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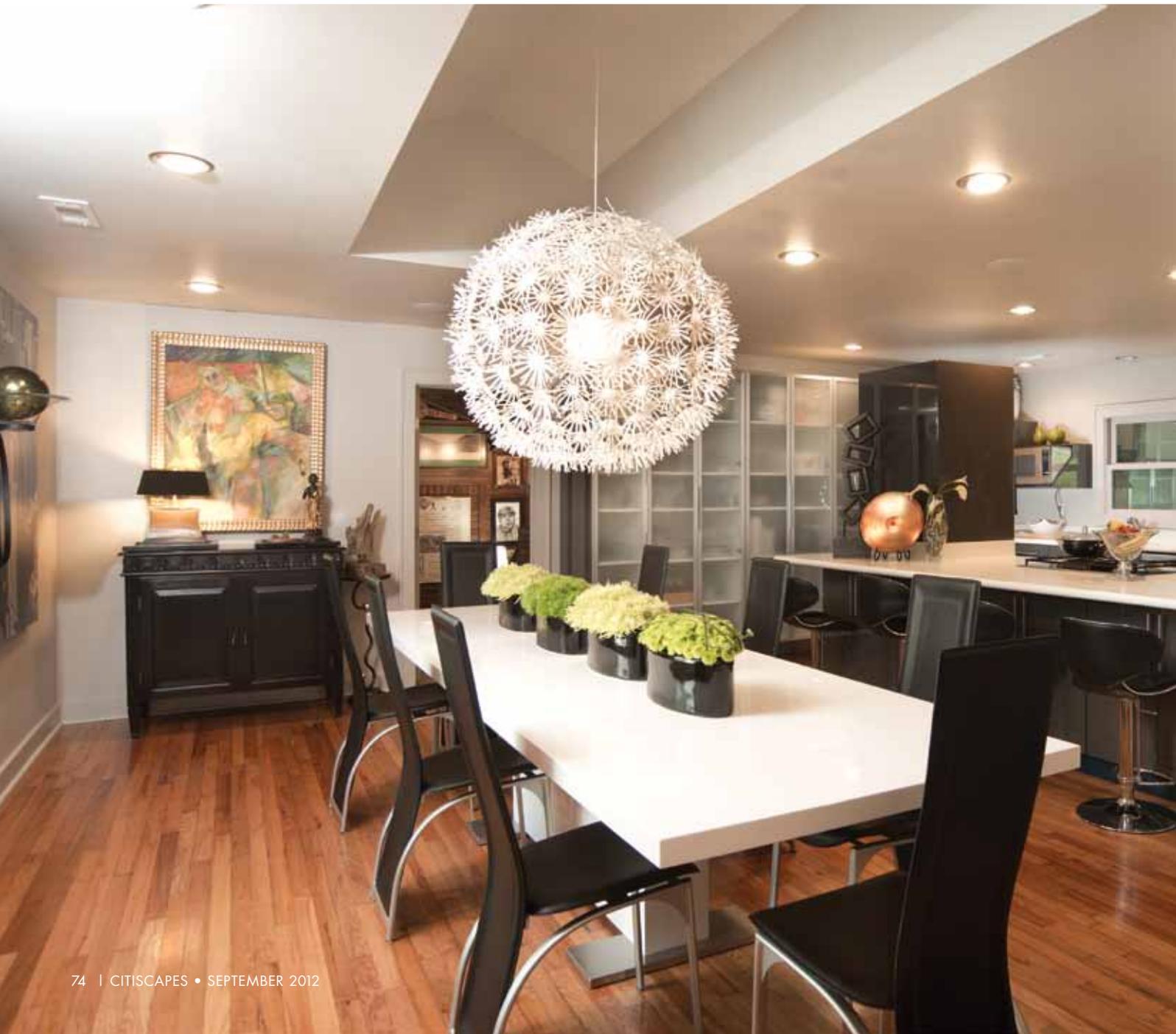
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EXPANDING THE POSSIBILITIES

DONNA AND TOM RIFE TURN
A BASIC 1950-STYLE HOME INTO A
MID-CENTURY TREASURE

BY PATRICIA ROSOL • PHOTOS BY JOE WITKOP



A few years ago, Donna Z. Rife was house hunting in the downtown Bentonville area and, turning onto Huffman Street, she found exactly what she was looking for...a 2,000-square-foot red brick 1950s ranch style home all alone on the street. She became even more excited when she turned the corner and realized the lot went from block-to-block and the back faced a beautiful private park.




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Her mind raced, thinking of the myriad possibilities and potentials for this house. She and her husband Tom, a real estate appraiser and owner of Rife & Company, knew they wanted to purchase the property but decided to lease the house until they could sell their downtown loft and office space. That would take three years, and during that time the ideas — small, large, obvious and creative — were many.

