

Text by Teresa O'Neil . Photography by Christiaan Blok

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



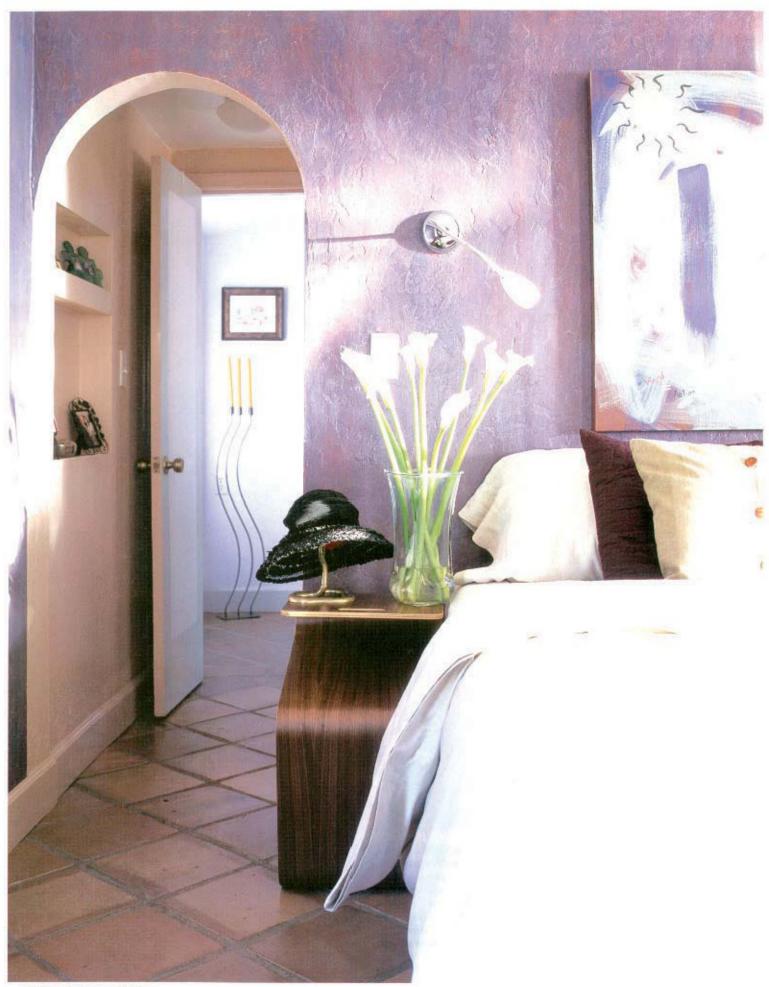
A laboratory. An office. A blank canvas. A home.

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





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"... 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.

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