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Spring 2022

Arcadia News

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Our most recent issue of *Arcadia Home & Design* regaled readers with the history of the Tovrea Castle.

That story started with a family home – and in the spirit of family, the Spring 2022 edition introduces our readers to the Avery House. Today, residents probably recognize the building as Rafterhouse, a local design and build company near 44th St. and Indian School Road.

But back in the early 1900s, the area, family and home thrived thanks to Frank Avery's citrus groves and what became known as the Early Avery Orange. Later on, the house was left to George Speer, Avery's trusted friend, and passed through a few other hands before Rafterhouse's owner Austin King bought and renovated the entire plot.

This edition also introduces another "history-saver" named Thomas Porter, whose business takes products like reclaimed barn wood from around the country and designs hand-crafted furniture and décor. Both Porter and King might be known for saving bits of history with each project they complete.

If you have story ideas or feedback, please contact me at editor@arcadianews.com. Until we meet again in the fall, thank you for reading *Arcadia News* and *Arcadia Home & Design*!

Mallory
 — Mallory Gleich

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The furniture and décor made by Porter Barn Wood may come from deconstructed barns around the country, but owner Thomas Porter and his team know how to put a modern touch on each piece they create.

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The Camelback Studio Tour offers a way for residents and visitors of the Valley to get a first-hand look at how various artists' created their pieces. We're also featuring three artists who are long-time exhibitors at Shemer Art Center.

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Front porch get-togethers are a way for friends, family and neighbors to connect. In Arcadia, front porches serve as an extension of the home. We reached out to a couple Valley experts to see what décor and floral trends are popular in 2022.



Restoring a home from Arcadia's past

By Sam Lowe

Until a few years ago, most drivers zipping along 44th Street just north of Indian School Road probably took their eyes off the busy roadway long enough to cast a cursory glance toward the old structure bearing house number 4203. It wasn't much to look at back then.

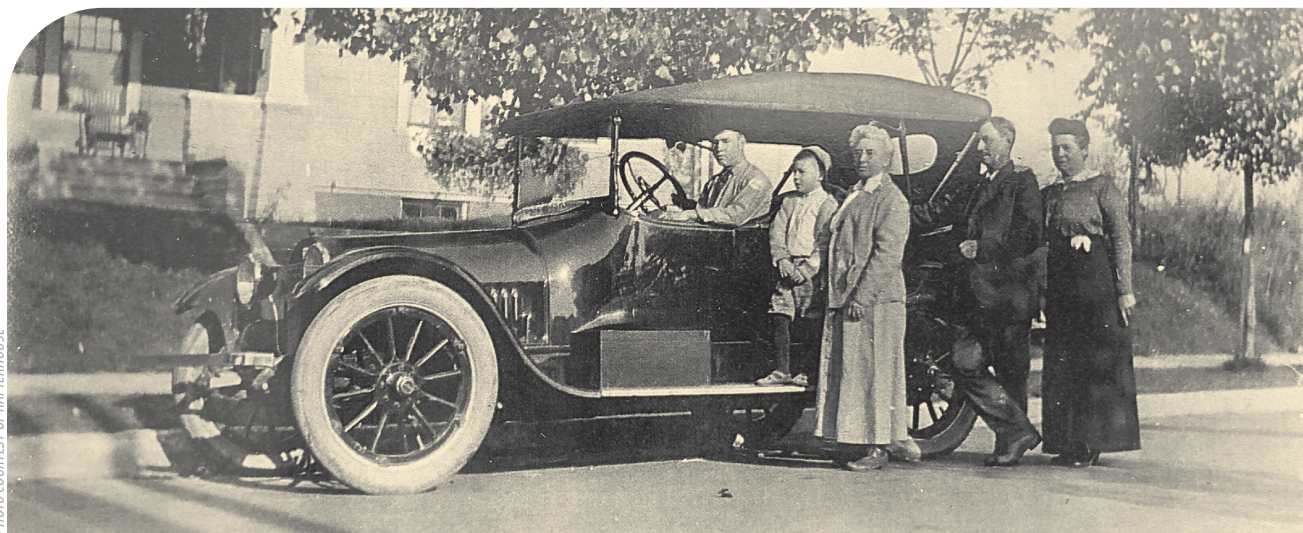
Fortunately for the house and a piece of Arizona history, Austin King recognized its worth. He bought it, restored it and saved a segment of Arizona's past.

