

## **A style called Barrio Modern**

by Rachel Miller - Tuesday, August 11, 2015

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**It's southwestern, it's mid-century, it's very very Tucson. Rachel Miller uncovers the homegrown interior style that we're calling Barrio Modern.**

Darci Hazelbaker and Dale Rush's Tucson home shows all the signs of being Barrio Modern: bright, natural materials, pops of mid-century. Photo courtesy of HA/RU

What do you get when you cross one of the longest continuously inhabited places in the US with a midcentury modern Mecca? Barrio Modern.

The colonial Spanish style, heavy rustic furniture, earth tones, and use of tin and copper, have long been characteristic of homes in the Southwest, a head nod to the Spanish occupation starting in the 1600s. This style stands in sharp contrast to the simple light lines of the mid-century movement in Tucson that has been defined as Sonoran Modern. But just as the Spanish utilized the regional materials, and adapted to the desert climate, so did the mid-century modern movement. Over the past couple of years we've noted a number of homes that take these shared themes to create something uniquely Tucson. We're calling it Barrio Modern.

**How can you achieve the Barrio Modern look?**

The home of Tucson architect Bob Lanning mixes natural materials with modern chrome. Photo courtesy of Bob Lanning.

Establishing a home that reflects your more modern leanings, but also respects your physical home's heritage, can be a tricky balancing act, especially when you live in a barrio home where a rustic style is typically *de rigueur*. If you're looking to update your adobe abode décor *and* celebrate this rich culture and land we inhabit, or even your mid-century ranch style home, we've got a few pointers for you to create your own Barrio Modern style.

### **Be bold with color**

Blinding white sunlight outside might sear the skin, but inside white provides a cool backdrop to some graphic and bright colors, and if there's adobe or plaster there's an earthiness that brings that cool white to the perfect temperature.

Darci Hazelback of architect and design firm [Ha|Ru](#) talks of how the renovation of their 1927 Tucson bungalow optimized white pure space mirroring the quality of light found in the desert and how the focus on local materials also reflected the rugged quality of the desert. "It reflects the true history and character of the home, exposing the bones and spirit of the house," she says.

Whether it's Oaxaca blue or Sonoran sunset hues, bold color plays a role in the cultural history aesthetic. This is not the place nor time to go with modern gray-brown monotone or close in the space with ceiling

to floor deep blue and tin, rather keep the clean light feel with white and use the yellows, pinks, reds and blues for strong accents.

Barrio Modern in Tucson's Downtown Clifton hotel. Color is important, with bold and bright against white. Photo courtesy of Downtown Clifton

### **Use natural materials**

Bright colors might be the order of the day, but wood and natural fibers play an important role in this look. Check out the use of plywood on the ceiling in the home of architect [Bob Lanning](#) (second photo from top) or the lathe walls in Darci Hazelbaker and Dale Rush's home (below). The emphasis on materials of a place is key in Hazelbaker and Rush's design. "We combine vernacular design, using materials of a place and place specific materials, with a complementing modern design," says Darci.

Traditional barrio adobe homes use natural materials, Barrio Modern plays upon that using modern interpretations. Above: the home of architect/designers Darci Hazelbaker and Dale Rush. Photo courtesy of HA/RU.

Teak may not be local to Tucson, but we have some sweet local thrift stores and antique stores with mid-century items that are a perfect local source. Have a few pennies to rub together? The heavier rustic furniture might not be quite the modern line you're looking for, but we have some incredible local woodworkers who use local materials to create something with more modern lines. Peter Baer of [Baer Joinery](#) is responsible for the fabulous communal mesquite table at [Tap and Bottle](#).

Barrio Modern uses local materials. This mesquite table at Tap and Bottle is by Peter Baer Photo courtesy of Rebecca Safford.

### **Bring the inside out and outside in**

While haciendas had their courtyards, mid-century modern architecture had their patios, both emphasizing outdoor living. Organize your furniture to take full advantage of the views, which many of us in Tucson are lucky to have, and keep the the window treatments to a light minimum. No fabulous desert vistas to take advantage of? How about bringing the scene inside, either on the patio or use a twist on the cactus/succulent vibe with some air plants? (Check out our piece on [how to grow air plants](#) in the desert.)

Airplants in the Hazelbaker Rush home

## **Tin and copper in the copper state**

Embossed tin might not be your thing but [local artist Rand Carlson's tin works](#) are a definitely funky twist on tin and Tucson. Or perhaps incorporate some corrugated iron around the bathtub as seen below for the Barrio Modern look. Bob Lanning describes his and wife Kate Hiller's approach as "historically compatible". He adds: "But sometimes it is more interesting to pick up ideas of our time." He explains that this happy medium of old and new comes in part "from working on a budget, being creative and finding affordable solutions."

A Barrio Modern bathroom in Bob Lanning's home, complete with tin backsplash, Rand Carlson tin art and contemporary watercolor landscapes by Lanning. Photo courtesy of Bob Lanning.

This isn't Mexican Modernism, it isn't Spanish Colonial, it's not even Sonoran Modern. It has a distinctly Tucson twist that reflects the stark beauty of the desert, the warmth of the people and a rich cultural history. It's Barrio Modern.

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