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A model home

Interior designer creates works of art from a blank canvas

BY AMANDA BAILLIE

For Vicki Gabriel Cobb, a model home means just one thing — a blank canvas.

The Tucson-based interior designer has stamped her mark on many properties across Southern Arizona, including in Cochise County.

And those who have contemplated buying a new house from local builders R. L. Workman Homes may be familiar with her stunning work.

From the outside, the model home and office at the Summit Heights subdivision may look similar to the other properties surrounding it. But on the inside awaits a master class in design.

Sumptuous and luxurious are two words that spring to mind when viewing the results of Cobb's creative mind.

A member of the American Society of Interior Designers and founder of Interior Design International Inc., Cobb sets to work on a new home before it has even been built.

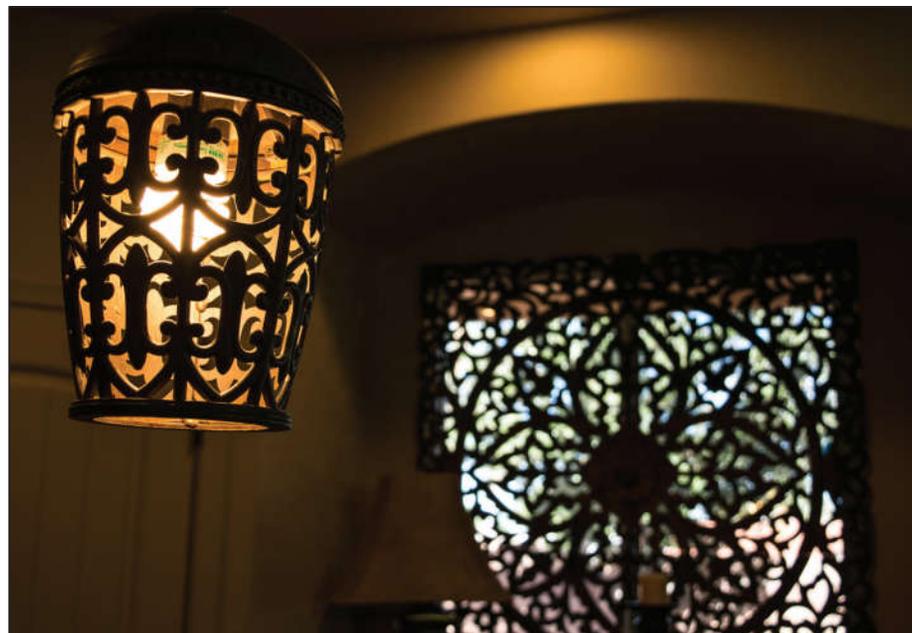
"We come in before they've broken ground," she explained. "We are given the blue line floor plans and we make any changes that we think will improve the home by adding red lines. That could be something like a door opening the wrong way, but it helps the builder to get a better finished product."

From there, Cobb is involved in the entire design process, from picking paint and tile to choosing hardware for cabinets.

Once the model home had been completed, the creative juices really start flowing.

"I like to call it a scavenger hunt. I don't go to just one furniture place to find everything for the house. I think if you do that, things can get stale," she said. "I like to get pieces that inspire me. I take a thought and then I go looking. I really enjoy that."

Cobb originally staged three model homes in Summit Heights, but just one remains. It has a



southwestern theme, but includes North African and Middle Eastern influences.

"I don't think it's good if you do everything strictly southwestern," Cobb, who also specializes in hospitality design, said. "You don't want it to be stereotyped so I like to use a combination of things. I might put something contemporary in a traditional design, or something traditional in a contemporary

design. Everything is eclectic now."

Although the model home is average size — just over 2,000 square feet — Cobb has used some large design elements to create a sense of drama.

On several walls are striking pieces of cowboy art. Plush bedding is piled with pillows, and traditional headboards are imaginatively replaced with ceiling high mirrors and a beautiful room divider.



The ceiling of the lobby area is decorated with an impressive mirror, creating the illusion of a second floor above you, and the windows are covered with intricate fittings that would not look out of place in a Moroccan palace.

Cobb admits she has bought back some of the pieces she has placed in model homes after falling in love with them.

But the public will have a chance to snap up the contents of the house, when it is eventually sold.

Although she has been in the business for nearly half a century, Cobb is not ready to give up creating gorgeous interiors just yet.

"I was in the dentist's office and after just 30 minutes I'd rearranged all the waiting room furniture in my mind," she said. "As an interior designer, you never quit."



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