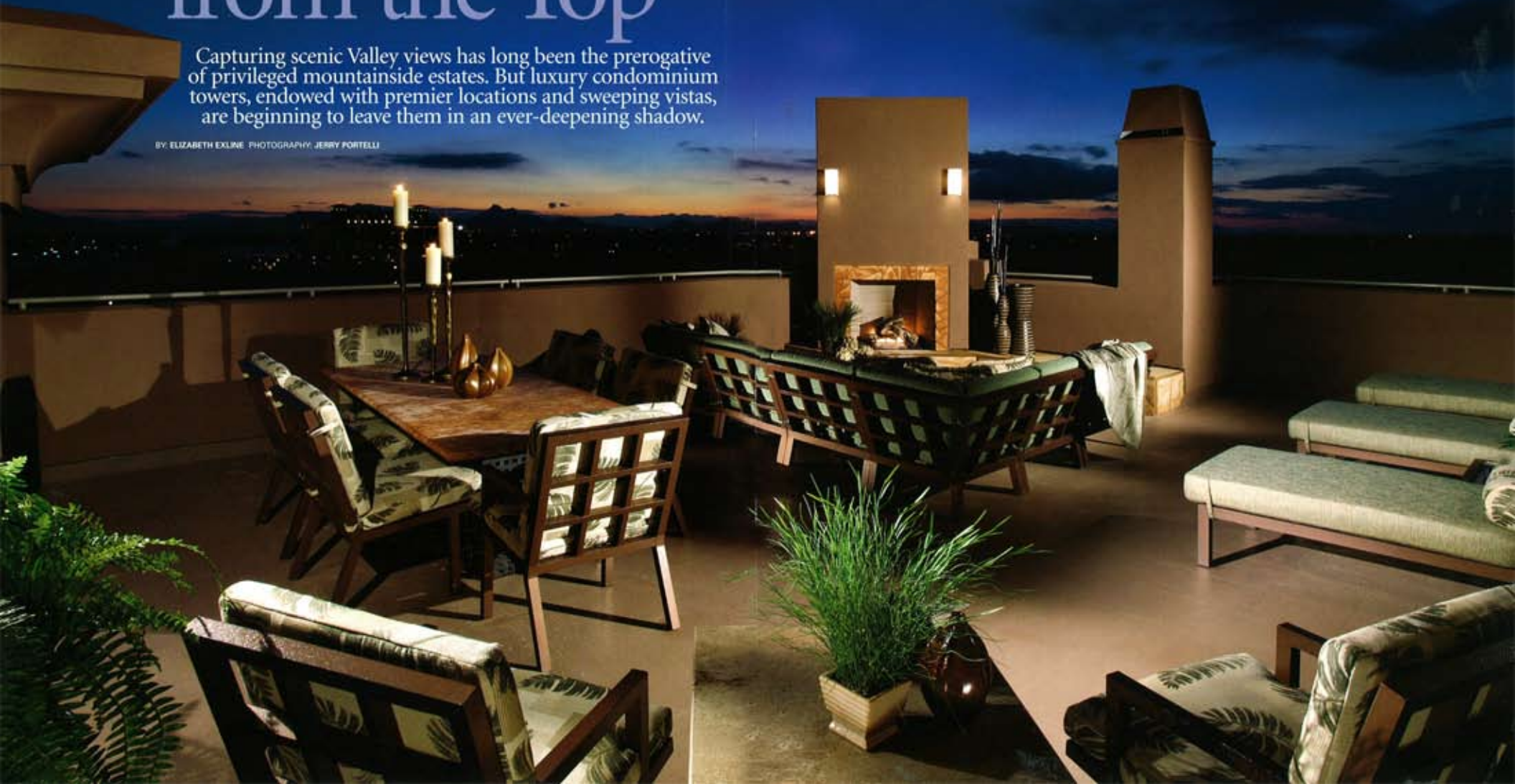


# VIEW from the Top

Capturing scenic Valley views has long been the prerogative of privileged mountainside estates. But luxury condominium towers, endowed with premier locations and sweeping vistas, are beginning to leave them in an ever-deepening shadow.

BY ELIZABETH EXLINE PHOTOGRAPHY JERRY PORTELLI



**NIGHTLY TURNDOWN:**  
Overlooking the Kierland Golf Club's Acacia course, spectacular views are served in bed (OPPOSITE).

ALREADY, THE LANDMARK AT KIERLAND has tapped into the Valley's vertical trend. The mid-rise towers (Tower One is completed, Tower Two is about to hit a growth spurt) are part of the Kierland master-planned community. Overlooking the fifth tee of the Acacia course at the immaculate Kierland Golf Club, they're also positioned within walkable and enviable proximity to the shopping mecca, Kierland Commons.

But location, however desirable, is just the first of The Landmark's charms. Like many condominium towers sprouting up around the Valley, The Landmark lures potential homeowners with amenities. Residents are invited to make use of the Club Room (a lounge-like social space where you're just as likely to pick up a book on The Beatles as you are on wine); the two

were all well and good, but it was the convenience that sealed the deal. The Houtzes' two adult daughters had long since left the nest, and the couple was looking for something that required less upkeep than their 7,000-sq.-ft. DC Ranch home. "We had talked about a condo," Joyce recalls. "The house we were in still [needed] a lot of care and maintenance, and we like to travel ... I thought this might be a nice place to move to."