For starters, the Rifes wanted the home to face the park — so, the back would become the front and the front the back. Adjusting the interior space to allow for a new master bedroom and bath area, as well as a new living area, was also necessary.



Living Room



Donna came up with the idea of what she called the "capital letter I" house that included a 1,400-square-foot addition, creating a long, wide gallery hall to tie the new space to the existing. The gallery hall would be perfect for their growing art collection, and the design created a courtyard on each side, one for entertaining purposes and the other for private use.

Donna, an interior decorator by profession, knew the look she wanted and was completely at home adorning the new space. But she and her husband agreed that enlisting a designer with the training and experience to successfully create new floor plans and design new spaces would be prudent. "I wanted someone who had the talent to make this all happen," Donna said.




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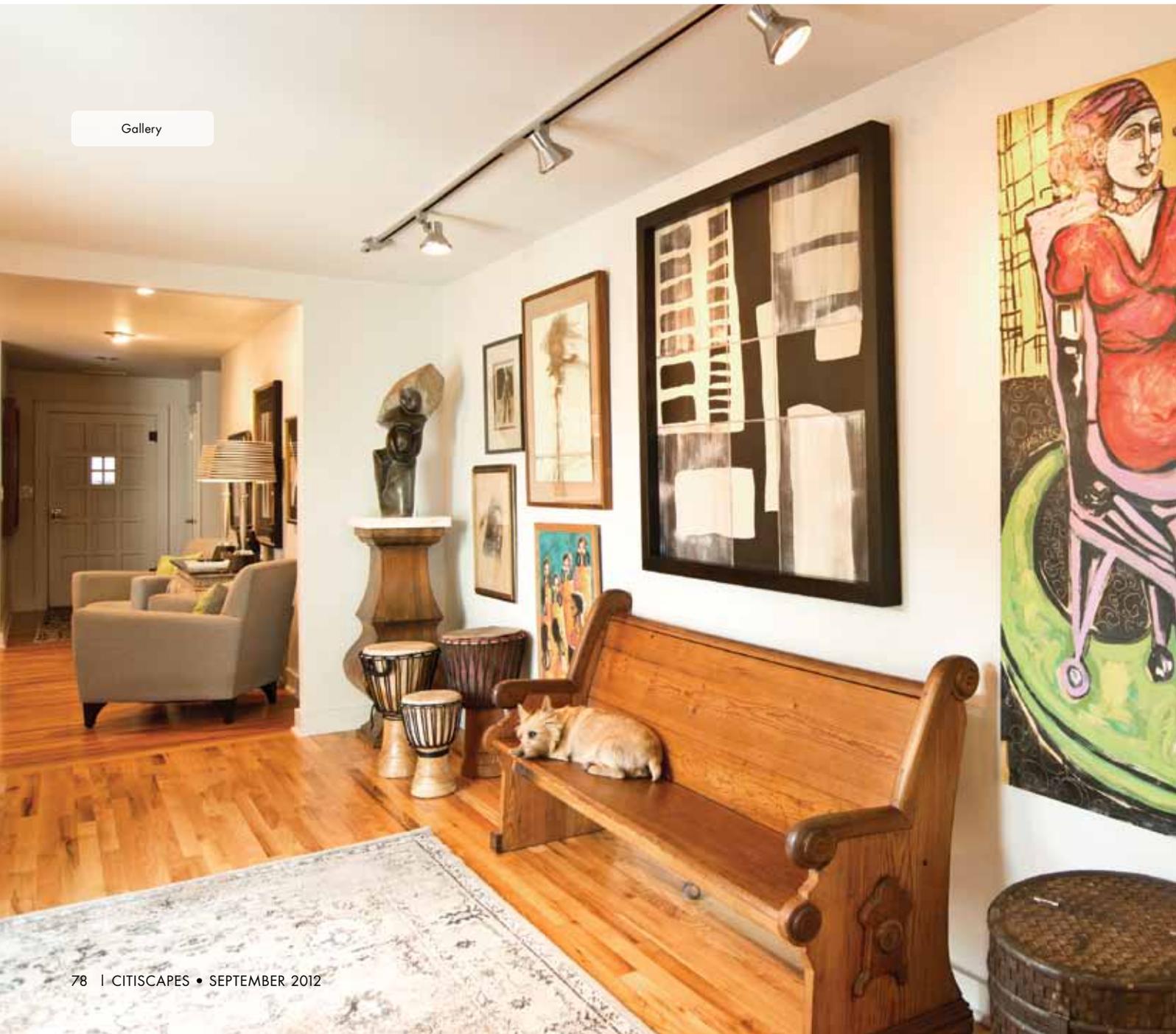
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Hollie Hudson, RN
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“From the first time I met Andrea Cornwell, owner of iSpace, LLC, on a designer house project in Fayetteville, I knew she could do it and would be perfect for us.” The Rifles were having trouble visualizing what the existing home and the new addition would look like tied together. They also wanted help with the kitchen design and layout of the new addition. “Andrea created a scaled model of the complete project, keeping the mid-century lines from the existing home flowing to the new addition,” Donna explained. “The model was perfect! It’s all I used to show the contractor, and he took it everywhere. It was funny because everyone thought it was so cool!”