Today, it's the office of Rafterhouse, a local custom home builder. But for years before 2018, it was the Avery House. And that made it important.

Although the lot had been inhabited since around 1910, the first buildings located on the site either burned down or were demolished. Frank Avery took over the property before 1919 and began construction on a new home for himself and his wife, Emma. The couple migrated to Arizona from Wyoming around 1910.

Frank worked at various professions across the Valley of the Sun and accumulated what was then considered a pretty fair amount of wealth. He used part of it to buy the 10-acre piece of land situated on the outskirts of Phoenix and became a citrus grower, turning most of the property into an orange grove.

14-year-old George Speer rode in a covered wagon from the Oklahoma Indian Territory to Douglas in southeastern Arizona, arriving around 1907. By 1914,



The Avery family with George Speer.

he had worked his way to Phoenix, where he found work as a mechanic in a Buick dealership.

Fate then brought Frank Avery and George Speer together when Avery bought a Buick – even though he didn't know how to drive a car. Needing someone to instruct him in the fine art of utilizing a motorized vehicle to get from one place to another, he hired Speer, first as a driving instructor, then as a handyman and foreman to maintain his holdings in the Phoenix area. Eventually, the two developed a lasting

relationship that would most benefit Speer.

Then World War I intervened. Speer was inducted into the U.S. Army in 1917 and shipped to France for the duration. But he corresponded regularly with the Avery family, and when his term of duty was over in 1919, he returned to Phoenix. Frank Avery met him at the railroad station and immediately returned him to his former status. So Speer was present to participate in, and probably oversee, the construction of the Avery House.



It was a fine home. The rooms were small but exceptionally well-appointed with tile and plastered walls. The floors were solid oak, sometimes in patterns, and a large brick fireplace dominated the living room. Workers first dug a basement using only hand tools, poured concrete into wooden forms to create the walls, then laid a double course of bricks for the upper portion.

While that was going on, Avery turned his talents to growing oranges. He developed the Early Avery Orange and helped organize the Arizona Citrus Growers, served ten terms as its president and board member, and was primarily responsible for the building of a \$60,000 storage warehouse.

In 1924, the local press heralded the growers with such glowing reports as “the Arizona orange has retained its supremacy in the Eastern market and brings about \$1.60 a box more than the California fruit in the same cities. Its superior qualities are also creating for it a steadily increasing demand...created through the color and flavor of the Arizona orange (so) growers of the Valley are urged to exert every effort to improve the appearance of the fruit.”

Another newspaper report noted that “a typical example of the best class of citrus culture in the Salt River Valley is the grove of F.W. Avery...during the past five years, this grove has netted the owner an average profit of more than \$500 per acre.”

Avery was also responsible for introducing airplane crop spraying to control citrus pests. The spraying runs drew large crowds who were, as noted in the local press, “as much impressed with the daring of the aviator (as he) swooped down until within a few feet of the tops of the orange trees (and) he flew even lower until it seemed to the spectators that he was missing fence posts by inches.”

Emma Avery died shortly after moving into her new home, but Frank remained on the property until his death at age 80 in 1938. In his will, he left some of his holdings to two sisters and the rest, including the orange groves and the Avery House, to his longtime friend and associate, George Speer.

The Speer family maintained ownership of the house until selling it to Venue Projections, a real estate developer, in 2016. By that time, the house had fallen into disrepair, and the vast majority of the citrus trees were either dead or torn up. Venue Property’s original plans were similar to a coffee house but were abandoned due to zoning restrictions and neighborhood protests.

Then Austin King came along.

After purchasing the property in 2017, he began an extensive remodel and upgrade in 2018, then moved his offices there in 2019. His work crew hand-scraped the plaster off the interior brick walls, sanded and rejuvenated the oak flooring, repaired the damage done by termites and feral cats, and faithfully refinished most of the original doors.

Many of the windows are new but were returned to their original locations, and the kitchen tile was resurfaced, but the stairs leading to the basement have been left scuffed and worn, just as they were years ago. The original pink exterior was given a new coat of gray and white paint.

“We saved the house,” King said. “And in restoring, we kept its past and history intact.”



PHOTO BY MALLORY GLECH

Rafterhouse’s redesigned fireplace. Inset: the fireplace from the original home.

