

A lesson in not going with the flow

by Gillian - Tuesday, July 07, 2015

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The home of Tom McGuire and Nieves Zedeño flies in the face of traditional floorplans and breaks rules - beautifully. Story and photos by Rachel Miller.

The fireplace is a central pin to four separate living areas that radiate around it.

Stepping into the Tucson home of Tom McGuire and Nieves Zedeño is not unnerving. To the contrary, it offers an immediate sense of right with the world. But it does shake up the predictable pattern of what the flow of a house should be.

The foyer opens up onto a semi-open plan that is made up of several living spaces. Right: a Thomas Moser bench, one of their favorite pieces.

Tom and Nieves' home, in Tucson's midtown San Clemente neighborhood, turns regular residential layouts on their heads. The fireplace and foyer acts as a pin to four separate living areas that radiate around that central fireplace in a semi-open plan: a library area, reading room, dining room, sitting room and television space.

This is a place to meander around with wine glass in hand and find a place for quiet reflection or, just steps away, a space for hearty conversation - with neither impinging on the other. Beyond this central space, the kitchen, study and bedrooms provide more private spaces. According to Nieves, there are just two other homes in the Tucson area that were built with this same eccentric floor plan.

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The layout of the house has a distinct modern feel, the furnishings at once comfortable, personal and fresh. The angled walls and the variable ceiling heights, along with the limited number of windows on the west facing wall, make for a light, cool feel to the home.

The central island table in the kitchen was built by Tom.

About the owners: Tom grew up in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York, spending summers in Maine. Seeking a change of scenery and climate, he came to Arizona in the 1970s and, other than a few years in colder climes, has remained here. Nieves, originally from Ecuador, came to Tucson as a visiting scholar in the late 1980s and returned as a research anthropologist in the early '90s. It's no surprise that their home reflects the influences of both their origins and their anthropological work.

About the home: The house was built in 1976, one of three built in Tucson with the same blueprint. In addition to the 2600 square feet of living space there is a front and a back porch, pool patio, workshop and backyard.

Framed art by Nieves' aunt.

Describe your style: "American folk art and mid-century modern," says Nieves. "We combine the primary colors of Joseph Calder and Joan Miro with clean-lined Shaker and New England hardwood

furniture. Then we throw in a few industrial splashes for balance: Classic [Lionel toy trains](#), naïf art (art that is typically free of conventions) and still life metal and wood sculptures; photographs; drawings of birds and boats; and tons of books."

Classic toy trains are part of the decor.

Your fave thing about your home: "The odd angled half walls that stretch from the central fireplace, dividing the large main room into four organic spaces. The effect is of an open, airy house where each human and animal can be private yet social at the same time," says Nieves.

Biggest splurge: The [Thomas Moser bow-frame bench and armchair](#) - "superfluous but edifying", says Nieves.

Best bargain: "The discounted flat-weave wool rugs designed by Steven Alan for West Elm (2013-14 catalog). Ivory, yellow, and royal blue, they look brilliant over dark floors."

My DIY momenting' with the boy - 07-07-2015

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Married in 1995, I fell in love with a \$250 George Nelson wall clock advertised in [Design Within Reach](#). We couldn't possibly reach it, so I headed for Michael's and found a sleek clock mechanism and accessory parts. Tom helped me build the clock with a piece of balsa wood, pocket knife, spray paint, and Elmer's glue. Twenty years and \$20 later, my 'GN' clock is still ticking on the dining room wall. (Our favorite piece? The kitchen table that Tom made!)"

The George Nelson-inspired homemade clock

Favorite resources: Nieves is a woven rug fanatic. She gets rugs, drapes, pillows and linens from [West Elm](#), [Crate and Barrel](#) and [Garnet Hill](#). The ethnic weavings are finds from [Etsy](#). The investment in décor is evident in the fine wood furniture from [Thomas Moser](#), [Shaker Workshops](#), [Chilton](#), as well as local store [Copenhagen](#). Nieves and Tom also source furniture from the [Sundance Catalog](#) and [One Kings Lane](#). The fine woodcarvings that adorn the shelves and walls have been picked up from antique malls in Bismarck, ND, Traverse City, MI, and Seneca, NY - as well as eBay and [Wisteria](#). To find similar naïf and native prints, Nieves suggests tapping into any city's homegrown bookstore, gallery, or art fair (e.g. Tucson's Antigone Books' handmade cards can make great wall art), or using eBay for broad searches.

Tucson treasures: Nieves and Tom's home has seen significant refurbishment since they moved in 12 years ago. They've used local companies where possible from landscape design firm [Boxhill Design](#) to [Rogo's](#) and [Ibarra's Flooring](#) for the concrete flooring. [Benjamin Supply](#) has provided the flair in the kitchen and bathroom.

For tile and stone: [Sierra Tile](#)

Furniture: Copenhagen, [Colonial Frontiers](#) in the Lost Barrio.

Sculpture and Wall Art: Tucson open studio tours and Tucson Museum of Art fairs, plus the couple's all-time favorite, the [Elizabeth Frank Studio](#).

Take-away lesson(s): 1. Woven rugs that can be cleaned easily and moved around are great when you have animals and are an easy and cheap way to spruce up a room. 2. We really loved the use of bold colors in this home. Nieves is not an 'earth tones' type and the seemingly effortless transition from one space to another without it seeming contrived has much to do with the choices of several bold colors: blues, yellows and red.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Are you digging these digs? Get the look locally:

- Rugs play a huge role in the décor of this home. [Nieves suggests Room of Rugs for affordable fine rugs.](#)
- Digging the ethnic weavings but not likely to be traveling too far a field anytime soon? Tom and

Nieves have found many an item on work explorations, but check out the UNICEF store or [Picante for ethnic weavings](#).

- Keep fabrics to bold and solid lines to reflect the choices in this home. In Tucson, try [Fabrics That Go](#) and [SAS Fabric by the Pound](#).

Or try these lookalikes (contains Amazon Affiliate links):

From left to right: dining bench, ball clock, Kilim rug, toy train.

1. LumiSource Oregon Dining Bench from [Amazon](#), \$162
2. Telechron Atomix Ball Clock from [Amazon](#), \$98.83
3. Steven Alan Cotton Kilim Rug from [West Elm](#), \$40-\$749
4. Lionel Trains from [Amazon](#), \$212.98