

REAL ESTATE ISSUE

Palm Springs Life

California's Prestige Magazine

Palm Springs Life

Real Estate Issue | Bionic Houses

Fashion Week El Paseo

Joseph Ambrose

DESERT GUIDE

May 2010

LUXURY & VALUE

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MAY 2010 | \$4.95

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Space and time set us apart.
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An overview of Coachella Valley neighborhoods, from the Hollywood glam of Palm Springs to the relaxed elegance of Indian Wells to the presidential appointment of Rancho Mirage and the greens-loving and shopping Meccas of La Quinta and Palm Desert.
Photography by Ethan Kaminsky.

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Discover the offerings among new residential developments throughout the Coachella Valley.

DESERT GUIDE 1-48DG

The official guidebook of the Palm Springs Desert Resorts Convention and Visitors Authority. Everything you need to know about what's happening in the desert.
Edited by Janice Kleinschmidt.

THIS PAGE

Lance O'Donnell's bionic home in Little Tuscany.
Photography by David Blank.



BIONIC HOUSES

GREEN, SHARPLY DESIGNED, AND BUILT FOR THE DESERT, THE HOMES OF THE FUTURE ARE HERE!

BY NICOLE BORGENICHT

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID BLANK

Ready, aim, fire! The phrase almost trivializes the tedium architects endure when designing “smart” houses in the desert. After homeowners declare themselves “ready” to build with sustainable materials and energy-efficient features, architects “aim” the structure, accounting for the angles of the sun and the direction of the wind during the season. Then they “fire” up construction with autonomous features.

These bionic houses sometimes come at a bold price (but they don’t have to), and they begin paying back through eco-conscious features, such as tankless water heaters, solar photovoltaic panels, and energy-efficient lighting.

We visited three houses — two in Palm Springs and one in Pioneertown in the High Desert — whose owners are committed to preserving and conserving and asked their architects to talk about their designs.





LITTLE TUSCANY HOUSE

Lance O'Donnell designed and built his family's house at 2299 N. Via Monte Vista in Palm Springs using the power of the great outdoors as a "timeless, low-tech solution" for cross-ventilation. His architecture taps natural temperature patterns (usually 72 to 80 degrees) occurring in the late morning and afternoons in winter and late nights and early mornings in the summer. "By placing operable windows on the north and south sides of the house, we can quickly cool the house in evenings, thus decreasing the need to air condition," says O'Donnell, who also incorporated passive solar heating and cooling. With floor-to-ceiling windows, the house makes use of a generous overhang to shade it from the sun and minimize heat. In the winter, the lower angle of the sun sends rays into the house and warms the concrete floor, which retains the heat throughout the night. The house eliminates electrical costs and remains around 70 degrees day and night.

FEATURES:

- Solar heating and cooling
- Natural cross-ventilation
- Water-cooled air conditioning
- "Cool" roof material
- Concrete floors and block walls
- Drought-tolerant native landscaping
- Gray water in landscaping
- Renewable bamboo
- Infill lot (did not promote sprawl)
- Healthy air quality (no VOCs, formaldehyde-free)
- Solar-electric (PV) system
- Tankless water heater

