



Mid-century
MODERN
makeover

BY SU BYRON / PHOTOGRAPHY BY CRAIG LITTEN

Alison and Michael Bishop have spent the past two decades helping other people transform their homes and offices into gracious, functional spaces. They own Living Walls, a Sarasota-based contemporary design and furniture enterprise.

But when it came to their own 1950s-era home, they had done little to it in the nearly 20 years that they had lived there.

"It's like the shoemaker who has no shoes," laughs Alison. "We've been so busy with work and family that we never got a chance to work on our own space."

That changed last year. The last of their three sons went off to college, and Alison and Michael took a long, hard look at their house.

"The bones are wonderful, but it needed a makeover," says Alison. "With the kids out of the house, the timing was right."

The Bishops' mid-century-modern, concrete-block home is tucked in a cozy cul-de-sac on a quiet Southgate street. The roomy family home features four bedrooms, a bonus room in the garage, and a sizable yard and pool.

The Bishops began by consulting with an architect. After reviewing their options, the team came up with a game plan. First, they would tackle the house's façade, and next, they would renovate the garage and lanai areas, connecting both spaces to the rest of the house.

The first step was eliminating the garage's bonus room to make room for Michael's pet project: a candy-red 1965 Mustang he's restoring. They would also wall off a laundry area to create a tiny fitness space for Alison, and turn one bathroom into an elegant guest powder room. The lanai needed a complete overhaul — from raising its sagging roof to reflooring and rescreening.

Alison sought a seamless transition from the renovated areas to the rest of the house.

"Handling transitions is a big challenge in design," says Alison. "I wanted to create a natural flow so that the renovated areas didn't feel truncated from the rest of the house." The solution included selecting a flooring for the renovated space that complemented the terrazzo in the rest of the house.

Alison spent weeks deciding on the floor.

"In order for it to complement the terrazzo, it had to look natural and vary in color." After combing through the choices at Sarasota Wholesale Tile, she decided on a slate-like mosaic porcelain tile called Maya Oro, which is offered in various sizes and patterns.

The couple hired Rob Dynan, a contractor, to oversee the job — "One of the smartest things we did," says Alison — and began with basic improvements to the façade.

"We eliminated anything that wasn't integral," says Michael. That included the colonial molding around the door and the cracked window sills — but not their vintage awning windows. They also reshingled the roof and painted the exterior walls white with black trim for a more modern, uncluttered look.

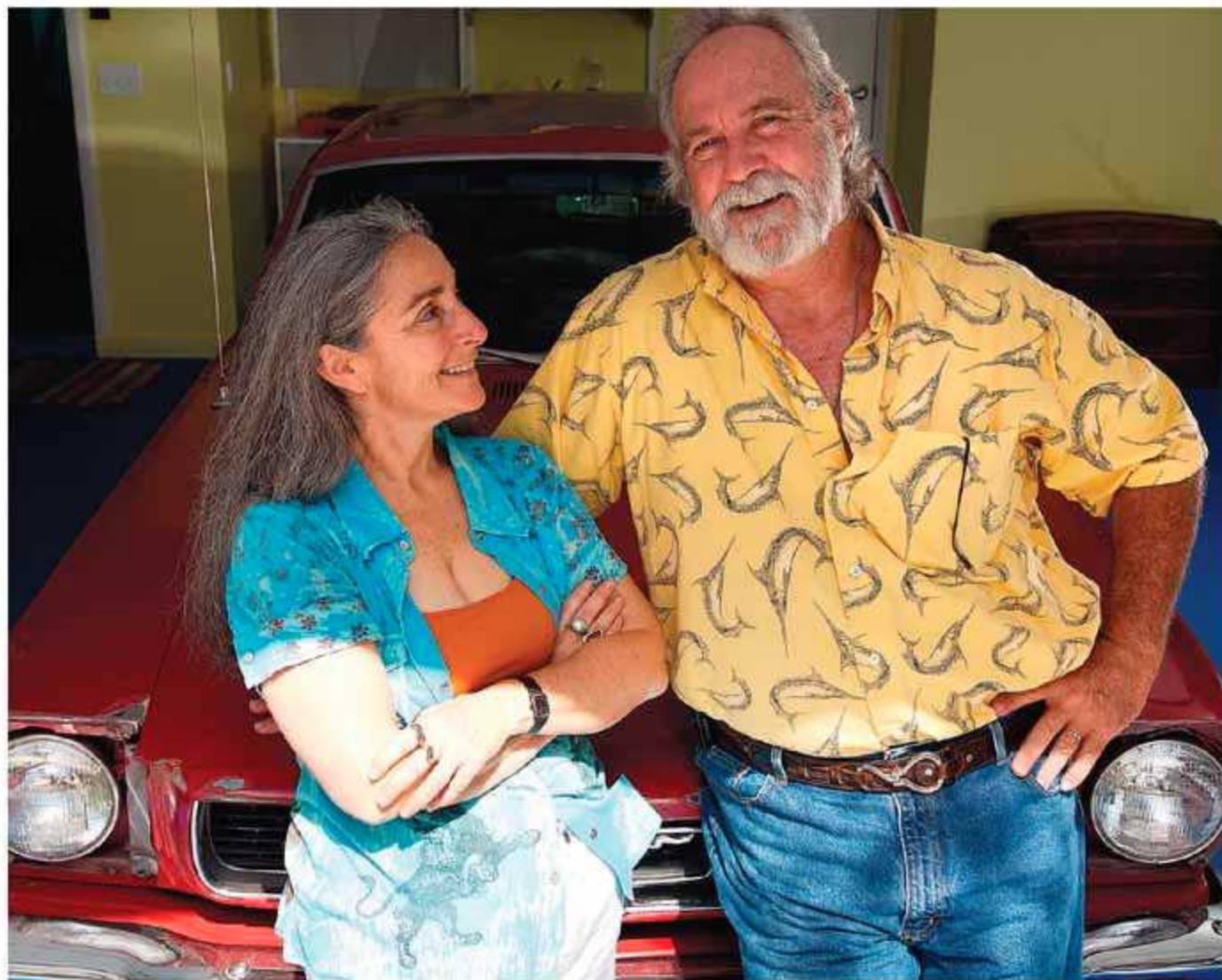
Next they moved to the back lanai. Its biggest problem was a sagging roof that didn't drain properly, which kept it flooded during the rainy season. Rob raised the roof by several inches and divided the space into screened and unscreened areas. For the Bishops, who are avid birders, this proved a perfect solution: two outdoor spaces to enjoy the sounds and sights of nature.

