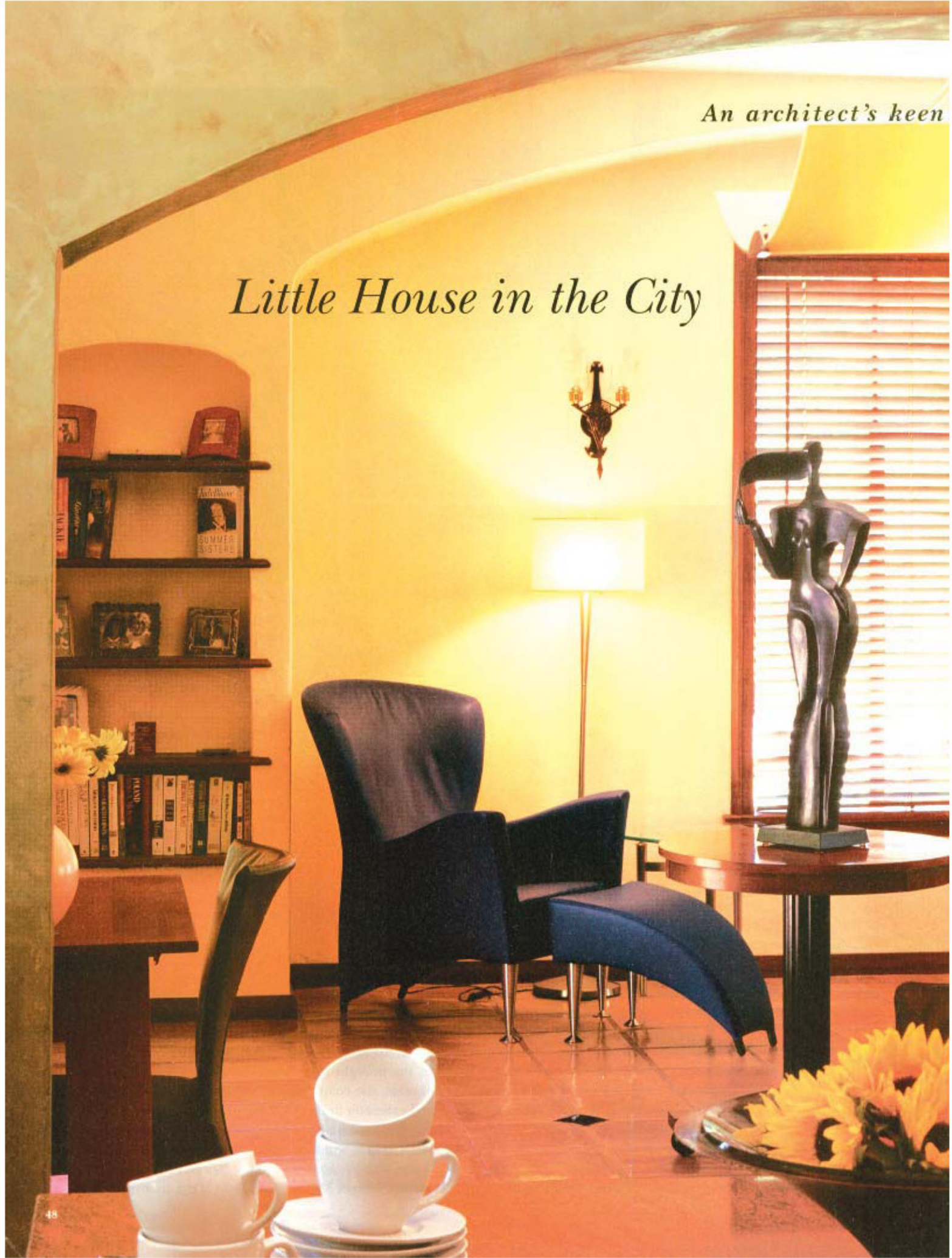


An architect's keen

Little House in the City



sense of style refreshes a historic home

Text by Roberta Landman • Photography by Alex Vertikoff

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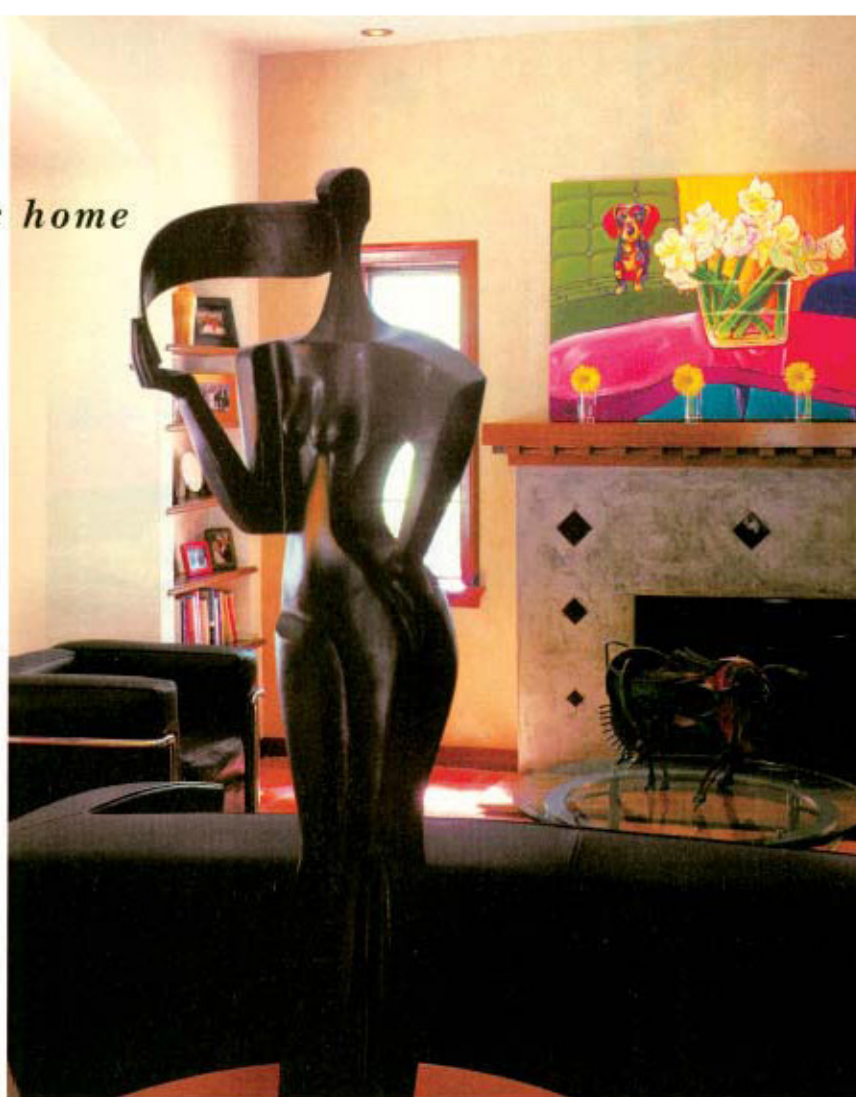
"Ask yourself what your lifestyle is about, and your answer will determine the kind of house you need." That's what architect Richard Doria likes to tell people. He wound up taking his own advice to heart, but not until after he and wife, Susan, did some serious soul-searching.

"We were going to buy 10 acres in New River and were ready to go, and then we did a one-eighty," Doria recalls. The desert house they planned would have been large, sweeping and clean-edge modern in style, as is his design bent. But it wouldn't have fit the couple's lifestyle. Their professional lives are focused mostly in central Phoenix, and a long commute appealed to neither.

In 1994, convinced that an older neighborhood in Phoenix would serve their needs, the Dorias did a complete residential flip-flop. Instead of going big, new, modern and way out there, they moved into a small, 1936-era house in the city's charming Willo historic district.

To a visitor, their street of well-tended homes exists in an idyllic pre-World War II sort of time warp, seemingly as far as it could ever get from today's hustle-bustle world. In actuality, their neighborhood is right off a main city thoroughfare, not far from the health-care facility where Susan is an executive. They're also close to Phoenix's cultural venues. The couple didn't know it back then, but they would have a daughter, Triana, now a toddler, who is taken on walks to a nearby museum.

This page and opposite: Architect Richard Doria admires the craftsmanship of his 1930s-era home. When renovating it, he took care to preserve its character, keeping pretty archways, such as one separating the living room from the dining area and another framing the living room's window wall. To help with furniture arrangement and selection in this small space, Doria consulted with interior designer Valerie Borden. Bronze sculpture in foreground by Lyle London. Painting over fireplace, *Sit and Stay*, by artist Ron Burns. Polychrome-bronze sculpture on coffee table by Marc D'Ambrosi.