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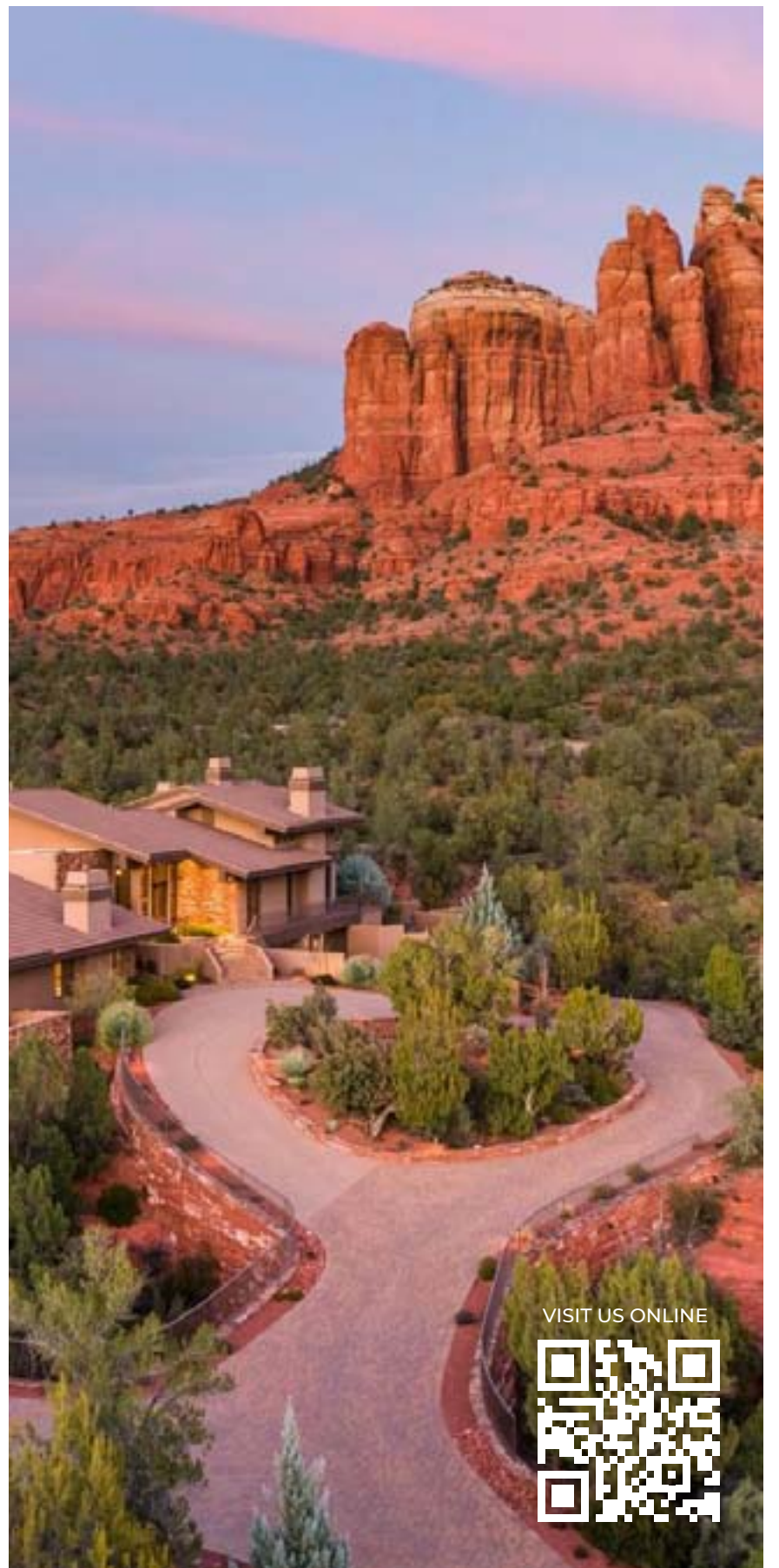


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PORTER BARN WOOD

*Saving a piece
of history one
project at a time*

By Mallory Gleich

When clients walk into the showroom at Porter Barn Wood, the first thing that probably catches their eye is the cabin.

It stands at the same height of the showroom and was built in 1760 in Ruffs Dale, Pennsylvania. Thomas Porter and his team painstakingly broke the home down, piece by piece, and transported it to Phoenix. It took them two weeks to put back together.

"The cabin was built before America became America," Porter said.

It is truly a sight to see, this piece of history, and that's the reaction that Porter is going for.