Whimsical as the decision sounds, it was in keeping with the Houtzes' lifestyle. "We've had about five houses in the Valley," Joyce explains. "So we've moved around every four or five years." Indeed—from a condominium near the Arizona Biltmore Resort to a 10,000-sq.-ft. outpost on Camelback Mountain—the Houtzes have hung their hats in a number of

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on-site concierges; the Pool, Spa and Fitness Pavilion; and, of course, the climate-controlled Wine Cellar, where every homeowner has a private locker to store up to three cases of their favorite vintage.

For Joyce and Jim Houtz, these bells and whistles

residential configurations. So when they discovered The Landmark's six stories of condos in the summer of 2003 (which, at the time, was little more than a scale model with big aspirations), the idea of relocating became quite tantalizing.





**HIGH-RISE HIDEAWAY:** Working with Interior Designer Vickie Richie of Est Est, the homeowners devised a cozy sixth-floor sanctuary (above).

By the time October rolled around, though, they still hadn't made a firm decision. Then, the day before their 43<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary, Jim surprised Joyce with the announcement that he'd purchased a penthouse unit for them. "The building was just framed," Joyce recounts. "[It was only] girders and metal."

The tower's infant status meant there was considerable room for change. With plenty of homebuilding experience on their residential résumé, the Houtzes weren't about to accept their floor plan at face value. First there was the matter of the bedrooms. One had already been designated as a media room with another reserved as guest quarters, leaving the master suite and one more bedroom. "We knew we had to have an office for [Jim] and an office for me," Joyce says.

So the remaining bedroom became Jim's office, and they siphoned off the sitting room from the master suite to make what Joyce calls her "corner of the world." Joyce then went about designing built-in bookshelves, desks and cabinetry for the two offices, all in plum-stained alder wood with an antique black glaze.

As a woman who has, "always had a lot of closets and a lot of cupboards," Joyce translated her passion for storage into the living room's custom, built-in entertainment center; the dining room's granite-topped buffet; and extra linen shelving (at the expense of part of Jim's closet) in the master bathroom. She opted to extend the already ample kitchen island, and she insisted on roll-out drawers in most of the cabinetry. But in all the storage frenzy, the Houtzes didn't neglect

their appliance needs. They upgraded the kitchen's single Wolf oven to a double and installed a SubZero under-counter refrigerator in the living room's wet bar.

"[For] the last house we built I didn't have a budget," Joyce explains, "whereas when we did this, we had to have a budget, because we still had the other house." So in addition to downsizing, the Houtzes needed to decide which pieces they could revamp and bring with them. For that, they enlisted the help of Vickie Richie of Est Est.

"She wanted something very peaceful

Perched high above its neighborhood and gracefully streamlined in coordinating colors and forgiving fabrics, their residence is an oasis of efficiency amid a desert of superfluous square footage.

and calm," Richie says, describing Joyce's design vision. "She loves coppers and browns and sage green, so we decided to go with the sage green, because the house that she was moving from had a lot of coppers."

Since convenience factored heavily into the Houtzes' move, Richie culled easy-to-maintain fabrics and finishes. Faux plants replaced live ones, and flat, washable wallpapers with the illusion of texture were selected for the walls. Then, because Joyce favors silk, Richie skillfully integrated it into culpability-free roles. "I used it [for] bed skirts, not bedspreads," Richie says, "and I used it in the drapery panels and the throw pillows, but not the pieces that you use all the time."

The furnishings also received Richie's textural touch. On the living room sofa, for example, a basket-weave chenille envelops the extra-deep seats, which were designed with 6-foot-4-inch tall Jim in mind. ("He wanted everything to be comfortable," Richie adds.) She custom-designed a linear coffee table and end tables, and she used the room's rug as a barometer for selecting throw pillows in sage green and copper. She utilized woven-wood blinds behind the open-weave, nubby drapes and reupholstered the media room's couch in forest green tweed chenille with brushed-suede piping.

On the Houtzes' 700-sq.-ft. terrace, which commands sweeping views toward the south and west, Richie covered the sofa in outdoor chenille. The patio chairs, meanwhile, chime in with a new motif: leaves. The organic element appears on wallpaper, bedding and rattan furniture, all with the aim of eliciting an easy-going milieu. The effect is so successful, it draws comparison to the Tommy Bahama restaurant (next door at Kierland Commons) where the Houtzes frequently drop in for dinner.

Although the Houtzes' penthouse is better described as soft contemporary than island getaway, it retains a flavor of isolation. Perched high above its neighborhood and gracefully streamlined in coordinating colors and forgiving fabrics, their residence is an oasis of efficiency amid a desert of superfluous square footage. It delivers the same (or improved) vistas as their mountain-side home, but with a fraction of the responsibilities, all of which leaves the Houtzes with little more to do than, well, enjoy the view. **b**