



WILD ROOM: A bowl of paintbrushes is the fitting centerpiece to the couple's dining room table, surrounded by Mies van der Rohe-designed Brno Flat chairs. Piles of blueprints await the couple's review for their next design job while an Achille Castiglioni "Arco" lamp — one of the few signed by the designer, points out Eric — accentuates the height of the vaulted ceiling.

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER GRIMES, TRIBUNE

DESIGNERS AT HOME

At Home introduces its occasional series profiling professionals in the designing world.

Designing couple

BRONS SPEND 37 YEARS WORKING TOGETHER ON BEAUTIFUL SPACES

MEET THE DESIGNERS

Company name: Bron Design Group
Owners: Eric and Dorothy Bron
Established: 1972
They do: Interior design and color design
Married: 37 years
Location: Though based in Phoenix, the designers say they'll travel "anywhere on Earth" to design, but so far their clients have been concentrated in the Southwest.
Accolades:
 • Named Masters of the Southwest in Phoenix Home and Garden magazine for 2005
 • Profiled in Interiors magazine and Designers West magazine
 • Have won 25 design awards from the American Society of Interior Designers
 • Dorothy is one of only a few Arizona members of the International Color Marketing Group that forecasts color trends years in advance for everything from cars to wall paint.
Did you know? Eric is a fifth-degree black belt in Hapkido, a Korean martial art. Dorothy is learning to play the guitar.



DESIGNER COUPLE: Dorothy and Eric Bron, and their dog, Toto, pose in their central Phoenix living room. The room's design focuses primarily on Monterey furniture, a style created in Los Angeles in the 1920s.



DESIGN DETAILS: The silver-dipped moose is an eye-catching antique store find. When the couple were first married, Dorothy says their furnishings were few. "We had no table, no chairs, no bed. And (Eric) goes to an antique store and comes home with a moose."



TRANSFORMED: The Brons turned a master closet into this devil-themed powder room after moving in.

By AMANDA MYERS
 TRIBUNE

Walking through the central Phoenix home of Dorothy and Eric Bron is like a lesson in the history of decor. Which isn't surprising, considering the married couple of 37 years own one of the Valley's most experienced interior design firms — the Bron Design Group.

Monterey furniture (circa Los Angeles in the '20s) fills the living room, an Achille Castiglioni "Arco" lamp swoops over their dining room table, and a 1940s Eames lounge chair sits unassumingly in the bedroom. Yet the couple modestly says they give credit for their style choices to their clients.

"We look around and see what client influenced this or that," says Dorothy. "Every time we do a job that takes us in a new direction, we have to research it. Sometimes we end up knowing their style better than they do."

The couple balks at the idea of a theme in their home. They classify the look as eclectic. A steer hide covers the concrete floor in the foyer, and there's a supposed Spanish/cowboy theme to the sunken living room to the right, though one can't be sure with the surplus of Eric's vintage toy car collection lining the shelves. The bedroom has a distinct Asian flair, and Dorothy describes the couple's bathroom as "Paris in the '40s." Meanwhile, a silver-dipped moose head keeps watch above the couple's retro dining room, which flanks a modern kitchen.

As impressive as the home's furniture is the couple's collection of dissimilar artwork, including an authentic and semi-intimidating Día de los Muertos ("Day of the Dead") costume that hangs in the modern powder room off the foyer. In the bedroom, a glass bust of a topless woman by artist Dan Daley towers over a collection of small Mexican figurines that, as Dorothy explains with a smile, "protect you from bad behavior."

Not that the couple have anything to worry about in that department. The Brons are way too busy with their interior design business for two to find time for trouble.

"There's a saying in this business — 'Either you're so busy you can't see straight, or you're sitting there sharpening pencils,'" says Dorothy. "Our pencils are dull, so that's a good sign."

Before she ever picked up a fabric swatch, Dorothy was in a drastically different field — social work. Then, in the late '60s, she met Eric, who was working as an interior designer for the Scottsdale architecture firm Haver, Nunn and Jensen (which built the first Cine Capri theater). After the two were married, Eric says he decided to quit his job and join two other designers in their own company, moving their offices to an even sunnier place than Phoenix — Honolulu.

"Why Hawaii? Because (his partners) were crazy," says Eric. Once there, an unemployed Dorothy found herself touring the island's cultural spots and reporting back to her husband design ideas she picked up from their surroundings. Soon, she was the team's go-to gal for research, not content with staying inside all day.

"I tried to type things, but I wasn't very good at that," says Dorothy with a smile.

In 1972, the couple decided to break off on their own and returned to the Valley. Picking and choosing their clients all over the western United States and boycotting any means of advertising other than word-of-mouth, the couple were pleasantly surprised by the results.

"It's very important now that we have work that we love with people we love," says Dorothy.

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PEEK INTO THEIR PORTFOLIO



DINO TONN

ONLY A DESIGNER WOULD THINK OF: In this Valley home's dining room, designers Eric and Dorothy Bron turned an accident into art. When movers dropped the table's glass top, breaking off a corner, the couple gave the table's edge a deconstructed look, breaking off more sections intentionally and covering them in gold leaf.

On TV

A Scottsdale homeowner's bathroom designed by the Bron Design Group will be featured on a new HGTV show, "I Want That! Baths," airing 10 p.m. March 15.



TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

COLORFUL PLACEMENT: In this Scottsdale home, the Brons blend natural elements like a stone floor and antler mantel decorations, with bright, modern-shaped leather furniture.



DINO TONN

ONE-OF-A-KIND SINK: The designing duo give a twist to a traditional sink by replacing it with a super-sized geode. This Valley homeowner's bathroom will appear on HGTV's "I Want That! Baths" Wednesday night.

LET ACCENTS SHOW: Artist Hank Adams created the cast glass sculpture in the Brons' Asian-inspired bedroom. Although most people will paint a room's overhead beams to blend in with the ceiling, says Eric, they decided to let theirs stand out to highlight the arched slant and give the room a larger feel.



Q&A WITH ERIC AND DOROTHY BRON

Q: Do you have a design motto?
ERIC: (reads from a sheet of paper posted in the couple's office): "As Chekhov said, you can't take a gun onstage unless you're going to shoot someone.' There's no room for useless things."
Q: Price range for your services?
DOROTHY: (laughs): "We're way too much."

Q: What is your favorite type of home to design?
DOROTHY: "Our next one."
ERIC: (smiles): "Good one."
Q: Most memorable design job?
ERIC: "We're doing a 'Lord of the Rings' house right now for a client in Park City, Utah. It's called Rivendell, and in the trilogy it's the place of positive energy and benevolence."

Q: What's something "in" right now?
DOROTHY: "Being very individual. Baby boomers are much more analytic about what pleases them."
Q: Something definitely "out"?
DOROTHY: "Tuscany is out."
ERIC: "I don't know why it was ever in."

Q: What is your favorite design aspect of your own home?
DOROTHY: "We love being in the heart of the city. There's such energy. (Laughs.) My name is Dorothy, and there's no place like home."
Q: If you could design anywhere in the world, where would it be?
DOROTHY: "Paris, because we love Paris."