

Clean lines, simple beauty and ease of function characterize the home Richard Doria designed for his family

# concrete DREAM

Some people describe contemporary architecture as cool, with a deliberate distancing between building and people.

They haven't experienced the home Phoenix architect Richard Doria built for his family. It is lovingly constructed with a contemporary vibe and a retro-modern theme, designed for both living and entertaining.

Long, low, lean and concrete, the home fits snugly against its site, one of about 35 homes within a Phoenix neighborhood that boasts both historic and modern homes in a contemporary style designed by noted architects.

This is a neighborhood where you'll find homes by Frank Lloyd Wright, George Christensen, Ned Sawyer, Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, Will Bruder, Eddie Jones and Marwan Al-Sayed — a veritable who's who among regional architects.

Susan and Richard Doria fell in love with their neighborhood years before they thought they'd find themselves living there. Richard first showed Susan the neighborhood while they were Arizona State University students.

"We're transplanted New Yorkers and have admired this neighborhood for 25 years," Susan says.

A few years ago, Richard spotted a house for sale and called Susan to tell her they were buying a house. "I asked him what was it like, and he said, 'I don't know, but it's in the right place.'"

Initially, they planned to renovate the home, gutting the inside and maintaining the exterior structure. However, as the construction crew was working, they discovered the walls were not sustainable. After the walls were demolished, Richard returned to the site with his drawing pad. "He drew our house," Susan says.

The two-year project culminated in the family's move from a 70-year-old adobe home in the Willo District in January.

"It's a marriage of structure and site to take advantage of all the views, with light everywhere, so you never actually feel like you're in the house," Richard says. "There's a delicate balance of inside and outside."

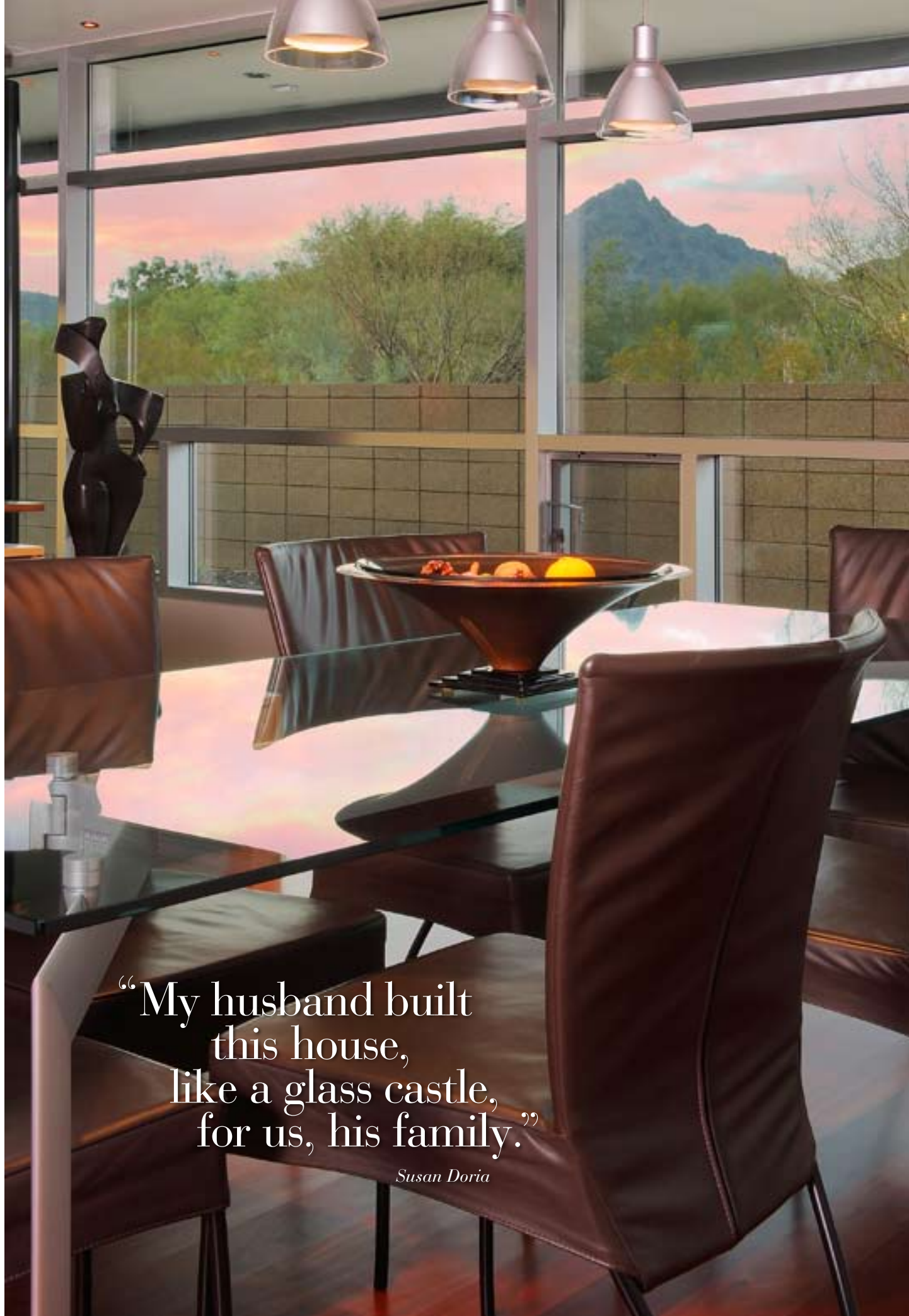
Organic in several definitions of the word, the house also is lightened with playful touches throughout. The largest and most visible of these are the etched glass doors gracing the garage.

