

Su Casa

WINTER 2005

AT HOME IN THE SOUTHWEST

Santa Fe
Light
& magic

artful
LODGER

Tangled up
in VIEWS

penthouse
SWEET

visiting a
GHOST RANCH legend

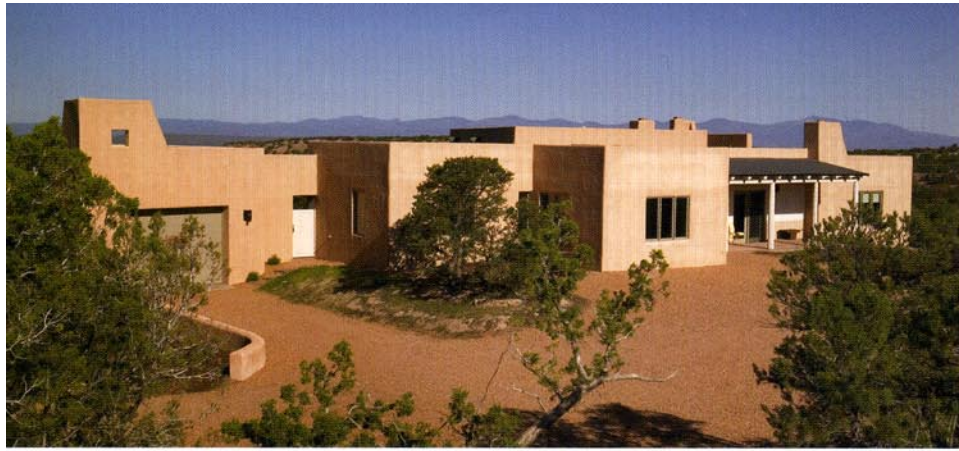
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Santa Fe light & magic

Speaking a language of light and shadows, line and space, Santa Fe architect Beverley Spears designs welcoming, comfortable homes at peace with their high-desert surroundings.



By Janice Myers Photography by Robert Reck
 Architect: Beverley Spears, AIA Builder: Denman & Associates

Designing beautiful, functional homes for northern New Mexico is no walk in the park—or, if you prefer, on the mesa. Venerable local traditions, tricky topography, and the sad proliferation of “faux Southwestern” make the path from paper to plaster a rocky one.

Fortunately, Santa Fe architect Beverley Spears has done her homework. In 1985, about 10 years into her New Mexico experience, she studied and photographed old adobe homes in villages across the northern part of the state. Her



Left and above: From a distance, the house integrates traditional design themes of room blocks, tower forms, and even a shed-roof portal with more contemporary abstraction of line and shape.
 Left: Porches provide deep shade and lots of outdoor living space.

book, *American Adobes* (Clear Light Publishers, 1986), documents the evolution of northern New Mexico style.

Authentic style

It's truly rare for a time and a people to spawn an original architectural style. But colonial New Mexicans went one better: various towns put their own spin on common elements such as dormers, porches, and portal columns. It's actually possible to speak of Truchas brackets or Santa Cruz Valley pediments.

“To design authentic homes in the vernacular of northern New Mexico, you need to study traditional architectural forms. You have to understand why the oldest buildings—the convents, mission churches, and pueblos—are focused on light and space,” says Spears, an award-winning member of the American Institute of Architects who has designed more than 40 homes over the course of her career.

Her nine-member firm, Spears Architects, established in 1981, comprises an amazing breadth of expertise, including urban design, landscape architecture, historic preservation, adaptive reuse, site planning, master planning, documentation, and surveys. Spears clearly applies her collective wisdom to every project, regardless of its nature, to arrive at a comprehensive design solution.



Elegant informality characterizes the living room, where Spears eschewed ornamentation for the clean lines and visual massiveness enabled by Rastra wall construction. Vigas, artwork, and views still say New Mexico without requiring Spanish colonial furnishings.

