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Indoor Opulence
Traditional luxuries for the home

fun house

Enter this Paradise Valley home at your own enjoyment

BY MELANIE WINDERLICH

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“fun house” is that topsy-turvy, carnival staple that bewilders guests with twisted mirrors and silly gags. But what about a fun estate — one in which an elegant residence is not only stylish, but also fun for the whole family?

Because the homeowners enjoy playing games as a family, an air hockey table, electronic dart board and video arcade are incorporated into the design. It's a highly frequented room, so durable flooring made of handscraped walnut is used. Photo courtesy of Mark Boisclair.



Despite the absence of a fireplace, the hearth room in the foreground earns the name for its function, as it's designed for family gatherings. Often, one parent will cook in the kitchen while the other helps their son with his homework here. It's also one of the most open spaces in the house, as it can be seen from the grand hallway, family room and backyard. Photography courtesy of Mark Boisclair.



Both the customized seating by Fortress Seating and rug made by Rodeo Carpets anchor the theater room's design. Ownby Design created a lip along the raised platform and added rope lighting for safety and ambience. Photo courtesy of Mark Boisclair.

The 15,000-square-foot (under roof) home on Invergordon Road in Paradise Valley achieves the difficult task of making a palatial retreat fun. Eagle Custom Builders' Villa Esperanza shows how luxury and amusement accentuate each other.

"The refreshing thing (about this home) is that it was designed with only one thing in mind — for the pure benefit and happiness of its family," says interior designer Claire Ownby, owner of Ownby Design in Scottsdale, who designed the home. "There are still really neat elements, like being a 'smart house' and having an audio/visual room to store all the tech components, but in the end, this inspiration was family-focused and youthful."

This Santa Barbara-inspired abode with a contemporary twist was originally built as a spec home. But when the future homeowners, who wish to remain anonymous, saw the estate, they purchased the property and let their personal requests be known, letting the F-words fly: fun, family, friendly, fish tank.

The enormous aquarium near the kitchen, in addition to features such as a half-basketball/tennis court and a fully loaded multipurpose room with a projector screen and flat screen, air hockey table and arcade, demonstrate that fun can still be beautiful.

Architect Luis Bonilla of Antigua Home Designs Inc. says the arcade was originally designed as a simple rotunda. After hearing the clients' requests, Ownby converted this windowless room into a gamer's fantasy with blacklight-reflective paint, custom carpet with metallic weaving to reflect the blacklight, artificial plants and tons of games.

"Lots of the rooms we work on are serious, so my favorite projects are those that make the space be about the experience for the family and guests and spending quality time together," Ownby says.



The homeowners spend a lot of time together as a family, and they love playing games. They specifically requested a game table, which is shown here in the family room. Because this is a highly used room, Ownby Design selected commercial-grade, easy-to-clean fabric for the sofa that's ultra soft. Photo courtesy of Mark Boisclair.



Opposite page: Folded fabric walls in the main powder bathroom act as a sound buffer to the ample stone work and 12-foot ceilings. Photo courtesy of Mark Boisclair.

This page, above: The parlor is the first room visible upon entering the house. It's used for entertaining small groups of friends, but its primary function is a room where the homeowners can play the piano. Photo courtesy of Mark Boisclair.

Right: The main hallway running from one side of the house to the other acts as a gallery. All along it are niches where the homeowners display their extensive and eclectic art collection. Photo courtesy of Mark Boisclair.



The living areas of the five-bedroom house and two-bedroom, detached guesthouse are bathed in a neutral palette of rust, yellow, gold and ivory. Each area is then delineated with a punch of color as this design scheme travels throughout the home. The color scheme places special importance on properly highlighting the owners' extensive art collection. The more than 50 pieces in various mediums and movements posed a specific challenge to Ownby; she carefully selected custom framing and matting and strategically placed similar styles together to give a sense of order and a way for the art to tell a story as guests walk through the house.

"This house is a statement," says Jim Audiss, president of Eagle Custom Builders. "The flow of the house is incredible; you don't get consumed by the space."

The fun continues outside with a luxurious backyard overlooking Camelback and Mummy mountains. Parents can enjoy spectacular views from their private, upstairs loggia overlooking the backyard, while children perform their best cannonballs off the diving platform into the custom pool. Water features such as the negative-edge pool, Italian limestone fountains, spa and dynamic waterfalls create an outdoor entertainment area that's fun for those of all ages.

Though this fun house showcases custom-framed glass mirrors instead of twisted, plastic ones, and a stately library full of books instead of silly gags, both "houses" celebrate the same things — fun, togetherness and the amusement park we call life. **H-D**

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