He's the owner of a reclaimed barn wood supplier in downtown Phoenix, fittingly called Porter Barn Wood. Their materials come from deconstructed barns all over the country.

"We have woods from Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Tennessee, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, Maine, all over," Porter said. "We bring them back and sell them to architects, designers, builders and the general public."

Not only do they sell the material, they also use it for custom projects.

Porter is an Arizona native who attended

the New School for the Arts, working in individual art classes, drawing and web design. As a kid, he was fascinated by woodworking.

"It started with skateboard ramps," he said. "My grandfather also had a small shop in his garage, and I always admired how he could build whatever he felt like."

The idea for using reclaimed barn wood came from Porter's love of history and stories from long ago.

"I combined my love for history with my love for woodworking. The fact that people were tearing down barns – rather than seeing them burned and buried, I felt they needed to be reused. It's like I'm saving a piece of history," he said.

The company was conceived in a backyard. Porter started collecting reclaimed wood and building tables, chairs, and shelves for friends and businesses around ten years ago.

Those projects grew in popularity, so much so that Porter had to hire more men to help – and find a bigger space. Enter his business partner and friend, Craig Suiter.

Suiter had recently purchased a plot of land in south Phoenix, so he and Porter moved the woodworking business there and kept creating. Before they had a building,



The reconstructed cabin inside Porter Barn Wood's showroom, originally built in 1760.



they worked under tents, with one electrical outlet. Now, there are 16 wood, metal and ironworkers under a massive roof. “We decided that since I had a woodshop and a forklift and he had an empty lot, we would bring in some barn wood to mess around with,” Porter said. “We wanted to build some things and maybe sell materials to friends in the industry: woodworkers, builders, designers, architects.”

The showroom and workshops officially opened five years ago on the northeast corner of 7th and Tonto Streets in Phoenix. Under the umbrella are two other companies: Porter Iron Works and Our Block, Co., which creates custom breezeway blocks.

There’s a full woodshop, where Porter and his team make furniture and cabinetry, plus architectural elements for restaurants and hospitality, luxury homes or “just small, fun stuff.”

“We also have a metal shop where we do traditional blacksmithing and modern metalworking,” he said. “Our Block, Co., is our mid-century modern inspired concrete breeze block manufacturer.”

Porter Barn Wood also supplies live edge slabs and forest fire recovery materials from the west coast.

Examples of some of the woods they work with include American chestnut, which Porter said was near extinction.

“We were using historical wood that no one had worked with or was able to work with, but we could,” Porter said. “Reclaimed wood scares a lot of woodworkers because it’s got mineral deposits, nails or cracks, and it’s not as easy to work with. We like a challenge!”

Other woods include walnut, sassafras, catalpa, butternut, hemp wood and waterproof wood made out of rice hulls. Porter said that every so often, they also find materials from outside the U.S.

“A gentleman once brought us thousands of board feet from shipping containers used in the U.S. Peace Corps – these were pieces from all over the world. We also had some military crates from the Vietnam War era that still had shells in them and some Parota slabs from southern Mexico. We had to use those; we couldn’t help ourselves. They’re just so pretty.”

Within the woodshop are several CNC (computer numerical control) machines. These cut or move material as programmed by the controller. There are also lasers, table saws, jointers, belt sanders, miter saws, band saws and other traditional tools. Porter said they lean more on heavy-duty industrial equipment to increase capacity.

Everything is custom-made. Clients explain what they’re looking for and pick the wood. Projects usually take 12-14 weeks to complete.

Previous (and some of Porter’s favorite) projects include all the wood, metal and a few concrete elements for Toca Madera in Scottsdale, elements for four Tocaya restaurants and some fun, luxury stuff for Phoenix ballplayers and “execs.”

“They come to us because we ‘build the weird stuff,’” Porter laughed.

Porter wears many hats as the owner: working on new pieces, setting up machinery, dealing with insurance audits and deliveries. “The list is never-ending,” he said.

They are currently working on shipping components for Caymus Vineyards in Napa, California.

“Caymus is opening a new winery near Napa, so we’re supplying modern blocks and custom tables. We’re also working with the new Toca Madera in Las Vegas for their booths and cabinets – the whole works,” he said. “Plus, a bunch of personal stuff: dining tables, shelving, wall materials – we’ve got hundreds in production.”

