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Chris Corrie (2)

**BURST OF COLOR** The Santa Fe home of Charles and Marilyn Hertz, above and below, which cost \$3.5 million, has a pinwheel layout intersected by a bright red wall.

## RESHAPING THE CLAY OF SANTA FE

Glints of glass and steel are appearing in the New Mexico desert alongside traditional adobe homes, but not everyone's happy to see the wave of contemporary structures; the search for a new Southwestern style

BY ALYSSA ABKOWITZ

Santa Fe, N.M., has long attracted throngs of tourists drawn to the city's distinctive architectural style: Pueblo-revival homes with thick, clay-colored adobe walls made of earth, water and straw. Strict building codes ensure that the city's central districts don't stray far from this aesthetic. Walls must be rounded, colors must be muted, windows must be small.

The problem: These older traditional structures can be small, cramped and dark—just the opposite of what many modern home buyers are looking for.

Now, a new wave of contemporary

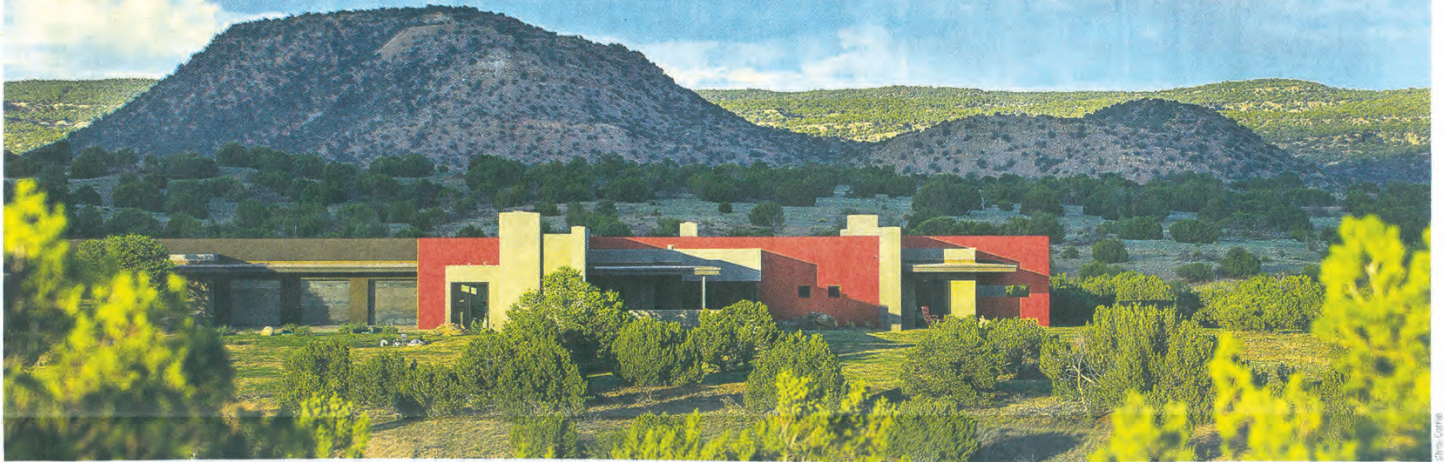


homes is springing up around the city's less regulated outer edges, transforming the once uniform landscape and pushing southwestern design in new directions. Glints of glass and steel are now dotting the city's earth-toned desert surroundings.

In July, Charles and Marilyn Hertz moved into their \$3.5 million custom-built contemporary home in the Galisteo Basin Preserve on the outskirts of Santa Fe. The 6,500-square-foot gray-green home, which is designed in a pinwheel arrangement, has an eye-popping red wall that intersects the space. After looking around town and seeing homes that were "dated and a little boring," Mr. Hertz says he

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# Reshaping the Clay of Santa Fe



**SOUTHWEST MODERN** Mr. and Mrs. Hertz wanted lots of light in their 6,500-square-foot home; their architect, Jon Dick, built in narrow skylights throughout the house.

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and his wife decided on a “Zen-like Southwestern approach.”

The couple, who moved from Jackson, Tenn., worked with Jon Dick of Archaeo Architects in Santa Fe to create a space that is flooded with light; there are narrow skylights throughout the home in places such as the violet powder room and exercise room. Mr. Hertz, a gastroenterologist, has a shower with floor-to-ceiling glass in the corner and the couple’s master bedroom has corner sliding doors that open up to a large concrete porch. A koi pond in the back of the home sits near Ms. Hertz’s art studio, which is next to an indoor current pool.

Brokers and builders say the shift toward a more contemporary style coincides in part with the rise in contemporary art in town. Santa Fe has long been a haven for artists, but many of the city’s art galleries typically featured traditional southwestern art: Georgia O’Keefe-style desert and animal skull paintings, Navajo blankets and Pueblo pottery.

In recent years, an edgier, more contemporary art scene has taken hold. Modern art galleries have cropped up in the Railyard district, an industrial area that has driven Santa Fe’s contemporary scene, says Irene Hofmann, director of SITE Santa Fe, a contemporary nonprofit art space. The Railyard is outside of the city’s highly regulated central districts, allowing contemporary artists and galleries more leeway in designing their spaces.

Santa Fe’s Historic Districts

Review Board has jurisdiction over the city’s five historic districts, which comprise 20% of the city. These districts, in the center and east side of town, have the city’s the strictest building codes. In a residential home on the east side, for instance, windows can’t be more than 30 inches on the diagonal. Margo Cutler, a Santa Fe broker who has lived in the area for more than three decades, says many modern homes are found on the outskirts of the city, where building codes aren’t as strict.