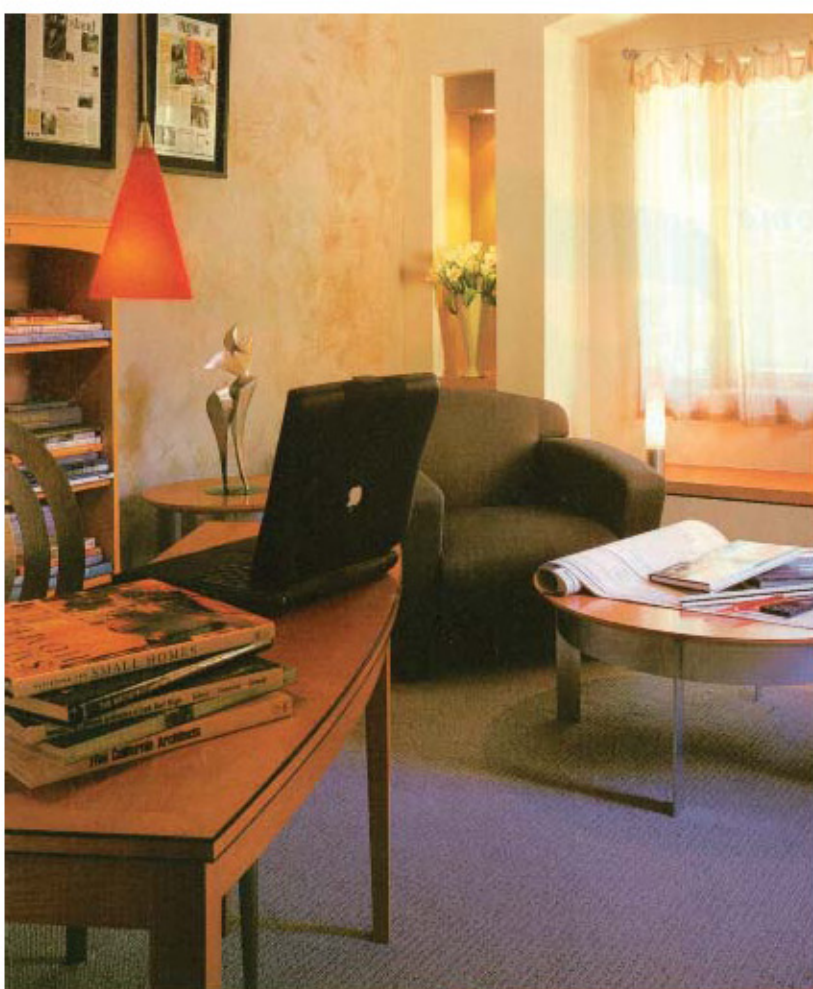
A completely modernistic house would be out of sync in this neighborhood; yet Doria was able to incorporate elements of clean, contemporary design in a remodeling project that breathed new life into the vintage dwelling.

Interestingly, Doria kept the home's Spanish Revival period facade, juxtaposing it against the more angular-looking elevation of a renovated former garage. The marriage of old and new styles is a happy union, according to the architect. "I'm a die-hard modernist, but I appreciate the charm of Spanish Revival, and also this area's bungalows of the teens and '20s," he says. "There was so much craftsmanship and attention to detail when they were built."

Doria kept those qualities in mind during a residential renovation and overall face-lift that was mainly twofold in scope. One: The home's narrow kitchen was enlarged by opening it up into another room, and revamped with sophisticated Doria-designed, Shaker-inspired cherry cabinetry, cherry flooring, and new stainless steel appliances. And two: A detached garage with upstairs guest quarters added on in the '40s was redone and expanded. On the first floor are a family room, laundry room, bath and office. The second floor contains his architectural studio.

While now much more habitable, the main house contains the same 1,300 square feet and two bedrooms as when it was first built. But with additional area created when the





garage was remodeled, now there's more than 2,000 square feet of "highly condensed, organized space," Doria says.

The Willo-district homes, built in what once had been the outskirts of town, are typically very short on storage space, according to Doria. "So we built in closets. We built in niches. We made use of every space there was. I found ways of tucking in closets and built-in cabinets all over the house, wherever you can find a place to hide something."

The older homes also lacked some rudimentary conveniences, by today's standards. "No one has laundry rooms in Willo," Doria says, noting that when people began buying washing machines for the home in the 1950s, they usually wound up on the back porch. "It's funny what things become luxuries in these little houses." A spacious laundry room in the converted garage is a source of pride. Its walls and floor are decorated smartly with ceramic tile. Even a place to do the wash should be elegant, says the architect.

There is an aura of understated luxury throughout this compact home, where furnishings of both Craftsman and contemporary styling, original artwork, and accessories were chosen with scale, balance and fluidity of form in mind. "Furniture and art cannot be overgrown in a small space," Doria offers. "You need simple pieces in a small scale that are beautiful in and of themselves. And you don't want to put a lot of things around them."

Uncluttered. Easy. Livable. Simple. These adjectives pepper Doria's conversation when he talks about what makes a home wonderful. With very definite ideas about building and design, the self-described "hands-on" architect not only supervised the entire residential makeover of his home, he participated in it. For example, using the hues of nature as a palette—his way of bringing the outdoors in—Doria hand-troweled walls in various rooms with three layers of colored plaster. "It's very earthy and natural and fits the contemporary mood," he notes. The old living room fireplace was given a new look with the color-infused plaster as well, though Doria left the original Honduras mahogany mantel untouched.

Doria also designed and built a dining room table, using the same granite as the kitchen counters and welding on sculptural-looking metal legs. "It's simple, streamlined and delicate, and doesn't overpower the room," he says, ever-conscious of infringing on the integrity and character of the old house.

"Less is more," he often states. This proviso applies to home decor and design, and, sometimes, to choosing the right place to live. After all, that was the case when Doria and his wife traded the dream of a large house set in the wide open spaces for their older, smaller digs in the center of a big city.

There have been no regrets. "These older houses have so much charm to them, and such a simplicity," Doria says. "They seem to wrap around you and comfort you." 🌿

See Resource Guide for details.

This page, top: This compact streamlined office is in the home's remodeled detached garage.

Left and opposite: The revamped galley kitchen melds clean, contemporary design with the warmth of cherry flooring and cabinetry. Pantry doors are faced with glass panels, to keep them from looking heavy and "predictable," says Doria. A cantilevered "floating" breakfast bar is of solid cherry.



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