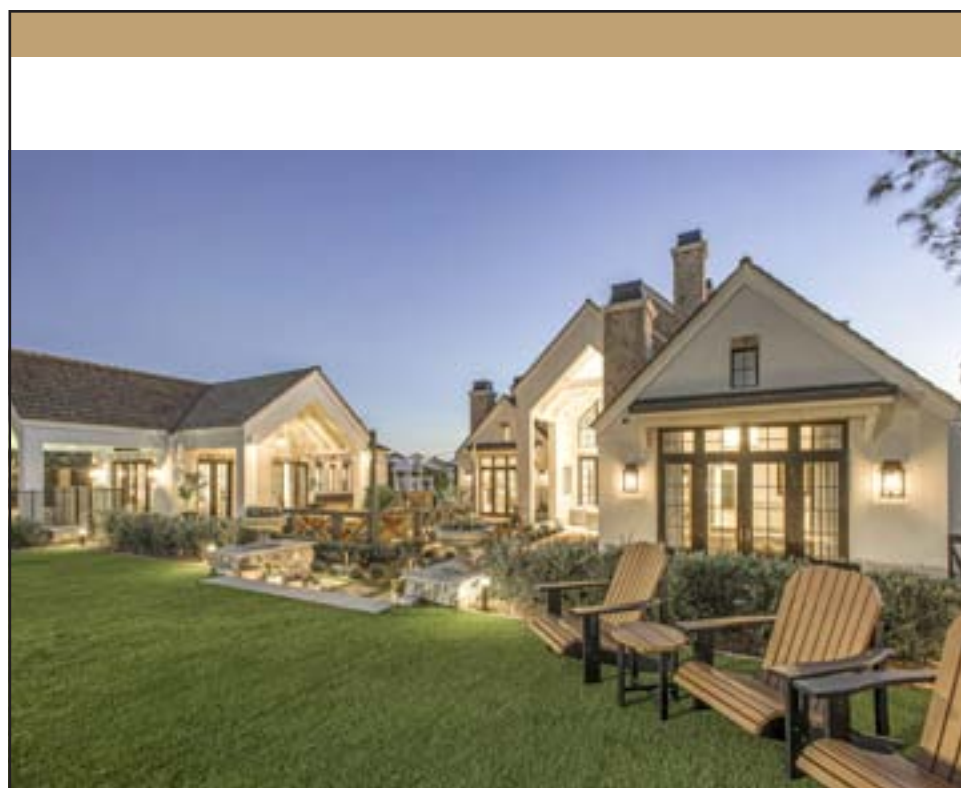
In the future, Porter Barn Wood plans to start hosting events again. Clubs and private get-togethers used to happen on the grounds but have been on hold the past couple of years. They have a Yoyo Club, Kung Fu classes and bluegrass classes that currently utilize the space.

“We want to continue to develop the property and stay with the ebb and flow of trends. Materials stay the same, styles change. We want to stay relevant. In the next five years, folks could go back to being cowboys or could go ‘Jetsons,’” he said.

According to Porter, this business comprises all of his creative outlets: building, designing and messing around with the machines.

“It’s not just the people stuff but the whole space; we have frontier land and tomorrow land all in one, there’s music and art – all the things I enjoy doing are here,” he said.

porterbarnwood.com



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Camelback Studio Tour

Decade-long event keeps artists and visitors coming back



Topknot by Kevin Caron



Violet by Fiona Purdy



Ocotillo Yellow Peak by Cheri Reckers

By Mallory Gleich

Each year, a gathering of artists takes place in south Scottsdale and west Phoenix. These artists open up their studios to guests, who come from far and wide to get a first-hand look at how Arizona's creative minds establish their works. This week-long event has become known as the Camelback Studio Tour.

Started in 2009 by four Arizona artists looking to showcase their art, the CST is a self-guided tour through working studios in Scottsdale and Phoenix neighborhoods.

"Back then, they held it in the Sherwood Heights neighborhood, where most of the studios are still located," Organizer Lynn Gustafson said. "Over the years, three of us moved on to new adventures, so I am now the sole organizer. The founders established The South Scottsdale Art Alliance, which sponsors the event."

Each studio has a host artist who opens their space so the public can see "where the creativity begins." Artists from around the Valley can also sell their works. The tour takes place during the first weekend in November.

"It is the artists that make this event so popular. We have a lot of great local people who participate every year and work in several different mediums. Folks have an opportunity to see how something is made and the space it is made in. Visitors can see every studio in a weekend, and some even come back the next day," Gustafson said.

