burger. "It was a struggle getting [the design to that point], because the developers' idea of contemporary was Tuscan. It was a battle every day. But they said they wanted contemporary, so I held them to their original beacon."

At first glance, perhaps the most stunning facet of the models' interior design can be found in the artwork adorning the various walls, and all of the canvases are authentic.



By rethinking the original architectural drawings, windows were relocated from a neighbor-facing position to capitalize on a spectacular view of the Strip. All artwork hung throughout the models, including the dramatic Janet Leigh a la Psycho piece shown here, was selected by Burger and donated by Michael Feder of famefarm.com.



*“Every airplane that comes in to Vegas is filled with happy people. They forget their worries and woes, so it makes for a very joyous town. It is in one sense the Wild West, and then one block away, it’s the most sophisticated shows and restaurants on the planet.”*

“Michael Feder of famefarm.com graciously donated all the art that I selected from his inventory; he is an angel!” Burger says. “I think he’s the most amazing art dealer here in Vegas ... He really has his finger on the pulse of what’s going on in the international art world.”

Chic style and postcard view aside, Burger’s predominate source of inspiration came from designing the models as if he wanted to live there. “Because I did,” he recalls of his original site visit with the broker. “I gave [purchasing one of the homes] very serious consideration.”

As with any home, Burger’s favorite functional space in each model is the living room. “The living room is where I consider life to take place,” he says. “It’s usually where the best views are, close to the kitchen, and it’s where I actually entertain, as opposed to the family room.” For his own social get-togethers, Burger typically hires entertainers such as opera or jazz singers. As such, he designed the models with adequate open space to accommodate a similar in-home performance.

A large part of the project’s appeal came from the developers, three friends who, together with their wives, poured themselves into the vision, heart and soul, according to Burger. “It’s a real family-oriented, heartfelt community, and I liked that. That’s what I like to be a part of,” he explains. “At this part of my career, I only take on projects that I love and that I believe in.”

Next up on Burger’s plate: Helping to get the Las Vegas Contemporary Dance Theater off the ground. “It’s all the amazing dancers in the Cirque du Soleil shows who want to express themselves in a more classical way,” he says. **HD**