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THIS WEEK IN YOUR CITY

What Is Beauty?

One photographer,
a powerful idea and
the challenge of
seeing ourselves
in a new way

BY HEIDI KYSER

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Explosive Art

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Introducing our 2013

Bar Hall of Fame Inductees PAGE 34

A self-portrait by
Stacie Frazier founder
of the No Makeup Project.

Super Model

Tyler Jones' opulent—and wildly popular—model home doubles as his business card

By NORA BURBA TRULSSON



◆ TYLER JONES ISN'T sure exactly when his newest model home became a Las Vegas visitor attraction. But on a recent weekday morning, groups of cargo-panted, flip-flopped tourists were oohing and ahing their way through the builder's sexy, sophisticated four-level home, admiring the zero-edge pools and the state-of-the-art kitchen, and imagining the parties that could be hosted in the huge, open-air basement bar.

Built as the New American Home 2013—a showcase for the National Association of Home Builders' International Builder's Show held at the Las Vegas Convention Center—Jones' more than 8,000-square-foot model residence in Henderson's Marquis Seven Hills development is drawing visitors long after the trade show ended. "We had about 7,500 people come through the house during the show in January," says Jones, principal of Blue Heron, a design-build custom home development company. "We're still getting about 100 groups a week."

Having a sleek, modern design that seamlessly blends indoors and out in a sea of dark, faux-Tuscan mansions helps draw the crowds, as do articles about the house in *The Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post*.

Jones, who founded Blue Heron in 2004, is an attraction himself. Rock-star handsome, the 35-year-old builder has thrived during the economic downturn, creating a niche market for architecturally innovative, contemporary custom and semi-custom homes—all the while inspiring a cadre of dedicated followers an associate dubs "Blue Heron groupies."

Jones, a Las Vegas native, grew up in the business, working at his father's Merlin Contracting



from an early age. "We did custom homes," recalls Jones, "and I did everything from sweeping floors to working on framing crews." At 16, Jones developed an interest in architecture and landed after-school jobs building models and doing computer-aided design work for local architecture firms.

After architecture school at the University of Colorado, Jones worked for several companies before launching his own firm. "I named it Blue Heron because, like the bird, we're native but unique." His first project, Stone Canyon, a single-family loft home development, garnered Blue Heron a 2007 Gold Nugget Award, a national building honor.

Jones grew his design-build company steadily—now employing three dozen people—incorporating construction with architectural and interior design services. He estimates he's done about 100 custom and semi-custom homes. His secret for riding out the recession? Downsizing, dropping prices and increasing service. "We had a strong will to survive," Jones says, "and we're a small, hands-on group. We have a unique product."

At the height of the recession, Jones snared the New American Home 2009, an infill project built near Tomiyasu Lane and Sunset Road. It kept Blue Heron on the radar screen. The NAHB was impressed enough with the 2009 home to give Blue Heron another go at this year's

project, meant to highlight cutting-edge building technologies, design and sustainability.

Jones worked with Blue Heron team members Michael Gardner, an architect, and interior designer Lyndsay Janssen to come up with the home's low, lean design, sunk into a ridge overlooking the Rio Secco Golf Club. From such eco-features as the photovoltaic array on the rooftop and the home's LEED Platinum certification to design details such as the gabion rock walls in the bedroom and pops of color in the furnishings, the house provides plenty of "wow" moments for engineers and design mavens alike.

"This house is intentionally not designed for a targeted demographic or buyer," says Jones of the Seven Hills home, which has a \$5 million price tag to re-create (the model is not currently for sale). "This is an extension of our concepts. It's a strategy to show buyers what we can do."

As visitors—and potential Blue Heron homebuyers—continue to flock to Jones' masterpiece, one can only picture Jones at the end of the day retreating to his own Blue Heron villa, resplendent with touch-screen lighting controls, view-grabbing rooftop decks and glass-enclosed soaking tubs. "I'm single, and I spend a lot of time at work," he says. "I'm not quite ready to do my own home. I'm renting." 🏠



As many as 100 groups each week pass through the New American Home 2013, a stunning four-level showcase model in Seven Hills featuring zero-edge pools and an open-air basement bar. The model, built by Blue Heron, isn't for sale, but Blue Heron can build you a replica ... for \$5 million.