Wanting to make sure her husband maintained his excitement during the project, Donna designed Tom's media room to his specifications. A single-car garage in 1951, the media room had two nice-sized windows and ceiling and walls covered in beautiful pine boards. With some design adjustments — such as staining the pine board, moving the door and installing cork flooring — the room became a stylish and functional space for Tom and served as the only retreat for 10 months of the renovation process.

In November 2010, the Rifes moved into their new house...though the renovation was not yet complete, it seemed the fun was just beginning. They hired builders Marv Blum and Ray Kerstiens.



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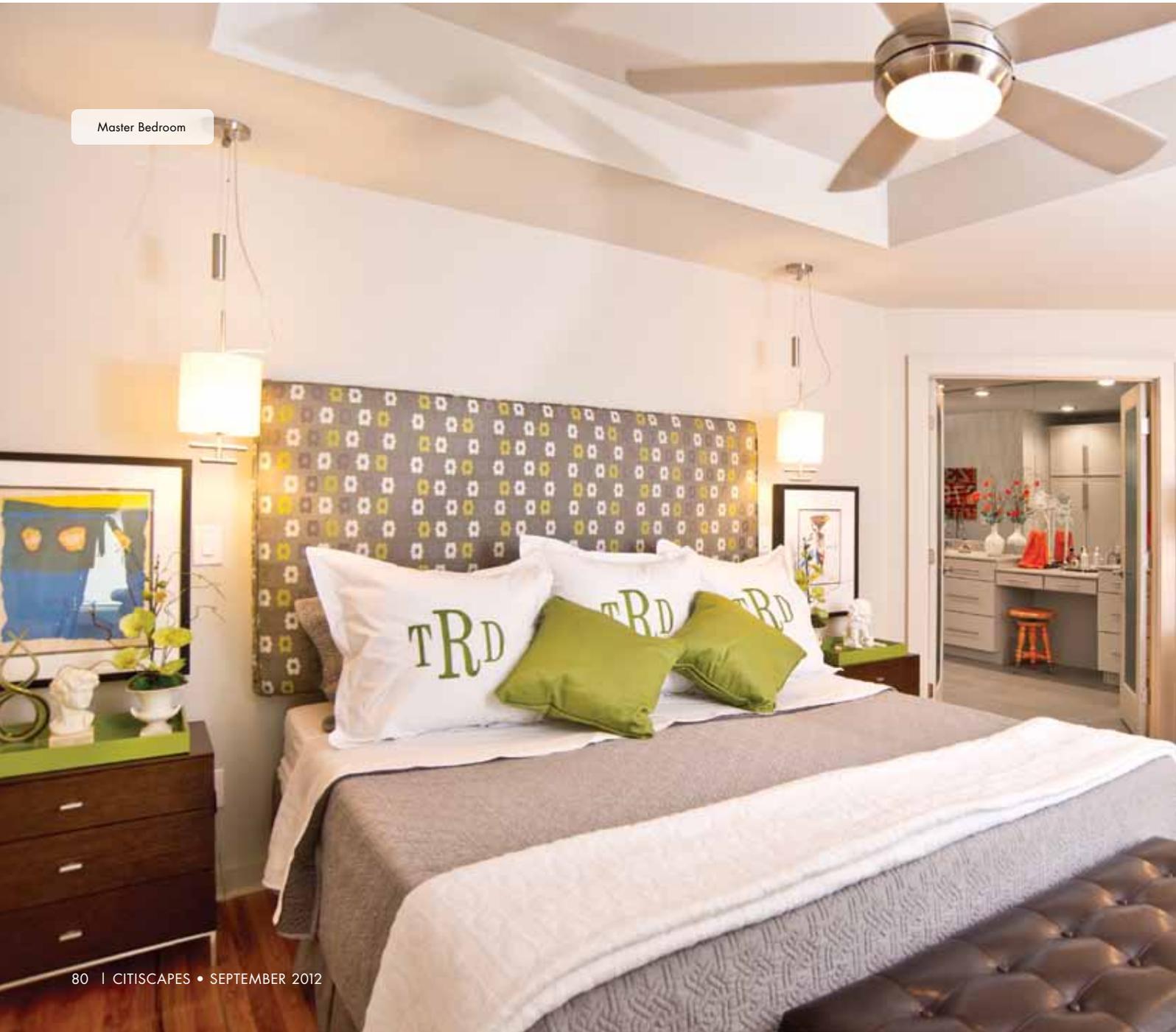
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Every morning, workers showed up and Donna would eagerly discuss the day's projects with them. "Marv and Ray just went with the flow and every crazy idea that came to me," Donna said. "Marv even worked hard to find a brick in North Carolina that had the same texture as the old brick."

