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August/September

summer 2015

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The view from the master bedroom is spectacular, with spot-on sightlines extending through the open courtyard to the living area and the covered patio, and then beyond to Santa Fe's city lights.

NOT EVERYONE HAS the luxury of taking their time when creating a dream home. Fortunately, time was one thing the owner of this award-winning Westside contemporary, who came to the project with limited space and a limited budget, had plenty of. She also had a vision for creating a serene, green home that would exist in environmental harmony with its surroundings.

home. in harmony

the views go on forever from a serene,
green-built contemporary

by Eve Tolpa
photographs by Douglas Merriam



Above: The chic but minimalist décor allows the northeast-facing views to take center stage. The homeowner chose most of her own interior furnishings, including the red swivel chairs and the dramatic square sofa. Playful paintings by Melinda K. Hall (Meyer East Gallery) adorn the living room and dining area.

Setting aside two years for planning and construction, the homeowner knew from the start she wanted to work with home designer Stephen Beili of Studio Dionisi and Jesse Gries of Green Star Builders. The tone for the project was set with an indigenous blessing of the land, and a spirit of collaboration was immediately established that would form the basis of the project's ultimate success. Realtor Lori Lanier, who studied green building, also became part of the team. "We explored every single option within our budget," says the homeowner, so when the time came to implement the plans, she explains, "there was no second-guessing."

Blending a Southwestern adobe-style exterior with clean, streamlined, modern interiors, the efficiently designed 1,852-square-foot residence is built, in a nod to historical New Mexico custom, around a tidy center courtyard that joins the living area on one end and the master bedroom on the other. "We loved the idea that it was tying into old Spanish tradition," says Beili. "The courtyard brought internal light and a feeling of openness to the home." Doors to the interior flank the space on both ends, while a contemporary fountain in the middle provides a soothing hum of white noise.

"Stephen's a really good listener, and he was able to translate our desires into architectural reality," says the homeowner, pointing to the ingenious system of doors that swing and slide to convert spaces from public to private and back again. "I wanted it as open as possible, but when I want to close things off, I can." The main living area is occasionally partitioned to create a separate office, for example, just as a designated yoga room transforms into a second bedroom for guests. This maximization of flexibility in what is essentially one connected space makes the compact home feel decidedly expansive.



“The courtyard brought internal light and a feeling of openness to the home,” says designer Stephen Beili.

Unprecedented panoramic views also create the sense of extra room. Situated on a hillside, the home was conceived to showcase an extravagant 180-degree sweep of three mountain chains visible from half the house—the Sangre de Cristos on one end and the Ortiz and Sandias on the other, with the master bedroom affording a peek at the Galisteo Basin. Complementing those vistas is a xeric landscape of carefully placed rocks and succulents created by Lee Klopfer.

The owner is understandably proud of the many green and energy-saving features in her home, all of which contributed to Green Star Builders earning the coveted Grand Green Award during last year’s Haciendas—A Parade of Homes tour hosted by the Santa Fe Area Home Builders Association. Solar panels on the roof provide the majority of power to the house; south-facing windows allow “the sun to pour in a window as long as there is sun.” Water is heated on demand, and special non-combustion appliances, like the induction stove, save energy.



A pair of massive, sliding barn-style doors fabricated by Jesse Gries can close off the office (on the right) or slide open to reveal a TV (hidden behind the door in this photo).

“Heat only conducts when there’s a pot on it, and only for that space,” says the owner. The stove heats up with shocking speed and then turns itself off after a designated period.

“Materials-wise, we wanted to use what made sense for our area,” she continues. Gries constructed the home with a highly insulating material called Faswall, made primarily of recycled wood pallets formed into blocks that offer mass similar to that of adobe. Poured concrete floors with radiant heating keep the house warm, quiet, and dust-free throughout the winter. The property boasts an impressive Home Energy Rating System (HERS) score of seven, which means that it requires only seven percent of the amount of energy used by a similar home that meets the requirements of national code, represented by a score of 100.

Bold, stylish furnishings and pieces by local artists punctuate the elegant, minimalist spaces, while artisan touches tie it together aesthetically. Beili calls Gries, who is an



The unfussy dining area opens directly to a sleek galley kitchen designed by Joan Viele of Kitchen Dimensions. Expansive picture windows in both areas capitalize on the views.

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In the summer, it's hard to step away from the covered, outdoor swing bed and its dreamy mountain views.

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accomplished steel fabricator, “an amazing builder with an artistic side.” Gries custom-crafted the industrial-chic dining room table and the rear *portal’s* dreamy hanging bed, as well as the exterior overhangs, the canales, and the garage door. He also fashioned the acrylic countertops in both bathrooms.

In addition to the Grand Green, Gries and Green Star Builders won multiple honors during the Parade of Homes,

including awards for Best Craftsmanship, Best Design, Best Energy Efficiency, and Best Indoor Air Quality. The accolades provided a fitting capstone to a two-year experience that the owner describes as “remarkably enjoyable.”

“It was never majority rule,” she says. “[The team] just ironed it out until everyone was happy. The whole building process turned into a real joy.”

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