Sharon Woods, the chair of the Historic Districts Review Board, says the city’s 50-year ordinance preserves its architectural integrity. “It’s what separates us from so many other places in the country,” Ms. Woods says.

“You don’t have to go outside the city to build contemporary,” she adds. “You just must be outside the historic districts.”

While many home buyers are drawn to the area for its distinctive landscape, many say they want their own homes to reflect a lighter, more modern aesthetic. Earlier this spring, Ron Batory, an executive at a railroad company, and his wife, Barbara, an interior designer, completed a 6,200-square-foot contemporary home in the northwestern part of town with views of Los Alamos National Lab and the Sangre de Cristo mountains.

“I’ve lived in so many traditional homes,” Ms. Batory says. “I didn’t want anything heavy or closing in.” Santa Fe architect Robert Zachry designed the couple’s \$1.5 million home with retracting



glass walls, a modern kiva (a southwestern fireplace) on a large porch and a living/dining room with wooden beams. Four coffered skylights bring in natural light over two granite islands in the kitchen and there is a small window over the soaking tub in the master bathroom with western views; Ms. Batory calls it her “private painting.” Curved steel gives the home a sense of movement on the outside and separate master and guest wings allow the split-level home to be “zoned for privacy,” Mr. Zachry says.



## SLICE OF SKY

John Van Drimmelen and Shelly Gore, left, wanted a minimalist exterior and a warm interior for their home, above. Their \$1 million home has ample skylights, concrete floors and sliding glass-panel doors; the ceiling of the powder room, far left.

Rick Scheibel Jr. for The Wall Street Journal (8)

Santa Fe's luxury market is still regaining its footing from the economic downturn. More than 80% of homes sold in Santa Fe during the first quarter of 2013 were priced under \$450,000. Sales of homes priced above that amount dropped 46% from the fourth quarter of 2012 to the first quarter of 2013, according to Santa Fe Properties, a real-estate brokerage.

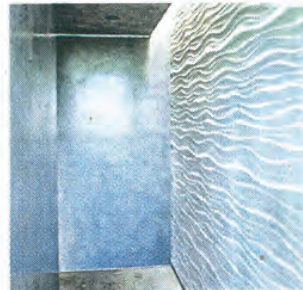
In 2006, more than a dozen homes priced at \$1 million and up would typically sell in a month, says Santa Fe Properties broker Matt Desmond; at the time, luxury inventory was at a low of about 20 months. Now, the \$1 million-and-up market has a 39-month inventory. "It seems like we're about a year and a half behind the rest of the country," Mr. Desmond says. "We're just starting to see movement."

Real-estate agents and builders say modern designs have helped strengthen the market, giving buyers a larger range of architectural choices. Agents say they have had more requests from buyers to see contemporary homes, particularly as the town has evolved from a laid-back artist community to a more sophisticated cultural center.

"There is a real market shift in terms of people wanting modern," says Santa Fe-based architect Trey Jordan.

Some local architects aim to meld traditional and contemporary architecture in their designs. While traditional materials of adobe homes—stucco and plaster walls, for example—are still used in many contemporary homes, the lines in modern designs are crisp and clean instead of rounded. Many of the contemporary homes around Santa Fe are characterized by large expanses of glass, clerestory windows and skylights—sometimes in unexpected places, such as in laundry rooms and showers—and muted stucco exteriors accented with steel that blend into the landscape.

Mr. Jordan recently meshed the traditional town vernacular with modern elements in the renovation of Sallyann Paschall's nearly 3,000-square-foot home, which cost about \$350 a square foot. Ms. Paschall, an artist, bought her territorial-style home in the northwest hills of Santa Fe in 2009 because she loved the views and knew the home had "good bones," but didn't like the style, she says. "It was



**MODERN SPACES** Touches in this home by architect Robert Zachry, left, include a striking front entrance and a textured wall.



**'I DON'T DO CUTE'** Sallyann Paschall with her architect, Trey Jordan, in her renovated home; Mr. Jordan added a light-filled art studio, left.

cute and I don't do cute."

To modernize the property, Mr. Jordan added a light-filled art studio, ditched the shutters and lined the windows in steel framing. He created a cube-shaped entry and modified the French doors off the back porch. "It flows so well now," Ms. Paschall says.

Mr. Jordan has run into difficulties with the historic board on some of his designs, including the renovation of his own house, which is in a downtown historic district on the east side. Though his plans passed as submitted after much review, Mr. Jordan says it took a long time for some board members to recognize that his proposals met their rules. Ms. Woods says people think the board is subjective but that it isn't. "We're just following the law," she adds.

For Shelly Gore and John Van Drimmelen, the modern design of their \$1 million home came down to the views. Mr. Van Drimmelen, who is Dutch, wanted a minimalist look, while Ms. Gore, a web designer, wanted a warm inside. The couple worked with Mr. Dick to create a 3,400-square-foot home with ample skylights, concrete floors, lyptus wood (a cross between mahogany and eucalyptus) cabinets, slit windows in the hallway, 12-foot-wide sliding glass-panel doors in the living/dining room and a master bath corner shower with doors that slide open to the outside. The guest wing has a steam shower, bedroom and sitting room, so that when Mr. Van Drimmelen's relatives come from Europe for weeks at a time they have their own space.

On a recent night, the couple opened the living room panel doors to the porch and enjoyed wine and cheese with views of the Badlands.

"There's a peaceful flow to the home," Mr. Van Drimmelen says. "It's still very much Santa Fe, but with a contemporary inspiration."