As the project progressed, the Rifes became more and more pleased with their new home. The living room addition, with 14-foot ceiling and 13 3' x 3' clerestory windows, allows ample light without a privacy issue. The gallery space and living room each have a set of French doors that open to the courtyard. The door placement works perfectly with the wet bar in the gallery during party mingling.



Master Bath



Master Bedroom

The Rifles tested this at their 2011 Christmas party with more than 100 guests. "It didn't feel cramped at all, quite the opposite," Tom said.

During the big snow of that same year, it was time to knock through the wall of the old house where it connected to the new gallery. Feeling very ambitious and because Tom told her she wouldn't be able to move all the piled up furniture and then knock through the wall, Donna did just that. When it was finally opened, the old floor and the new floor came together perfectly. Now it was time to move everything to the new space and gut the old. "I moved every box and piece of furniture to the new space by myself," Donna bragged.



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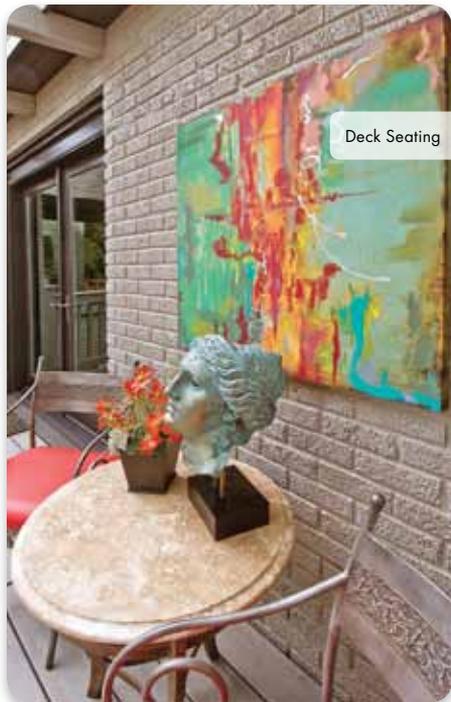
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Working in the old space proved to be a bit more of a mess. The dust was 60 years old and everything had to come out – the wiring, plumbing, ductwork, a couple of windows and drywall. The changes, however, were worth it. All new Lincoln windows were added to match the addition.



The stud walls between the kitchen and dining room were removed. The ceiling in the old living and dining spaces were vaulted for aesthetics and the two spaces were transformed into one large dining room.

Donna and Tom wanted the kitchen to have a serving bar area for grandkids and for the space to be open to the dining room. They purchased modern-style cabinets from IKEA in Dallas and later joked that, though they loved the look, the trim carpenters weren't happy that everything arrived in flat boxes and had to be put together. The couple then paired white metal countertops with the dark gray cabinets. "I love the strong contrast, and they are so easy to clean," Donna said.

The two existing baths were also updated with a more contemporary look, and Italian porcelain tile was installed.

In the rest of the home, the 60-year-old red oak flooring was stripped and coated. The new floor was an amazing match to the existing flooring, considering the age difference. Everyone involved agreed that the transition from old to new couldn't have been better. The exterior, now wrapped in a soft gray color, is a perfect backdrop for the Rifles' art. And, finally, a carport was added. Donna and Tom just didn't think a garage felt right for this home, which follows the mid-century feeling.

When asked if this is the last house they will ever remodel, Donna gave a vague, "Hard to say" response. Tom, however, gave an energetic, "Yes!" ■

LOCAL HOME PROS USED

Designer: Andrea Cornwell, ASID, owner **iSpace, LLC**

Interior Decorator: **Donna Zoe Rife**

Builders: **Ray Kerstiens and Marv Blum**, Bella Vista

Artwork: **Jane Garrison, Christina Mariotti, George Dombek, Ken Addington, and Brad Williams**

Countertops: **Impervicote Custom Countertops**, Gravette

Electrician: Steve Rose and Samuel Rose, **Rose Electric & Communications**, Bentonville

Fabrics: **M. Grace at Home**, Bentonville

Flooring (tile): **Carpet One Floor & Home**, Springdale

Flooring (red oak hardwoods): **David Foerster**, Bentonville

Florals (interior): **Shirley's Flowers & Gifts, Inc.**, Rogers

Furniture: **Abibe Furniture & Interiors, Inc.**, locations throughout NWA; **Lighting Emporium**, Springdale

Iron Art: Frank and Lise Wallace, **Bentonville Ornamental Iron, Inc.**, Bentonville

Plumber: Gary Baker, **Diamond T Plumbing**, Bentonville

Media Room

