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Southwest Homes

Tour 21
ABQ homes
in the
Spring Parade

beautiful baths

swoon-worthy
private spaces

a corrales
mountain mod home
captures picture-perfect views

a worthwhile endeavor

construction complexities made this contemporary desert home even more remarkable

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photographs by Daniel Nadelbach
styling by Gilda Meyer-Niehof

What do you do when you find the perfect lot, with unimpeded views in every direction, but it comes saddled with an intimidating set of restrictions? If you're Karen Ehrlich, you don't hesitate. You accept the challenge, and then you conquer it with gusto.

When Ehrlich espied a 1.26-acre lot in Santa Fe's Monte Sereno community, atop a modest rise with eye-popping vistas, she knew it was the place to build. "The property was special," she says of its enviable sightlines to the Sangre de Cristo and Jemez mountains and the nighttime lights of Los Alamos and Española. All that spacious beauty only five minutes from Santa Fe Plaza. She envisioned a classic Santa Fe adobe exterior embracing a thoroughly modern interior. "I wanted a house with a view," she says. "I wanted black, white, steel and wood. I'd always wanted to do a ton of raw steelwork."

"The magic of this house is in what you don't see, or rather that you don't see it."

— Karen Ehrlich

Ehrlich enlisted Arch Sproul of Santa Fe's The Virginian Designer/Builder, Inc., to help her bring her dream home to fruition. The decadeslong custom home builder and developer was up for the task, while his son, Stuart, played an instrumental role by 3D modeling the design for review. Ehrlich, under her business K Kaci Designs, has 30 years of styling and interior design experience. So, she collaborated with the Sprouls in the design process and then oversaw the finishes herself.

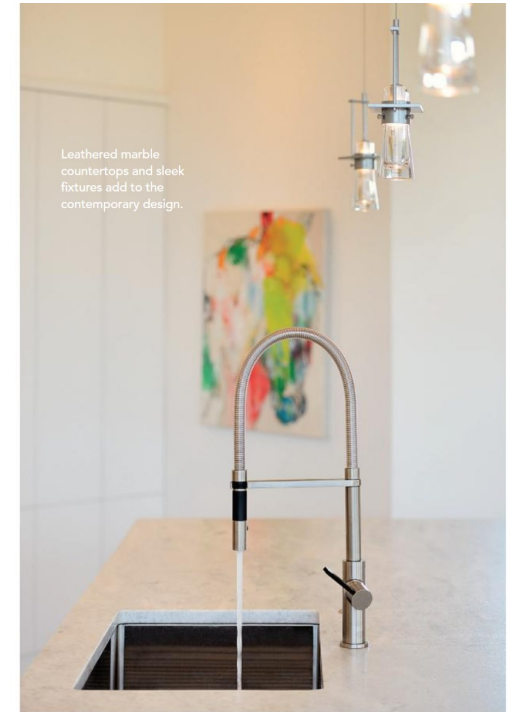
The sliding window wall connects the family room to the covered patio creating an expansive indoor-outdoor living area.



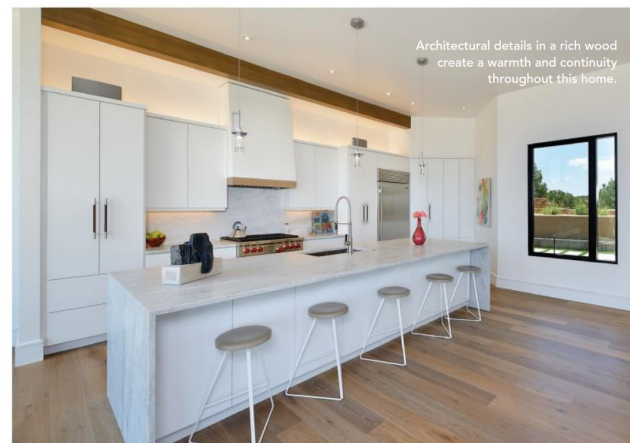
Floor-to-ceiling windows capture the views that made this Santa Fe building site so attractive to the homeowner.



