

# BACKYARD BOYS

TWO N.Y.C. CREATIVES  
BUILD A RESIDENCE WHERE  
INSPIRATION GROWS.

BY SHELLY CANNON

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For Bret Baughman (left) and Brian Hagiwara, outdoor spaces encourage easy alfresco living.



What's better than not getting what you want? Getting more than you imagined. When New York City residents Bret Baughman and Brian Hagiwara realized the Palm Springs home and working studio they sought didn't exist, they embarked on an ambitious architectural journey.

Trading their 1,000-square-foot loft in Greenwich Village for a 3,200-square-foot house in the desert, they designed every aspect from the ground up, collaborating long-distance with a trusted builder.

"We wanted the space to build an art studio for Brian in our residence," says Baughman, who studied architecture and had managed Hagiwara's successful commercial photography studio. They created a foam core model of their sleek, modern design then worked with Brian Buchan Construction to see it through to fruition over the course of two-and-a-half years.

As Hagiwara explains, building a home "with outside walls on your own dirt," unlike big-city apartment renovations, "was liberating." Inspiration for the residence emerged from diverse origins. The influences are far-reaching, from the modern architecture of South America to the riads of Morocco — homes designed around a central courtyard, which prompted one of the serene outdoor spaces.

"We based the structure design on modern South American construction," says Hagiwara. "All white, somewhat austere, with clean, open spaces and minimal ornamentation." The interiors echo that theme. Like a blank canvas imbued with possibility, white walls contrast with the visual richness of treasures collected on the pair's many travels. Design books on

above: Hagiwara applies his artistry with three-dimensional work in the comfort of his studio. The light-filled atelier inspires all manner of creative genius. opposite: A view to the studio from the kitchen reveals Hagiwara in his favorite place to imagine.



IN THE STUDIO, HAGIWARA'S WORK AS A PAINTER, CERAMICIST, AND SCULPTOR IS IN VARYING STAGES OF COMPLETION.

THE HOME'S INFLUENCES ARE FAR-REACHING,  
FROM THE MODERN ARCHITECTURE OF SOUTH  
AMERICA TO THE RIADS OF MOROCCO.



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A perfect composition in Little Tuscany. The pool and the architecture's horizontal and vertical lines are juxtaposed with the organic shapes of plants and cactus. Over the course of two and a half years, the couple built their home from the ground up based on a foam core model of their own design.



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 clockwise from far left:  
 Ultra-comfortable built-in  
 seating in the kitchen enables  
 casual dining. Shelving with  
 books and collected objects  
 defines the dining area above  
 a wall-mounted cabinet  
 designed by Hagiwara.  
 Around the dining table,  
 the black leather Bellini  
 Cab chairs from Cassina  
 were acquired from the pre-  
 renovation dining room at  
 MOMA in New York. The  
 kitchen island and cabinetry  
 read like bespoke furniture.



display impart the owners' affinities as they hold the promise of new worlds — the sensibility is global yet intimate. More than anything, this home is the expression of a life well lived.

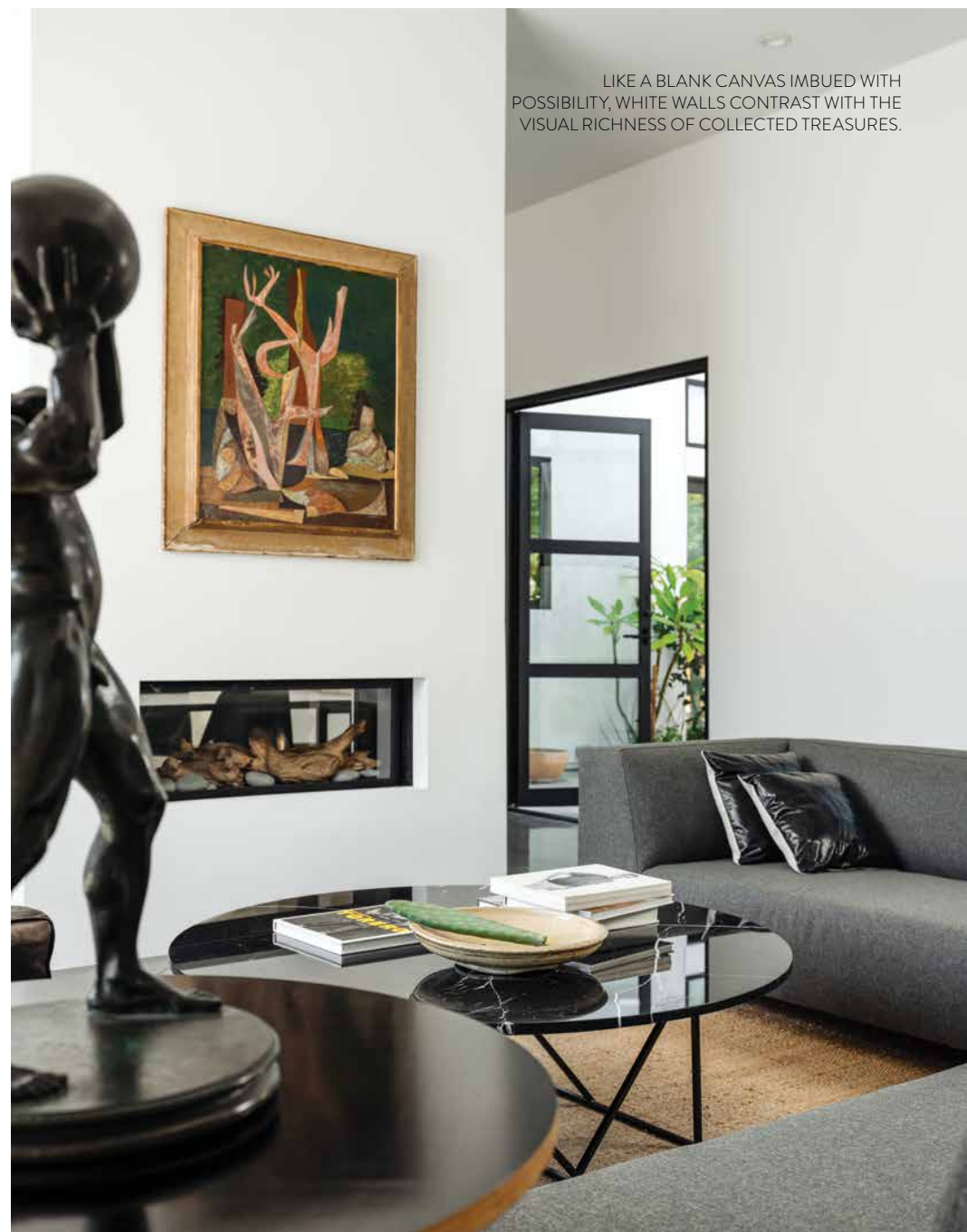
Located inside the main entrance, with high ceilings and clerestory windows above, the art studio is a maker space for grown-ups. Hagiwara's work as a painter, ceramicist, and sculptor is in varying stages of completion. Many of the artist's finished pieces, from large-scale abstract paintings to slender, vertical sculptures carved from tree trunks, are showcased throughout the home.

