

MASTERS OF THE SOUTHWEST

PHOENIX HOME & GARDEN

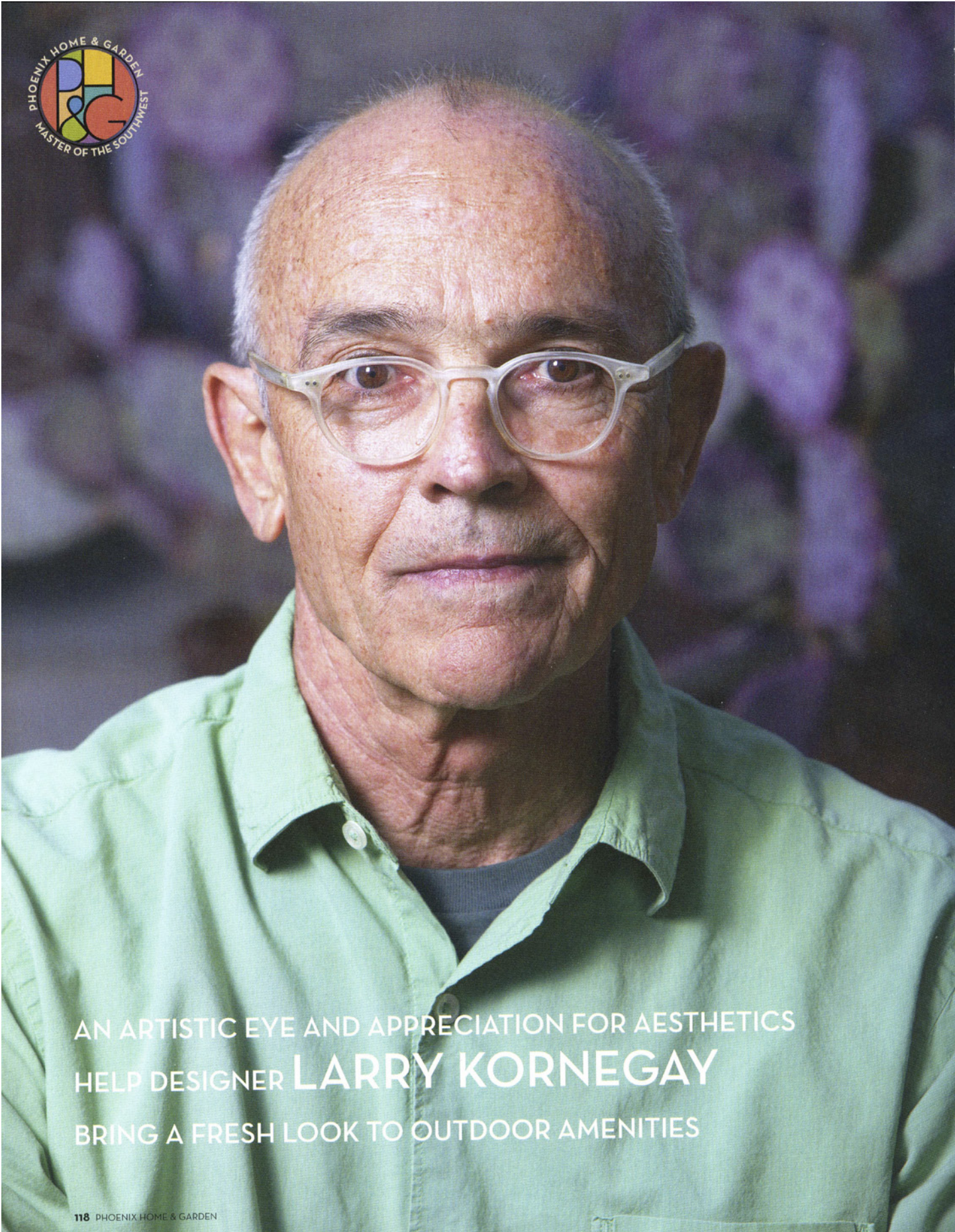
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AN ARTISTIC EYE AND APPRECIATION FOR AESTHETICS
HELP DESIGNER **LARRY KORNEGAY**
BRING A FRESH LOOK TO OUTDOOR AMENITIES





CASTING AGENT

BY SUSAN REGAN ■ PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTIAAN BLOK

A MINIATURE CONCRETE MIXER—complete with a working drum—is displayed in a cabinet in Larry Kornegay’s office as a reminder of his roots. The Phoenix-based designer is heralded for his mostly cast-concrete outdoor pieces, which he dubs “site furnishings.” He says the material has been a constant presence throughout his life.

Kornegay grew up in Miami, Arizona. The old copper mining town lies east of Phoenix, not far from a concrete bridge his grandfather helped construct. His childhood home was a concrete-block house that his father designed and built. And, as for the miniature concrete mixer, Kornegay made mud mixes in it as a boy. Looking back, he says that his father had a major influence on his artistic leanings. “He taught me an incredible amount about tools and materials from a young age,” he recalls. “He taught me about design.”