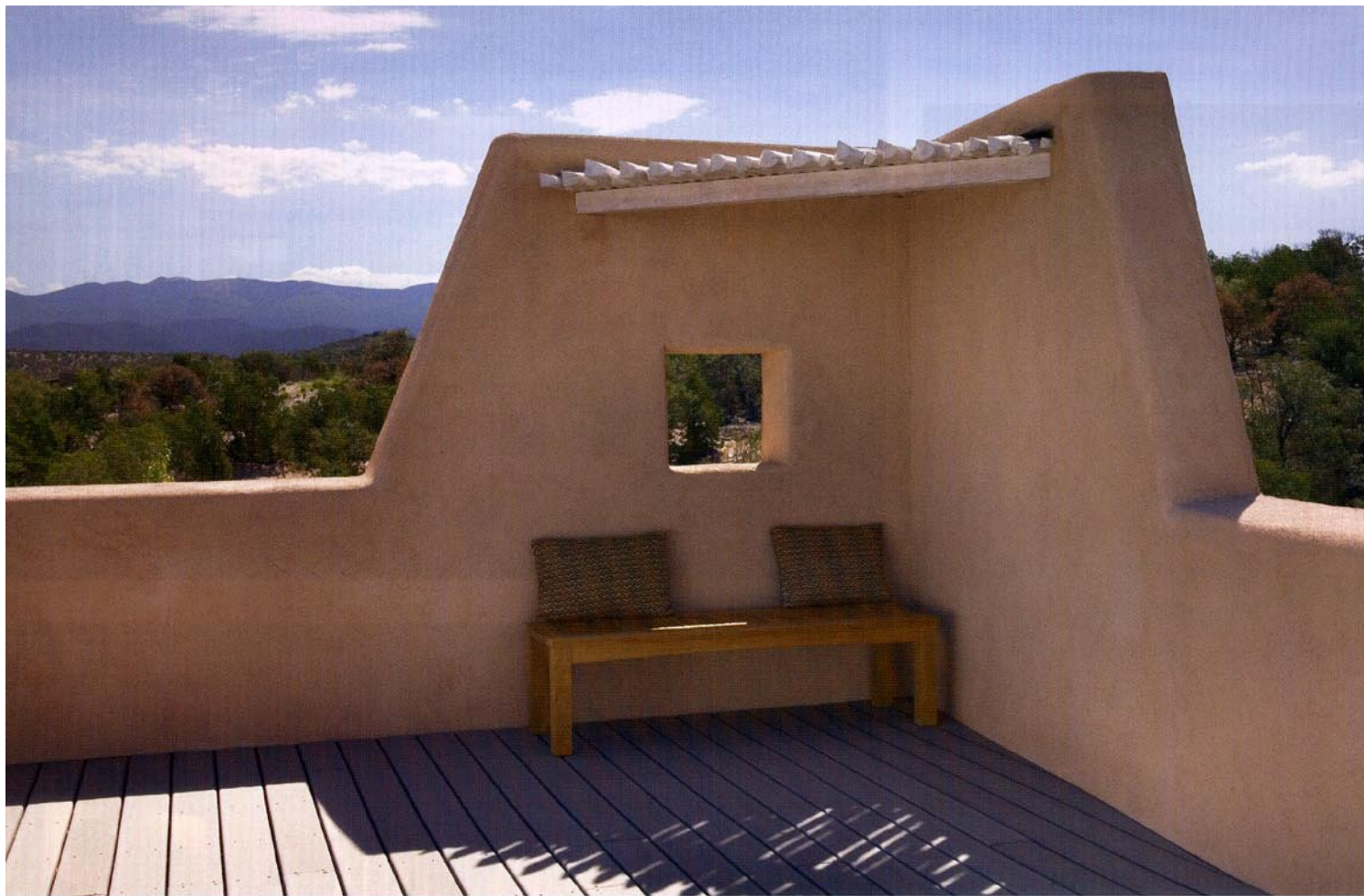


Spears Architects' avowed design philosophy is "to create environments that are spatially rich, articulated by sunlight and shadow, and comfortable and welcoming. The design must respect its surroundings." Spears gives form to this philosophy through clean lines, light and airy interiors, and inviting spaces for outdoor living.

The New Mexico landscape is a capricious player in the design process. Like a beautiful diva, it's compelling, aloof, and fragile: "Take me or leave me," it seems to say. Spears is happy to accommodate the diva's demands. "The land is precious," she says. "Architecture must respect and respond to our exquisite natural surroundings."

Refined refuge

Although her design philosophy has not changed over her three decades in New Mexico, Spears agrees that its expression is constantly being refined. Nevertheless,



she seems to have arrived at something close to refinement itself in her design for a 3,000-square-foot home near Santa Fe's exclusive Las Campanas residential community. The owners are delighted by this tasteful and understated second home, which more than meets their need for a refuge from the endless stimulation and adrenaline-fueled pace of big-city life.

The 2.5-acre site, purchased on a weekend whim, contributed both expansive western views and a steep arroyo running along one side of the property. The house sits tightly on the lot, but the owners purchased a small adjoining easement to guarantee against future construction. Following alongside the arroyo is a driveway, which leads to a European-style "parking court" that butts up against the west side of the house. The entryway is unassuming, its single whitewashed door opening into a juncture of passageways that lead to opposing wings of the house, one of which invites interaction, the other introspection. The four bedrooms are divided between the two wings, which beg to be designated as "family" and "guest."

Spears' design proves that "elegant informality" is no oxymoron. The primary, "family" wing gathers kitchen, living, and dining areas together in a great room that, despite its impressive size, is cozy and appealing. Large western windows and double glass doors serve as season tickets to the moody mountain vista, which responds to minute changes in temperature, atmosphere, and light. Through the glass doors, a tiled terrace, with its corner kiva fireplace, is a cozy setting for informal entertaining. Whitewashed latillas provide shade.

This is a house without guile, a place where light and space play without interference. Light-colored finishes on interior surfaces support this airy feel. Even the

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A roof deck reached by an outdoor staircase reveals a 360-degree panorama of north-central New Mexico mountains and mesas. If that's too much, use the window under the corner ramada to frame a smaller slice!

Right: Luminous and sparsely furnished secondary bedrooms carry on the themes of bright

woodwork and contemporary elegance that incorporates traditional design elements, like the corner kiva fireplace.

