

# Home Is Where *the Art Is*



TWO PALM SPRINGS ENTREPRENEURS COMBINE BUSINESS SAVVY AND A LOVE OF ARCHITECTURE TO TRANSFORM HO-HUM HOUSES INTO MIDCENTURY MARVELS.

*By Linda L. Meierhoffer  
Photography by Daniel Chackin*

*Located in the southern end of Palm Springs, this midcentury modern home sparkles anew after renovation by two Portland, Oregon, transplants who traded in their corporate jobs to follow their dreams.*

“Who doesn’t love to tear down a wall?” asks Jackie Thomas, a woman with contagious energy who’s not afraid to swing a hammer. Thomas and her spouse and business partner, DeeAnn McCoy, started Thomboy Properties in Palm Springs four years ago with the philosophy of “respectful reimagining,” buying midcentury homes to renovate and sell to eager buyers.

“We bring back the authenticity of a house as it was first envisioned and marry that with the way people live their lives today,” Thomas explains, noting the two aren’t “flipping” homes for quick cash. “To ‘flip’ conjures up the lipstick-on-a-pig thing that no one likes,” she says. “Midcentury houses have such amazing histories and were so beautifully and artfully done. It’s important to respect the past.”



#### ENVISIONING A DREAM

The couple first moved to the desert part time in 2005, commuting from Portland, Oregon — Thomas from her job as an executive marketing director at Nike and McCoy from the advertising agency she owned. They purchased a Palmer & Krisel–designed condominium in south Palm Springs that year, which provided an easy getaway for sun and golf.

“We had always [dreamed of] coming to Palm Springs in retirement,” McCoy explains, “and in 2007, we put in place a three-year plan to leave our corporate jobs to have better work-life balance.” However, the worst economic climate in decades tweaked those plans. In 2010, they forged ahead and left their jobs, sold the condo, moved to a nearly 50-year-old house in their favorite Palm Springs neighborhood, Indian Canyons, and turned Thomboy into a full-time venture.

Dreams of a leisurely semi-retirement were traded for the reality of crunching numbers, removing '70s-era wallcoverings, and investing in sweat equity. “Our financial portfolio had changed since our original plan, but fortunately we had immediate success with our renovation projects, and we love what we’re doing — following our passion for midcentury architecture while living a simpler, more fulfilling life in a community we love,” Thomas says.

#### TEAM PLAYERS

The two jumped in with a solid business plan and someone who knew Palm Springs. Realtor Joe Simeone acted as their guide to navigate the impetuous marketplace and access the after-repair value that Thomboy plugs in to every profit and loss model.

The real estate mantra “location, location, location” led McCoy and Thomas to the south end of Palm Springs and the Racquet Club for their completed renovations, and location always goes hand in hand with their love of the architecture.

Although home renovation is a male-dominated field, the women hold their own: Thomboy’s renovated homes — they have done more than a dozen so far — average 30 days on the market, and one property closed in less than 10.



*Above left and right: The home’s renovations include new concrete in the front and back of the house, a new pool and spa, new landscaping with desert-appropriate plants, an outdoor kitchen, and period lighting fixtures and fans inside and out. Demolition uncovered a decorative block wall and original terrazzo flooring on the patio. Opposite: DeeAnn McCoy, left, and Jackie Thomas.*

As in any team sport, each partner has a specific role in the business. McCoy is affectionately called “the squirrel” because she manages the budgets, timelines, and business operations and “can sock enough nuts away for the toughest winter.” Thomas is the perennial budget-buster, always trying to up the aesthetic ante with custom finishes in wallpaper, tile, or cabinetry.

The partners always choose a house they think has “good bones,” create a vision for it, and then carefully build a business strategy to achieve their trademark wow factor.

#### ANATOMY OF A RENOVATION

When beginning a new project, Thomas and McCoy share the first and last steps — demolition and staging. “Demo is the one thing anyone can do, and if you’re on a budget, it’s a great way to save a few bucks,” Thomas says. “If you are careful and methodical about your approach, you can sometimes find a few gems.” She cites an original decorative screen she found hiding behind a house’s drywall in an early project, and in their most recent renovation — the five-bedroom, four-bath, 4,275-square-foot midcentury modern home in the south end of Palm Springs shown in this story — an amazingly intact fleur-de-lys–patterned exterior wall that had been covered for years by plywood and aging stucco.

“Patience was a virtue on this renovation,” McCoy says about the home they called “25 Palms” due to the number of palm trees on the property. “We decided to chip away at the front facade

instead of letting our guys take chipping hammers to it in the first few weeks.”

In addition to the fleur-de-lys on the front, they uncovered a decorative block wall on the back side of the house facing the golf course, plus original terrazzo flooring on the patio obscured by a layer of Mexican Saltillo tiles.

Thomas says a combination of opening up walls and closing off spaces created a sense of flow on this project. “We added a large structural beam between the kitchen and the dining room so we could open the dividing wall to enhance the way people live and entertain today,” Thomas says.

By treating the master bath and walk-in closet as an integrated unit, Thomboy created a spa-like atmosphere without sacrificing closet space. They also moved the casita’s entry point to maintain a connection to the main house while giving it the feel of separate living quarters. “We even took a ‘bedroom’ that was 7 feet by 10 feet to create a custom temperature- and humidity-controlled walk-in wine cellar,” Thomas says.

Score another one for Thomboy: “The house closed in October, and the buyers described it as their ‘dream house,’” McCoy says.

At one point in Thomas’ career, she disliked Sundays — the next day meant going back to the corporate grind. “We are so fortunate to live in Palm Springs and wake up every morning doing something we love,” she says about what’s now a favorite day of the week. That’s what can happen when you follow your heart. ✨



This page and opposite: Modern updates to the midcentury modern home include custom walnut cabinetry in the kitchen and baths; Viking appliances; quartz countertops; new Kohler toilets and sinks; a “floating” bathtub; all-new skim-coated ceilings and walls; and white, high-gloss porcelain tile flooring throughout.