All of the exterior and interior doors are stacked, allowing them to be pushed or pulled. There's also a brilliant cobalt button that glows off to the left of the industrial-size front door. That's the bell.

The etched concrete tile that defines the entrance extends to the formal living space at the front of the house. The tweed-looking tiles soften the effect of the concrete and lend an important textural dimension. The wood ceiling is actually bamboo flooring, adapted for a different use. Between the tweed and the wood's natural warmth, there's a sense of being embraced by the space.

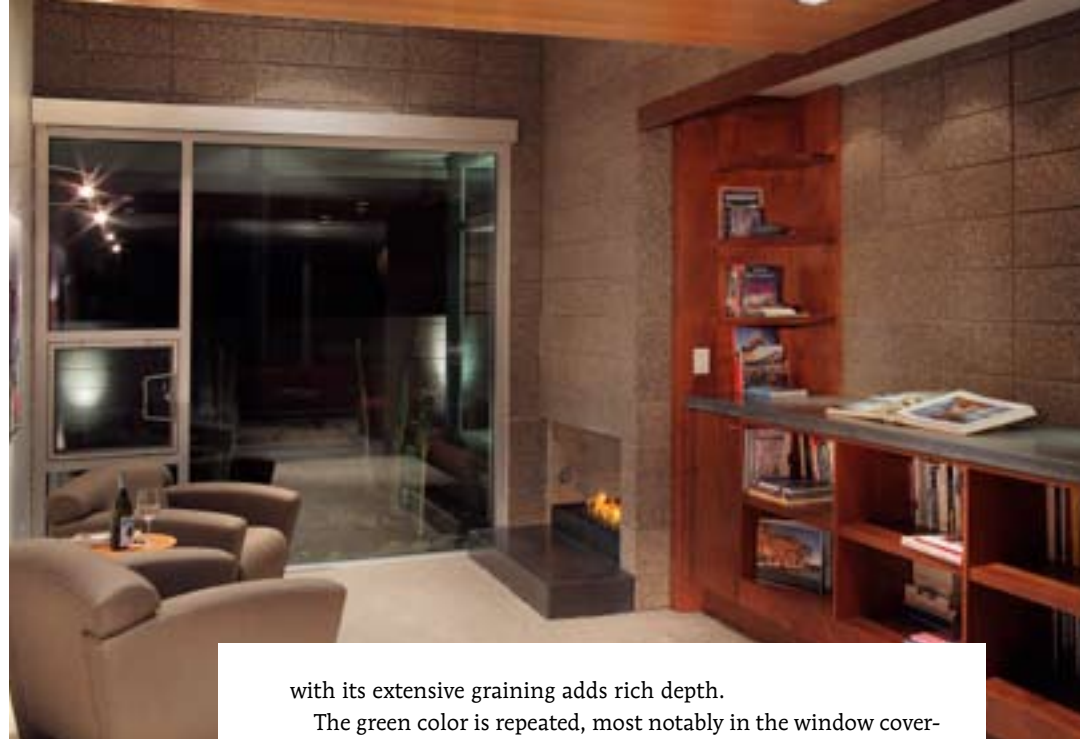
Throughout the home, palo verde green is used as an accent on walls. A Doria signature, the stucco is flecked with mica, deep with color, and has a suede-like appearance that also acts to enhance and embrace spaces within the home.

Richard made extensive use of wood from a container of unfinished Argentinean mesquite he milled in Phoenix. The dark wood



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*Susan Doria*



with its extensive graining adds rich depth.

