



# Eldorado Modern

*A Vision and a Variance—Building Your Own Home*

Three years after purchasing their first home in Eldorado, Lauren Rose and Rusty Richardson decided it was time for a change. Lauren, a physiotherapist who worked out of the house, was growing weary of using her living room as a waiting room. Rusty, a software engineer who also worked from home, found himself busy every weekend with around-the-house projects. So when their daughter, Lila, was born, they decided to search for a new place, at a time that luckily coincided with the “refinance frenzy.” After months of scouting for homes without any promising prospects, the decision was finally made to buy land—and build. Delighted to find nearly three acres on a green belt at the end of a cul-de-sac in Eldorado, the solution seemed a perfect one, aside from the fact that the couple had no house plan nor any building experience. Would this be a mission impossible?

One thing the couple knew for certain was that a more contemporary structure suited them. “We wanted plenty of natural light and a feeling of openness that seemed more typical in contemporary structures,” Lauren says, gesturing toward the oversized corner window. “So that’s where we began, with the theme of light.” They started by writing a program which identified the areas

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OPPOSITE PAGE: The family’s most important room—the kitchen. LEFT: Entrance to the home off the auto court. CENTER: Looking down on the courtyard with its tumbled blue glass, granite fountain, and wooden footbridge. RIGHT: Looking out to the courtyard from the living room.

and uses for their new house. Rusty wanted a home office and a south-facing garage. Lauren needed a waiting room and separate studio space for her growing business. And Lila would soon need a play space that Lauren wanted within view of their most important room: the kitchen.

The couple attempted to create a structure that respected and integrated the quality of the land, and concluded that a two-story house would complement the site. For protection from the “El Diablo” winds that can blow incessantly on the open plain, they skillfully added an entry courtyard, or “homage to the void” as they like to call it, with a blue-glass ground covering and a wooden footbridge. “I wanted the entry courtyard to seem as if one were entering over calm water, with sounds from the fountain supporting this conceptual idea.” After “hours and hours of excellent hands-on help from friends and family,” says Lauren, they hit upon some great ideas and proceeded to quickly prepare building plans for the homeowner’s association plan review. The height of the two-story structure raised eyebrows, however. Rusty confides, “I’m not sure our homeowner’s association knew what to do with us since we wanted to build something contemporary... but Lauren provided excellent reasons for why our design works well with the sloping site. In the end, a variance was granted for the two-story section built into the slope of the land so that it’s no higher than the rest of our house.”

With the variance granted and construction



A view of the front entrance from the dining and living area.



TOP: Rusty gives Lila a whirl in front of the fireplace tiled with South African slate. RIGHT: The open plan of the living-dining-kitchen intimates a coziness the family enjoys. BOTTOM: Lauren painted giraffes on Lila's closet doors. Stairs to the master bedroom suite are awash in natural light.



underway, the couple could now concentrate on the personal details that make a house a home. Lauren recalls buying every home magazine available and rifling through each issue for resources. As she discovered, "Building a contemporary house in Santa Fe proved challenging because it was a continuously painstaking process of distilling information." Even when traveling out of state she felt every part the designer. "I was consumed with finding ideas that could spark unique ways of using materials." To further coalesce her personal vision, Lauren toured the Santa Fe Hacienda Parade of Homes and many of the area showrooms that illustrated built examples. She recalls spending months in search of the right fireplace tile, when Janet Marshal from Santa Fe Stone suggested using South African slate.



Lauren assembled antique Spanish crystals on an heirloom chandelier and de-electrified it to hang over the master bath.



After reviewing the material with Janet, Lauren intuitively knew it was perfect and engaged a family friend who is an interior designer to lay out the tile pattern, which resulted in a most striking centerpiece.

The couple's creativity didn't stop there: They designed the kitchen's custom layout and ordered the cabinets from IKEA, the Swedish furnishing company, with Rusty putting them together. Lauren painted giraffes on Lila's closet doors and assembled antique Spanish crystals on a chandelier that was given to her by her father—it now hangs over the master bath and invokes both fond memories and Lauren's artful intent.

Smiling, Rusty adds, "Lauren worked her magic to find lovely, cool, and fun furnishings at great prices—and it all resulted in a very sweet house that feels like home... We're happy."

Mission accomplished.

#### SOURCES

**LIVING ROOM:** Chenille cushions for built-in seating: Elizabeth Harris 505/473-3074; stainless-steel lighting track by Juno: Dealer's Electric, Santa Fe; industrial fan by Nicor, Kiva Lighting,

Albuquerque; South African slate for fireplace and clad entryway bench: Santa Fe Stone; copper fireplace flue: Diego, Santa Fe Metal; recycled cobalt sea glass in courtyard: Tiny Circus Glassworks Santa Fe 505/992-1644; granite fountain: Stone Forest, Santa Fe.

**DINING ROOM:** Light fixture: Das Original, Sperlick Lighting, Miami, 786/388-7523 (fax only); chairs on casters: Tema, Albuquerque

**KITCHEN:** Pendant lights over buffet: Bruck, Form and Function, Santa Fe; kitchen counter top: impala black granite, Arizona Tile, Albuquerque; butcher block bar and corner desk: Foxwood Inc., Santa Fe; cabinets: IKEA, Sweden & USA; cabinet hardware: Sugatsune, Japan (via website); sink: American Standard, Westbourne, Santa Fe; faucet: Moen, Lowe's, Albuquerque; flooring: maple hardwood, Plaza Hardwoods, Santa Fe; lighting: undercounter halogen: Dealer's Electric, Santa Fe; bar stools: Crate & Barrel; appliances: gas stove: Viking; electric stove and microwave: Dacor; dishwasher and refrigerator: Kitchenaid, Page's Appliances, Albuquerque

**LILA'S ROOM:** Flooring: maple laminate, Plaza Hardwoods, Santa Fe; giraffe doors painted by Lauren Rose; window seat cushions and drapery: Elizabeth Harris Sewing, Santa Fe. ✿