Below are three artists who not only take part in the tour but may also be familiar to those who have visited the Shemer Art Center in recent years.

camelbackstudiotour.com
shemerartcenter.org

Kevin Caron

Caron was born in Connecticut and lived in Florida before heading to the desert in 1973. He's lived in Phoenix since.

"I was 13 – my mother said 'get in the car!' and away we went. I took to the desert right away, though, spending many hours riding through the beautiful expanses of the West Valley," Caron said.

Caron is a sculptor who works with metal – primarily steel and aluminum – and 3D-printed filament. He's participated in the Camelback Studio Tour three times.

"I've been working in metal since 2002 and became a full-time artist in 2006. My largest sculpture is a public commission in Chandler, titled *The Seed*, which is 14 feet tall. It is installed at the Tumbleweed Recreation Center," he said.

Around 2012, Caron began working with 3D printing technology. He prints in various materials, including bronze and rubber.

"My tallest 3D-printed sculpture thus far, a commission for PricewaterhouseCoopers in Columbus, Ohio, is 5-1/2 feet tall," he said. "But I'm always learning, following my curiosity with materials and techniques. To me, part of being an artist is discovery through creation."

Caron has also had indoor and outdoor exhibits presented at the Shemer Art Center. His 3D-printed jewelry is available in the gift shop.



"I believe in community, and the Camelback Studio Tour and Shemer epitomize that. I also like that both are centrally located, making them easy for Valley residents to visit," Caron said. "Both of these organizations are very supportive of local artists, too."

His advice for those looking

to go professional?

"If you are thinking of becoming a full-time professional artist, don't quit your day job. I worked part-time as an artist for four or five years before going full-time. Every artist I've known who 'focused only on being an artist' has gone back to a regular job," Caron said. "Starting part-time lets people get an idea of what it would be like to work full-time before they take the leap."

kevincaron.com

Fiona Purdy

Purdy moved to Scottsdale from New Zealand in 1995. She has been part of the Camelback Tour for the past three years.

Purdy paints pet portraits using two different mediums: acrylic on canvas and fine art paper and with pen and ink. She's been painting those for almost 30 years.



"I started painting them on large river rocks but changed to canvas in 1997. It's much easier to source and paint on. I started the pen and ink and acrylic on paper in 2017 to help pet lovers on a limited budget," she said.

Purdy said that she's always drawn animals and that as she got older, she was passionate about painting them, too.

"My art teachers were always exasperated that I managed to incorporate an animal or bird in any assignment I was given," she said. "When I painted dogs and cats on river rocks, someone asked me if I could paint their pet, and I found that I had the talent to paint their likeness and also capture a pet's personality."

Purdy explained that being an artist means

continually developing skills and mediums.

"I am extremely comfortable and competent in handling my chosen medium, but the way I use it is always evolving. Every portrait teaches me something new and allows me to get better," she said.

In February, Purdy participated in the Shemer Furry Friends Art Festival for the second time. Her favorite part about being on tour and at the festival is talking to the people who visit. A bonus is hearing about and seeing photos of people's pets.

"Both events are low key and relaxed. The Shemer Furry Friends event is perfect for me as a pet portrait artist because visitors are both pet and art lovers – my favorite type of people," Purdy said.

Purdy said that aspiring artists should paint what they love, in the medium they love and believe in their work.

petportraitsbyfiona.com

Cheri Reckers

Reckers moved to Phoenix from New Mexico five years ago with her husband. Since they came from an inspiring desert/mountain region, they wanted to continue living in a similar area.

"The Sonoran Desert was attractive because of its unique environment, dramatic vistas and of course the saguaro cacti that only grow here," she said.

Reckers' primary medium is silk painting – and it has

been for 30 years. She's participated in the CST twice.

"Occasionally, I work with watercolors, acrylics and oils, though I particularly like the vibrant color achieved with the dyes on silk," she said.

Reckers doesn't believe there is such thing as "perfect" but that striving for "perfection" as an artist is ongoing.

"Having a good foundation helps one achieve success because they can apply the principles to any medium of choice," she explained.

Her work can be seen at the Shemer several times a year, and Reckers also teaches silk painting workshops there.



"Participating in the tour and exhibitions are good ways for the community to see my work and meet me," Reckers said. "It's nice to get feedback about my paintings and see what pieces the collectors make a connection with."