The green color is repeated, most notably in the window coverings along the southern side of the home. These shades extend the length of the family room and kitchen, the space that Richard, Susan and their daughter, Triana, 8, call the heart of their new home.

“We live here,” Susan says of the kitchen. “Eighty percent of the time, Richard does the cooking, and I clean up.”

Richard designed the kitchen so he could socialize while cooking. Constructed of concrete, the island has a sleek curve, echoed in the curved halogen-light track above and in the terrace roof just visible as you gaze out across the southern view. The island sports an offset mesquite chopping block, which he says he loves so much it may be his favorite part of the house.

Wolf and Sub-Zero appliances, with warming drawers and extra cooling space, plus a six-burner gas cooktop, make his culinary responsibilities a little easier. “All my stuff is available, ready and accessible,” Richard says.

Overhead, beech cabinets lighten the kitchen space. The wood is used throughout the home to complement and accent the dark, grainy mesquite. A game room, just off the kitchen, is still being furnished and is sure to be a hit with Triana and her friends.

Almost like a loft, the master suite hovers over the first floor. “I wanted this to be almost like a hotel space, with a sitting area, a work space and great space for the bath and sleeping,” Richard says.

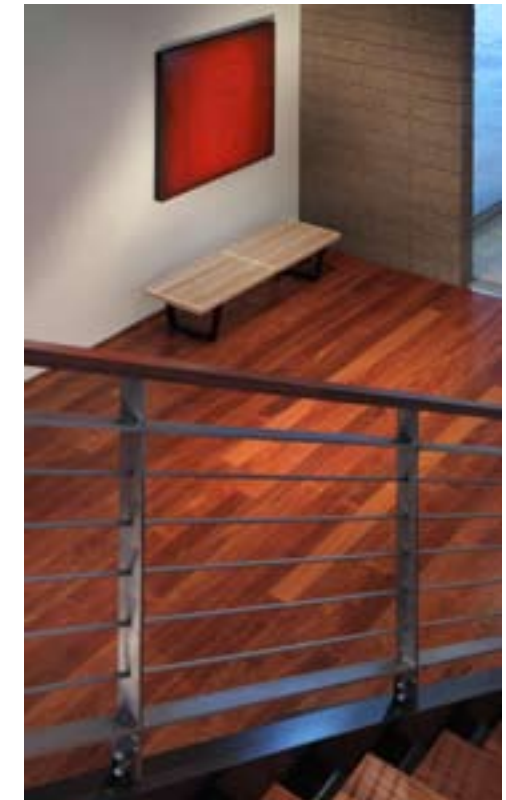
Windows in the master suite seem to be set high against the ceiling — if you’re standing upright. Rest assured, Susan and Richard say, from the prone position, there’s a view that affords spectacular scenes of storms rolling across the Valley and the sun against the flanks of Camelback Mountain.

The Dorias are eager to see what the rest of the year has in store for their home. “We’ve been watching the cactus grow (in the gardens),” Susan says. “But we’re still waiting to see what the light is like in the house in October and the rest of the year. We’re still wondering what Christmas will look like and what it’ll be like to cook our anniversary dinner in this kitchen.”

All three Dorias love their new home. “It’s the energy and the intention and space,” Susan says. “Our friends come in and say, ‘It’s so you guys!’ And I know that my husband built this house, like a glass castle, for us, his family.

“It’s all the things we hoped and dreamed for.”

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**TROVE OF ARCHITECTURAL JEWELS**

The Dorias' neighborhood is small, but with a prominent stone entrance created by Phoenix architect Eddie Jones from the ruins of a fire-damaged Frank Lloyd Wright home, it's hardly unnoticeable.

Still, not many residents realize the enclave harbors a rich architectural feast of significant contemporary homes.

"It's one of the most important architectural sites in the country," Phoenix architect James Trahan says.

The list of architects represented by the neighborhood's homes is a virtual who's who among architectural stars. There are homes by Frank Lloyd Wright, George Christensen, Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, Ned Sawyer, Will Bruder and Marwan Al-Sayed.

"One of the things that's most interesting here is that this just happened," Trahan says. "It's not a planned neighborhood."

In fact, he says in most neighborhoods today, these homes wouldn't be built because "they wouldn't meet the CCNR or HOA requirements."

The homes are of various sizes, are contemporary and are enhanced by xeriscape that emphasizes the relationship of homes to sites, taking full advantage of desert — and some urban — views.

"There's a concurrent development just to the east of this one with some very interesting new homes being built," Trahan says.

These are neighborhoods with personality and perspective, "something unique and beautiful," as Trahan says, that resonate to both our time and our place here in the desert.



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