Hagiwara, who has an MFA in fine art, was a prolific illustrator and album cover artist who later enjoyed a three-decade career as a commercial photographer. Baughman is a creative force in his own right. He started a design company called Doghaus (a play on Bauhaus) with Hagiwara, featuring objets d'art by various designers. He also created photo shoot sets while assisting Hagiwara in developing his photography business.

As soon as they relocated, the couple embraced the newfound allure of cactus and desert plants. And, just like that, a business took root. In late 2017, they opened The Back Yard PS, a retail boutique located at The Shops at Thirteen Forty Five. Baughman's discerning eye and Hagiwara's creative direction shape the high-end offerings.

"We specialize in collectible pottery and specimen plants," Baughman explains. Coveted midcentury Gainey pottery, custom arrangements like pencil-cactus topiaries, and sophisticated design services have made the shop a go-to resource for Greater Palm Springs' green thumbs. Further, Baughman helped reimagine the landscape

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 above: A dark sofa and a pair of black leather-and-chrome Le Corbusier chairs in the living room let the large green painting by Hagiwara, *Green with Scribble*, take center stage.  
 opposite: The living room displays more artwork and a minimalist, dual-sided fireplace to warm the room on cool desert evenings.



LIKE A BLANK CANVAS IMBUED WITH POSSIBILITY, WHITE WALLS CONTRAST WITH THE VISUAL RICHNESS OF COLLECTED TREASURES.



INSIDE AND OUT, DESIGN REIGNS SUPREME, DEFINED BY DYNAMIC BLACK AND WHITE.



from opposite:  
In the master bedroom, the theme continues with a restful haven. A corner seating area showcases books and collectibles from around the world. The master bath distills materials to their essence with a linear marble slab counter top. A narrow glass door provides access to and from the home's swimming pool.

design company EJM Landscape with business partner Eric Munoz, whose design and installation he showcases through the storefront.

At home, Baughman and Hagiwara cultivate and arrange plants in their outdoor workspaces, which serve as both garden and lab. Peruviana, cowhorn, and paddle-like prickly pear cactuses share common ground as they propagate with abandon in a garden that Modernism Week featured on one of its 2019 tours.

Inside and out, design reigns supreme. Defined by dynamic black and white, the interior is warmed with nods to nature in beautiful woods and subtle greens. Pedigreed furnishings, nuanced textures, and tactile surfaces abound. Walk across the smooth, polished concrete floors, where diagonal-cut lines are placed with precision, and the fluid spaces unfold in sequence.

For its part, the kitchen is a beacon of utility and luxury. From the patterned zebrawood-clad island and cabinets with white quartz countertops to the stainless JennAir cooktop and appliances, the area elevates the everyday. Built-in seating and a white Eero Saarinen tulip table and chairs beckon in a far corner framed by glass windows on two sides.

Moving through the open dining and living rooms, one reaches the master bedroom. Cool and still, it's a sanctuary of calm. Nearby are two guest suites, one of which has morphed into a yoga studio — an idyllic spot for Hagiwara to perfect his practice.

While it's expected that moving from an East Coast urban environment to a one-story California residence would be life-changing, the feeling Baughman describes reaches even deeper. "I felt myself coming alive the first time I came here," he shares. With Mount San Jacinto as a stark backdrop, the property has a magnetic, almost sacred vibe. That undeniable connection to the terrain galvanized their home and their business — proof that the desert and its plants can inspire a completely new way of being, designed from the ground up.