Karen Ehrlich's design was all about minimalism. It's a perfect backdrop for her extensive art collection including the custom-designed glass birds over the fireplace.



Leathered marble countertops and sleek fixtures add to the contemporary design.



Architectural details in a rich wood create a warmth and continuity throughout this home.

Conquering Immediate Challenges

When it came time to put pencil to paper, however, the team learned just how complex their project would be. "There were 200 pages of covenants from Monte Sereno and the city," says Arch Sproul. There are the usual building restrictions such as constrained lighting to preserve dark skies. But, because the property sat atop an escarpment, there were height limits in effect and above-grade limitations, making the vertical building envelope very shallow and nearly unachievable. "They did that so they don't have huge houses everybody can see from everywhere," says Sproul, of the immense effort to keep the Monte Sereno desert looking spacious and natural.

The challenges stacked up and one by one, Sproul and Ehrlich knocked them down. First, in scouting the home's optimal layout, Sproul flew a drone over the site to help maximize views, account for dense tree locations and stipulate drainage. Then, the company hauled away a staggering 200 truckloads of dirt to lower the grade.

Rewarding Results

Four bedrooms, four bathrooms and 3,165 square feet later, Ehrlich has her divine abode. Fumed and oiled European oak hardwood floors run wall-to-wall. One wing contains the master bedroom, media room, reading room and the floating stairs, while the other wing houses the guest room, laundry and mudroom. The oversized pivot door, gate, portal and outdoor water feature reflect Ehrlich's coveted steelwork. The countertops throughout the home are white leathered

marble. And the walls are all the same color for simplicity and visual continuity. "When I commit to my materials, I use them throughout the house," says Ehrlich. "I design cohesively." Wood beams—echoed room to room and reflected in floating shelves—lend a touch of Southwestern charm to an otherwise entirely contemporary interior. "The wood really grounds it," says Sproul.

The home is airy and crisp, awash in natural light, meant to be invigorating, but without being noticeable. Even the landscaping, a xeriscape designed by Serquis + Associates, centers on being low-maintenance and happily playing second fiddle to the miles of Mother Nature's grandeur surrounding the



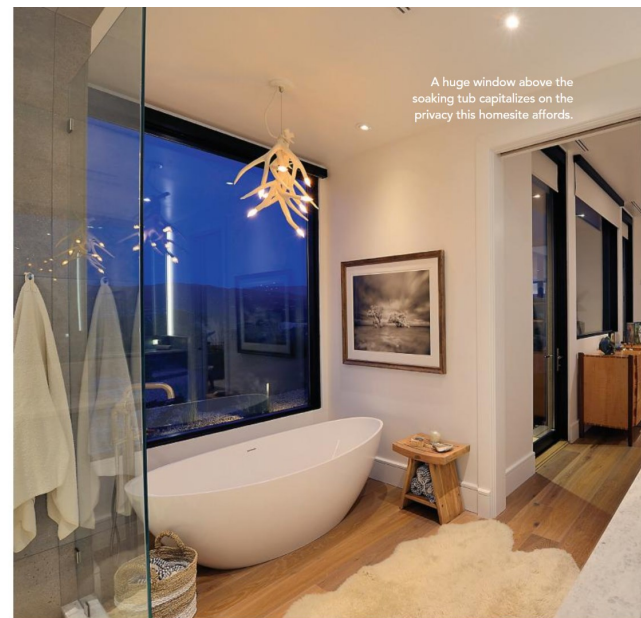
"I wanted a house with a view. I wanted black, white, steel and wood. I'd always wanted to do a ton of raw steelwork."
— Karen Ehrlich

An inventive addition, this custom-fitted skylight at the top of the stairs opens for access to a rooftop patio.

