



Inch by Inch

A young interior designer transforms her tiny central Phoenix home

Interior designer Valerie Borden brightened up her first home by enhancing the exterior and painting it a deep-orange color she calls "Lois Ruscapan meets Valerie Borden." The designer also added tile accents around the front door and windows, and spruced up the landscape.

Text by Teresa O'Neill • Photography by Christiaan Blok

"I NEEDED A LABORATORY FOR MY WORK, SOMEPLACE WHERE I COULD



A laboratory. An office. A blank canvas. A home.

Valerie Borden describes her 1937 central Phoenix house in many ways. But it also can be said that it's proof of her vision, perseverance and creativity.

"The house was a pit when I bought it," Borden recalls. "There were eviction notices pasted on the windows, things were broken, and there was dollar-a-yard blue commercial carpet everywhere.

"Every inch of the interior has been redone," she continues. "And with only 950 square feet, every inch is important."

Call it cozy, intimate and quaint, but the truth is the house is small. The simple L-shape layout includes a front room with a kitchen, dining table and sitting area, a transition space with an office and bathroom, and, beyond that, a bedroom and second bathroom. That's it. Yet Borden happily and comfortably shares

BE CREATIVE."

Small but efficient, the remodeled kitchen features concrete countertops, cherry cabinetry, nine colors of tile, and a stacking washer/dryer hidden in the tall cabinet near the front door. The Lucite bases of the 1970s-era bar stools save visual space. The O'Keeffe and Merritt stove is original to the house. Borden raised the kitchen floor up a step to set it apart from the adjacent sitting area.



BEFORE



Top: Manganese baked Saltillo tile floors were installed throughout the house. Borden freed up space in the sitting area by pulling out a free-standing black fireplace. In its place is "Donna," a shapely lamp that comes with her own wardrobe. The 1950s side table features a functioning fan as its base. The homeowner purchased the Angel Alonso painting above the fan table while traveling in Cuba. **Right:** Simple yet stylish, the dining area features a glass-top table with graceful legs, and artwork the homeowner created using paint left over from the remodel. The light over the dining table and those over the kitchen island were purchased in Italy.





"... I LOVE HAVING PEOPLE OVER. THIS IS ME."

the space with two big dogs, Chairman Mao and Bosley; runs her business, Chimera Interior Design, from here; and has hosted as many as 20 friends for a sit-down dinner.

"My friends thought I was crazy when I bought it," Borden says. "But I walked in and knew right away that this was my blank canvas. I'm an interior designer, and I've always lived in places where I couldn't put a nail in the wall. I needed a laboratory for my work, someplace where I could be creative."

The transformation from "pit" to pretty started right after she bought the house in 1998. Her first project was to replace a cracked toilet in the front bathroom. One thing led to another, and soon the room was gutted. Borden added a chandelier, replaced the sink, mirror and baseboards, and painted the walls and concrete floors. The tub and tile surrounding it are all that remain of the original bathroom.

Soon after, Borden moved everything from the back of the house into the front room, and even slept there, while she redid the bedroom and second bathroom. After that, she moved all of her stuff from the front of the house to the back, and worked

seven months on the front room. In addition, she has repainted the home's exterior and planted a lawn, and she thinks now that her work is through.

"Everything I touched had to be rebuilt, but I think I'm pretty much done," Borden continues. "I've had so much fun. Going through it was a pain, but I love coming home. I love having people over. This is me." 🌟

See Resource Guide.

Opposite: New molding and seven colors of paint go a long way in personalizing the home's only bedroom. The archways and abundance of natural light were part of what attracted Borden to the house. A hat on the bedside table is just one piece in the homeowner's large collection of vintage clothing. The painting over the bed is another of Borden's creations. • **Above:** Chairman Mao (left) and Bosley take a break.

PHOENIX HOME & GARDEN

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