

# Desert awes Soleri-inspired architect

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Each day after school, Scott Jarson would trot over to his neighbor's house to watch him work.

That neighbor was architect Paolo Soleri.

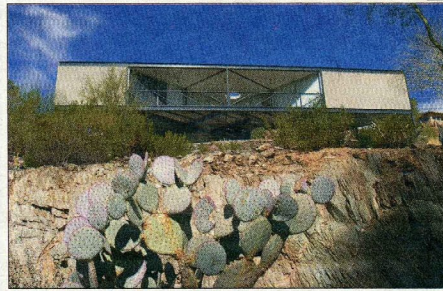
Jarson was mesmerized with Soleri and his Cosanti village, a series of dome-shaped buildings along East Doubletree Ranch Road.

In 1956, Soleri used "earthcasting" to create the unusual structures. Cement was poured over pre-shaped earthen molds. After it became solid concrete, the earth was excavated.

For Jarson, architecture and history morphed into a profession and passion.

Jarson, 49, with his wife, Debbie, built a real estate partnership specializing in architecturally unique homes.

Perhaps it's difficult to see beyond the pervasive production housing, but there are pockets of gems in north and northeast Phoenix, especially around Dreamy Draw and Northern Avenue, Jarson said. These houses are designed by architects with a "desert-school ethic." They blend with the desert and sit gently on the landscape.



A northeast Phoenix home embodies mid-20th-century modernism.

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"When I lived out here in the 1950s, this was the Northeast Valley," Jarson said about his family's house near Cosanti.

"We were completely remote, as remote as Happy Valley is today."

At Cosanti, Jarson meandered through the domes.

"Paolo built a lot of shade covers and canvases. It was tolerable. It's how we survived before freon," Jarson said.

"His whole trip was (that) how we live in the desert should be dense. Live closer together to preserve the desert and open space. Rather than become

the view, you preserve the view."

Cosanti is ground zero for Jarson.

While Soleri became an inspiration, Jarson's mother, Eileen, had an interest in desert architecture, too. She influenced her son by driving him around to open houses to look at architecture. His mother's idea of a great picnic spot was "Shiprock," the ruins of a house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright that had burned down on North 32nd Street.

Intriguing sculptural shapes were left behind after the fire, and Jarson recalls sitting on a burned-out wall, look-

ing out across the Valley.

Eileen introduced him to the work of architects like Al Beadle, a great mid-century modernist known for dwellings with a crisp geometry of steel frames, foundations on stilts and expansive windows designed to bring the desert into the house rather than shut it out.

One of Jarson's favorite Beadle designs rests on an outcropping not far from the Dreamy Draw area and the mountain preserve. It's only about 1,800 square feet and was built around 1980.

"It sits very lightly on the sight," Jarson said. "A wonderful desert house."

Another architectural gem, one that defines contemporary "desert modern" architecture, Jarson said, sits near this Beadle house. The home, built in 2001, was designed by Wendell Burnette. It is rectangular with a window that stretches across the front of the house.

Of course, a number of architects design for the crispness that you can't find anywhere else but the Sonoran Desert, Jarson said.

Will Bruder is one of them. Best known for Phoenix's Burton Barr Central Library and the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Bruder is designing the Dial Corp. headquarters in Scottsdale.