Kornegay says that his aptitude for design has always been with him. In elementary school, he won a national award for a traffic poster he created; later, he earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in drawing and painting from Arizona State University. Over the years, he held such “day jobs” as a printing press designer, commercial sign painter, and co-owner of a company that designed trade show environments for Mattel as well as holiday decor for cities around the U.S. These endeavors allowed him to pursue his fine-art concrete and mixed-media sculptures on the side. He calls the arrangement a “beautiful balance.”

In 1999, Kornegay saw an opportunity to combine his love of design with his knowledge of concrete by creating landscape planters. According to many professionals, his pieces have revolutionized the industry.

“These planters are not unlike the designer; they are unassuming yet brimming with artistry,” comments architect John Douglas, FAIA. “Some think that design is intelligence made visible. Never has this

description been more apt than when referring to these serene concrete castings. Concrete is the humblest of materials, yet the color and form sensibilities of the designer have elevated it to the most desirable of all.”

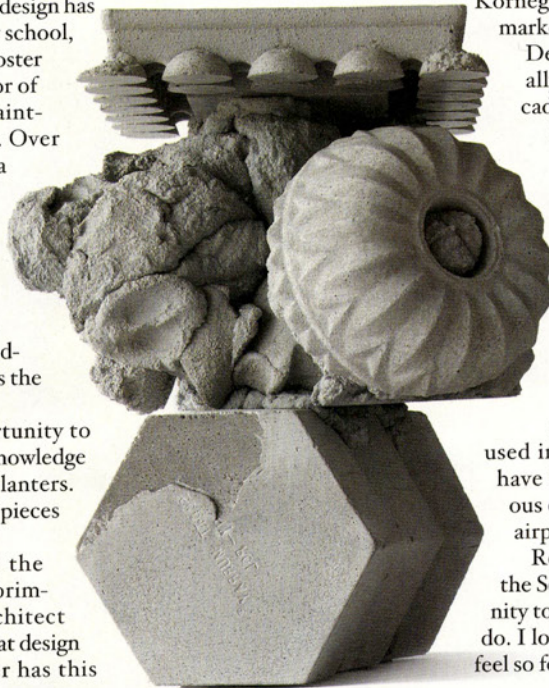
Elaine McGinn, director of planning and exhibits for Desert Botanical Garden (DBG) in Phoenix, has worked with Kornegay on several projects and says his designs seamlessly integrate into the desert environment. “Larry approaches each project with a lot of thought as to how the product will fit into the landscape, complement the space and enhance the overall aesthetic.”

The artist’s approach to his craft is methodical. He was the company’s sole employee for several years, casting, finishing and delivering each piece himself. As interest grew, so did the business and, eventually, his wife, Paula, came on board. “Behind every good designer is the person who makes it happen,”

Kornegay says of his wife. Her business and marketing efforts helped propel Kornegay Design into an award-winning, nationally known firm that today employs a cadre of artisans.

Kornegay explains that many of his pieces, which are available through trade professionals, are inspired by his fine-art concrete and mixed-media sculpture and that each piece is made to order. Many are large in scale—some planters weigh more than a ton—and can be manufactured in a palette of approximately 40 colors. The collection consists of 12 series, including benches and trash receptacles. In addition to being used in residential landscapes, the pieces have been commissioned by DBG, various corporations, governmental entities, airports, resorts and universities.

Reflecting on his career, this Master of the Southwest says each day is an opportunity to create something new. “I love what I do. I love the smell of concrete. Every day, I feel so fortunate.” ■





Previous pages: Larry Kornegay stands in his studio with examples of his fine-art sculpture. To the left is a piece that the artist created by using the paper tube from a paper towel roll as a mold; for the sculpture on the right, he utilized a Bundt pan as a mold. Both are works in progress.

Opposite: *Complicated* is one of Kornegay's fine-art sculptures; it measures 15"H x 14"W x 17"D.

This page: Kornegay calls his firm—Kornegay Design—a “design-driven” company. “The whole [site furnishings] industry was lacking good design, and I knew I could bring it good form,” he says. Clockwise from top, his offerings include the *Mex Bold Series*, *Ribbed Series* and *Dune Series*.



Top: A recent introduction, this bench is part of the *Maple-Pile Seating Series*. It is constructed of thermally modified red maple and steel; approximately 1,300 stainless steel screws were used in its construction.

Above: A textured surface defines the *Nutshell Landscape Container*.

Opposite: Larry Kornegay launched his company by developing 10 designs for planters. He then asked several design professionals to select their favorites, and the top two series were manufactured as the firm's initial product offerings. One of those designs is the *Faceted Series*, shown here.

See Sources.

BILL TIMMERMAN

*“I love what I do. I love the smell of concrete.
Every day, I feel so fortunate”*