The powder room was Alison's pet project.

"I've been waiting for 20 years to have a decent guest bathroom," she laughs.

With less than 50 square feet of space to work with, Alison wanted each element to be perfect. They began by creating a vestibule leading from the kitchen to the new powder room, so that guests were not redirected through the garage.

For the walls of the shower, she went with the same porcelain tiles as the floor, but in a brick pattern. To break the monotony, she placed three sets of horizontal strips of iridescent glass tiles along the contours of the shower. She repeated this geometric motif with



Alison and Michael Bishop give their 1950s concrete-block house a facelift, while preserving its mid-century modern bones.



On the lanai, the red chair is a reproduction of the Corona chair by Poul Volther. The green chairs were designed by Karim Rashid from Umbra, and the Isis stainless-steel table is from Gordon International.

When working in a tight space, you may as well be bold. In the guest bath, Alison went with Caribbean-blue paint on the walls, strips of iridescent glass tiles in the shower, and an aquamarine glass bowl suspended by a stainless-steel bracket for the sink. In front of the mirror, she hung a frosted-glass WAC pendant light etched with horizontal grooves.



three horizontal strips of glass hung above the sink as a mirror. The sink is a Curvet USA aquamarine glass bowl suspended by a stainless-steel bracket. In order to hide the plumbing, the Bishops had a zebrawood cabinet made that works as a backsplash and a mount for the sink.

“Another essential element of design is coming up with easy and affordable solutions,” says Alison, “and this was one of them.” Michael laughs. “Let’s put it this way,” he says. “She designs it, and I make it work.”

Alison chose a vibrant Caribbean-blue paint for the walls.

“I went for drama, because in such a small space, you’re not fooling anybody that it’s larger. This makes its own bold statement: I’m small but wonderful!”

Using the same logic, she chose citron green for her laundry room. Continuing with the geometric theme, she hung a frosted-glass WAC pendant light etched with horizontal grooves in front of a BiDi square mirror, and commissioned an artist to create vertical copper panels with horizontal lines to go over the toilet.

She solved the lack of storage space with an Umbra Conceal Towel Shelf to store towels. The shelf becomes invisible once folded towels are stacked on it.

Throughout the process, the Bishops kept a strict accounting of their budget.

“The reality of a budget,” says Alison, “keeps you focused on making sensible choices.” In all, the couple estimates they have spent \$80,000 on the project thus far — and there’s more to do, including renovating the pool area.

What are their plans now that this stage of the renovation is finished?

“I know Michael will disappear into the garage to work on his Mustang,” says Alison. “As for me, now that we’ve got a guest bathroom and a great lanai to relax on, I’m planning on inviting all of our friends over!”