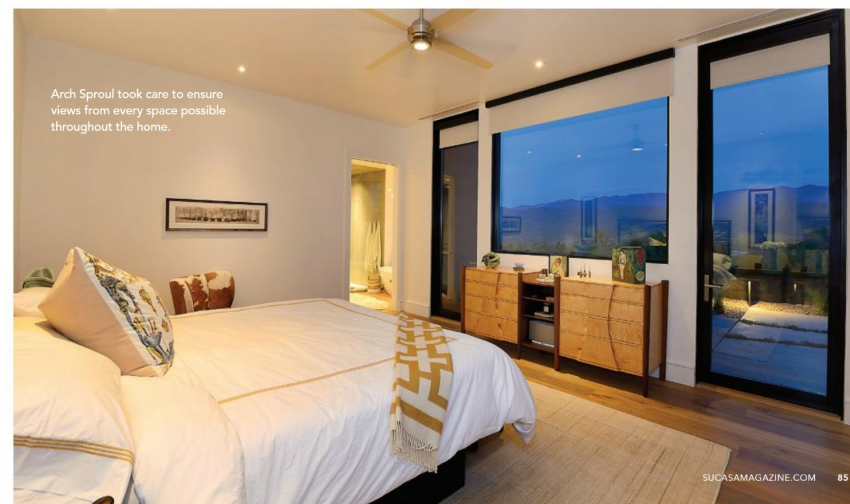
site. "The magic of this house is in what you don't see," says Ehrlich, "or rather *that* you don't see it." All these subtleties provide a solid backdrop for Ehrlich's colorful artwork and, of course, the exquisite beauty of nature framed through every window.

Bringing It All Together

To meet the required green ratings, the team installed solar panels to offset the effects of the expanses of glass throughout the home—so necessary to capture the jaw-dropping views. This meant adjusting the parapet design to hide the solar panels from view without raising the structure's height beyond allowance. Meeting height restrictions meant there was only room left over for 11-foot ceilings. To maintain that soaring ceiling feeling and accommodate 10-foot-tall windows, 130 can lights and still harbor HVAC channels, Sproul used some deft tricks. He employed specially designed trusses that allowed for recessed pockets above each window for hidden electric shades and suspended beams to eliminate the need



A huge window above the soaking tub capitalizes on the privacy this homesite affords.



Arch Sproul took care to ensure views from every space possible throughout the home.



The back of this classic Santa Fe adobe-style home is surrounded with modern landscaping that creates a private outdoor living space.



Custom floating wood and steel shelves echo the elements from the rest of the home.

for weight-bearing posts.

While that sounds like a lot, the biggest obstacle came from the home's most unique feature. With such beautiful 360-degree views, Ehrlich felt a rooftop deck was imperative. The hurdle? She wanted to access it from inside the home, requiring a weather-tight passage that wouldn't raise the roof. Undaunted, they masterminded an elegant solution. A floating staircase rises to the ceiling where, with the push of a button, a glass skylight slides open for access to a rooftop seating area. To boot, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the skylight manufacturer from sending an installer, leaving Sproul and a friend to decode and assemble it themselves.

What a challenge it was. "It had its moments," laughs Sproul. Yet, having solved this multi-faceted puzzle, both parties came away not only loving the finished product but feeling a deep sense of achievement. Whether relaxing in the home's artful interior or taking in one of its many endless views, it's a shining example of what good design work and perseverance can do. 📷

resources

Builder

Arch Sproul
The Virginian-Designer/Builder Inc.

Interior Designer

Karen Ehrlich
K Kaci Designs

Appliances

Builder's Source Appliance Gallery
builderssource.com

Bathroom Tubs, Sinks, Fixtures

Brizo

Beams/Cabinetry/Interior Doors

JC Woodworks

Blinds/Windowcoverings

Custom Window Coverings in Santa Fe

Countertops/Marble/Tile

Arizona Tile
La Piedra Granite fabricator

Fireplaces

Mountain West Sales Inc.
mountainwestsales.net

Flooring

Hakwood Hardwood Flooring

Front Door

Colletti Doors

Gates/Architectural Metal

CH Metalwork Inc

Landscape Design

Serquis & Associates

Landscaping

C.L.L. Landscaping

Lighting

La Luz Lighting

Skylight

Solar Innovations

Sliding Window Wall & Windows

Sunwest Construction Specialties Inc.
sunwestconstructionspecialties.com

Solar

Positive Energy Solar

Spa

Mirage Spas

Staircase

Viewrail

Water Feature & Planters

CH Metalwork Inc.