



ENCORE!

A veteran builder puts on a grand show with a sumptuously cozy home

TEXT BY ROBERTA LANDMAN ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY WERNER SEGARRA

What does a builder do after retiring? If he is Gary Linthicum, founder of a well-known Arizona custom-home construction firm—which his son Eric now owns—he builds another house. This time, it's for himself and wife Dianne. "We had a house in Paradise Valley for 25 years and raised our family there," he says. With children grown and gone, "We were looking for a lifestyle change."

Located in a north Scottsdale desert community, this two-story residence, designed by architects Bing Hu and Steve Hall, has the allure of a vintage Spanish/Mediterranean-style dwelling. Iron balconies, a red-tile roof, and a prominent arched window streetside hint at the charms that await inside. Also at the front, a deep-set courtyard and a large terrace announce this home's emphasis on outdoor living.

What kind of a house did the retired builder construct? Hall, who was project manager, says admiringly: "It reminds me of something that Humphrey Bogart might have lived in."

This comment likely would bring smiles to the faces of Donna Vallone and Shane Mehrer of Vallone Design. Vallone, who was involved in the initial design phase, and Mehrer, who carried the project to fruition, kept an early-20th-century California mood in mind as they considered the home's primarily all-new trappings.

With children and grandchildren who visit often, "The Linthicums didn't want anything too formal," Mehrer says. Hence, most areas are decorated with a casual spirit, even when they are elegant, such as the living room. Offset by a soft monochromatic palette, furnishings here are eclectic but with a subtle Spanish Colonial bent. The juxtaposition of textures contributes to the room's welcoming feel. A plantation-style chair and ottoman are covered in velvet, for example, while other chairs are upholstered in linen.

Wide-plank wood flooring in the living room, honey kitchen and other main spaces, and also old terra-cotta tiles from France in the gallerylike hallway, lend rustic warmth. In contrast, the master bath gleams with the cool sophistication of copious amounts of Carrara marble. "It's a little bit of glamour—like the '20s and '30s," a smiling Mehrer declares.

Exterior spaces were as important to the homeowners as the interiors. "We're both outdoor people, and we live a great deal outdoors," the husband says. Consequently, plans for the home included patios off the dining room, kitchen and master bedroom; access from the long glass-walled gallery hall to the front courtyard; and a backyard that becomes one with the family room when a wall of glass doors telescopes open.

"We had a Cinco de Mayo party there with about 45 people the first time we used those doors," the retired builder recalls. "They bring the outside in and the inside out."

Happy with how the house turned out, he jokes that it better be wonderful, then explains: "I can't make any excuses to the owner, who is my wife!"

Details: This cozy courtyard is flanked at the front of the house, off an interior gallery hall. The homeowners wanted an outdoor area that faced a neighborhood park, architect Steve Hall explains. In addition to a fountain, the space includes a fireplace, potted plants and teak furnishings. The patio house is constructed of bricks in a herringbone pattern.

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WIDE-PLANK
WOOD FLOORING
IN THE HOMEY
KITCHEN AND
OTHER MAIN
SPACES LENDS
RUSTIC CHARM
AND WARMTH

Built for convenience as well as good looks, the kitchen's island has a butcher-block top with vegetable sink, plus a dishwasher and trash pull-out below. The custom dual lighting fixture has parchment shades. Cabinets are painted a cream color with a glazed finish; those with glass fronts are lit inside and also underneath. Behind the Viking stove, a handy pot-filler faucet is set into a backsplash of custom glazed clay tile in a crackled green finish. The Sub-Zero refrigerator and freezer are clad in wood. A sliding door to a patio beyond the eating area adds to the home's indoor/outdoor sensibility.

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This page: "Pure Hollywood" is how designer Shane Mehrer describes the master bath. Sleek Carrara marble is used for countertops, flooring, an over-the-tub niche, wainscoting and shower tiles. Mirrors add to the icy glamour, as does the vanity chair, dolled up in gold and silver leaf. Opposite: Specially created for visiting grandchildren is this blue-and-white confection of a fabric-covered bedroom. The ceiling wears plaid, and crown molding is covered in checks. Walls, the bedcover and a canopy drawn up to a golden crown are in a floral print with striped accents. The crystal chandelier has the look of fine jewelry.

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This page: The mood is mellow in the Traditional master bedroom, where Deco-style fireside chairs add unexpected dash. Across from the bed, a plasma TV is hidden in new furniture with an antique look. Opposite: Defined by cantera arches and columns, the back patio is furnished with a barn-wood table and teak chairs with striped Sunbrella fabric cushions. Ready for a Day of the Dead celebration, the hand-carved skeletons came from a house the homeowners had in Mexico. "I guess they have become family," Gary Linthicum jests. See Sources.

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