

# UTAH HOMES & GARDEN



special issue  
**BEFORE & AFTER**  
great ideas for  
**RENOVATION**

SPRING/SUMMER 2003  
\$4.95

*A magazine about living well in Utah*



less is  
more  
*condo living by design*

WRITTEN BY PAMELA OSTERMILLER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT PETERSON



Q

GREGG HODSON LIVED THE AMERICAN DREAM. HE HAD A house in the suburbs and tended a garden, both of which he returned to at the end of a nine-to-five day at the office. But he wasn't content. Hodson craved a simpler lifestyle that would allow him to work as a designer during the day and follow it up with a hassle-free night at home. What he needed was a pared-down space where he could exercise his no-nonsense, practical style.

"Well, it was kind of a tract house," Hodson says of the house he left behind, "but it was hard for me to live that way. I had always wanted something smaller with more



## details can turn a small space into a gem

details, something I could turn into a gem. I wanted more than just big, bad space."

With the help of an open-minded, savvy realtor Hodson found a condominium in a building he had been curious about since childhood. "We called it the Wedding Cake Building," he says, because it looks like stacked layers of spice cake adorned with swags of white ironwork that droop like icing. The Bonneville Condominiums, its current official name, was built in 1963 for well-to-do

Hodson made the bedroom cozy by covering the walls with textured wallpaper, adding a window screen and decorating with personal art and antiques.



The kitchen was updated with all new countertops, track lighting and appliances. Hodson kept the original cabinets, choosing new paint and hardware.



New paint \$200

Granite countertop \$500

New hardware \$20

Commercial Carpeting \$250

Eames Lounge & Ottoman \$2919

Hodson is proud of his "finds," furniture bought at the university reclamation department or the thrift store. But here, the room is completed with new paint and hardware—and a classic Eames chair.

empty nesters. Located on east South Temple St. in downtown Salt Lake City, it offered valet parking and other luxury services of yesterday to residents fifty-five years and older.

"It was all Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack, so Palm Springsy," says Hodson. After overcoming his original impressions, he took a second look at the building and discovered its solid architecture and engineering. In the condo unit itself, he was delighted to find a better floor plan than in other Salt Lake City high-rises he'd seen. He was also impressed by features such as well-placed access panels to plumbing and electrical works, which make renovation and maintenance easier. After looking for a space for six months, Hodson closed on the condo and moved in just in time to take advantage of his tenth-floor views of Rice Stadium and the fireworks displays of the 2002 Olympic

added new hardware and purchased new appliances. He converted the family room into a den by painting the walls and changing a built-in hutch into a modern entertainment center with new paint, hardware and a granite shelf. An old brass and glass chandelier was tossed and replaced with sleek black track lighting that Hodson pulled from his store of fixtures.

"I always like to relate design to playing with Legos; it's like taking pieces and making them work," Hodson says, a method he enjoys implementing during client projects so that it retains their "heart and soul." In his own home, Hodson has utilized and built some wonderful furnishings, all of which have interesting origins. The coffee table, for example. Hodson paid \$10 for the metal base, which he found at an industrial salvage yard and topped with a rectangular piece

## neutral colors and art create harmony

Games. Then, he set to work.

If there's ever a question about a design choice, Hodson believes that one should do the simple thing, a philosophy he hopes will rub off on his clients. "If you try to get tricky, you could create a nightmare," he says, rather than a place in which you can feel comfortable. And that's why, when Hodson started fifteen years ago to collect furniture and accessories, he chose neutral shades, transitional furnishings and art he adored. "You cannot go wrong! If an environment is important to you, put your money into art," he says. And when he found something he liked, whether it was on the floor of a local showroom or on the curb in a spring clean-up pile, he grabbed it.

"I had a goal to renovate this [apartment] in \$15,000 or under," Hodson says, which he accomplished by incorporating all of his collected pieces into his new design and by picking and choosing between which elements in the apartment could be left and which had to go. He kept the hardwood floors, complementing them with wall colors and adding rugs. In the kitchen, he replaced countertops with granite slabs from "the bone yard," a supplier's selection of small, irregular pieces. He also painted the cabinets and

of security glass. Hodson spotted his console table on the street, on top of someone's spring clean-up pile, and tied it to the roof of his car. And many pieces, including a sofa, an antique chair, an end table and set of dining chairs, all came from the reclamation department at the University of Utah.

"I like the challenge of doing things with less if I have to. It's amazing how things work together," Hodson says. "I like using the weird and unusual, and giving things a new life instead of taking from the world." The only thing is, by the time Hodson gets finished, an object loses its oddity and becomes artful and interesting. And the overall result of this remodel is that an out-of-date condo was transformed into a handsome, contemporary space that is comfortable, welcoming and refreshingly uptown.

It may be enough to inspire others to take a second look at some of our cities' mid-century towers. They are just waiting for a new generation of independent people looking for a less demanding, more gracious lifestyle. "It's hard for me to understand why anyone single wouldn't want to live here," says Hodson. "The mindset in Utah is to have a house, but living here—it's just so easy." 