Her advice for aspiring artists is this:

"Take some classes, hone your skills, then use self-motivation and determination to keep creating and getting your artwork out where people can see it," she said.

Visitors to Shemer, the Sedona Art Center and Wild Holly Gallery in Carefree can view Reckers' current and past works.

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PHOTO BY SCOTT SANDLER

Front Patios

Fresh ideas for outdoor living spaces

By Cody Kennedy

For the past couple of years, the front porch has become an extension of our living spaces. In 2020 and 2021, neighbors used them for drive-by greetings and socially distanced gatherings. The popularity of front yard get-togethers, if anything, has grown even more in 2022.

We spoke to Russ Greey of Greey-Pickett, a landscape architect business based in Scottsdale,

to find out what makes those “front porch hangs” so popular.

“Porch-forward spaces are often seen in houses built in the 20s-30s, and Arcadia is one of the rare neighborhoods in Arizona that has succeeded in reviving this trend,” Greey said.

In Arcadia, having a large front patio is not only an extension of living space but an important social meeting space. Greey said that this movement allows for neighbors to socialize and connect naturally.

“Kids playing in the front yard is a true invite for other families to follow,” Greey continued. “A simple wave or a friendly hello to your neighbors has provided a way for the community to feel still connected. The uniqueness of Arcadia allows for this revamp of a past trend because it’s a family neighborhood that values safety and socializing.”

Greey said that landscape designs usually have a grass space for families to enjoy, with a yard typically fenced for safety but low enough to allow for an inviting look as neighbors pass.

“This year, patio spaces are leaning toward low maintenance planting, like featured pots with unique succulent gardens that do not require too much upkeep and less ornamental plantings due to the extreme heat in Arizona and a need to maintain,” Greey said.

Decorating the patio is treated the same as decorating a room with furniture for seating and dining, area rugs, lighting and focal pots. Furniture is

chosen to complement the architecture.

“We are seeing modern steel furniture with clean lines as well as rattan chairs with woven and curved details. Many are without cushions or have removable cushions for easy styling and storage to preserve from the desert dust,” he said.

Greey-Pickett often designs permanent banco seating (chairs built right into the groundwork of a patio) around a fireplace for an evening when the temperatures cool off. Patio spaces are not necessarily covered and weatherproof but are more open and inviting.

“The market is growing with this front yard trend, and we’re seeing excellent options for outdoor furnishings, as well as other must-have accessories that are more durable to the weather and climate,” Greey said. These include speakers, lighting and unique fabrics.

Bistro lighting is a trend they’ve seen for many years, but Greey said it is here to stay, as it adds an element of fun and function to the entertaining area.

To capture an “indoor” feel, arrange furniture under a patio covering, such as outdoor drapery, a green wall, water feature or outdoor tiled accent wall.

“We do not see the front porch trend ending in the Arcadia community. The front porch design, we think, could add to new communities, providing a family-friendly space to connect with your neighborhood,” Greey said.



PHOTO BY LOGAN SOWERS

Add some flowers

Arcadia News reached out to Berridge Nursery to find out which flowers might work best for your front yard:

"As we head into our spring weather and more outdoor entertaining, it makes this a wonderful time of year to implement a new landscape vision, or refresh existing plans," Owner Melinda Walton said.

A well layered landscape will boast foundation shrubs, accent plants, ground covers and annual flowers.

Walton explained that if folks are working with southern or western sun exposure, they might enjoy

planting layers of large or small hedging shrubs such as xylosma, dwarf myrtle or little ollie along with accents of Mediterranean fan palms, desert spoon, hesperaloe or agave species. Yellow dot (Wedelia), in lieu of lantana, offers a lush appearance as a ground cover and has vibrant yellow flowers.

"If you need a place to start, look no farther than your front door or patio, with the addition of decorative pots planted with annual color for a bright and bold entrance to the home," Walton said. "In full sun, folks can choose from geraniums, osteospermum, nemesia,

snapdragons, petunias and pansies."

For northern or eastern facing entries, she suggests planting kimberly queen or foxtail ferns mixed with begonias, impatiens, cyclamen or campanula to brighten up those areas.

"Keep in mind a regular fertilization program and proper irrigation schedules will keep your flowers and shrubs looking their best. Nursery professionals are here to help with that!" Walton said.

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Begonias



Petunias



Snapdragon



Osteospermum



Nemesia



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