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# well scripted

Superior casting and direction creates an award-winning Westside production



Patriot Homes, [patriothomesnm.com](http://patriothomesnm.com); HVL Interiors, [hvlinteriors.com](http://hvlinteriors.com)



by Charles C. Poling  
Photographs by Amadeus Leitner

**H**ere's the script: A young professional couple transplanted from Washington, D.C., to Albuquerque needs a home. They meet an up-and-coming builder eager to make his mark. The husband introduces to the team a seasoned interior design professional with a knack for negotiation. The four are thrown together into the pressure-cooker of a new construction project.

No, it's not a disaster movie. It's a true story about how to build a tastefully restrained yet well-appointed contemporary home with enough inner sizzle to nab a Buyer's Choice award in the 2013 Spring Homes of Enchantment Parade.

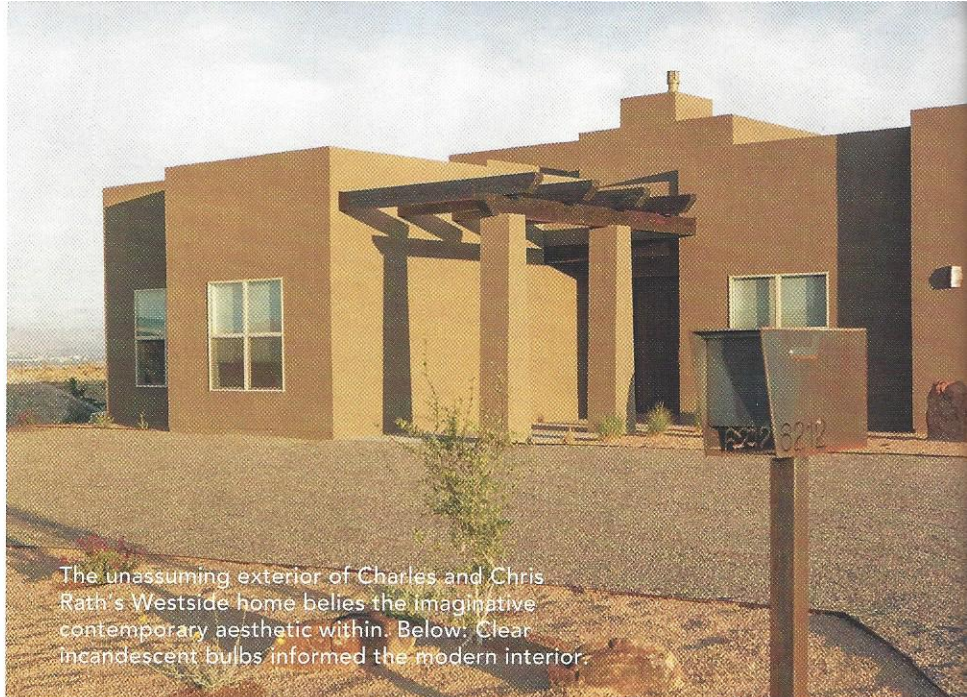
Flashback: In spring 2012, Christine ("Chris") and Charles Rath found a sage-covered one-acre lot on the West Mesa, not far from Charles's recently relocated mother and her husband. Encouraged by their builder, Jimmy Porter of Patriot Homes, Chris and Charles sat outside one evening with a bottle of wine and brainstormed their wish list for a new home: moderate size with open spaces for entertaining, a juicy kitchen, a man cave for gaming and watching sports, and great patio spaces centered around an outdoor kitchen centered on a charcoal grill. Porter worked up a floor plan.

One big question remained for Charles and Chris: What should their home look like?

Initially, Chris says, she and Charles "didn't really know" their style. Their aha moment came when they showed Porter a picture of the chandelier they wanted to hang above the dining table. Porter had built Tuscan- and Southwest-style homes, but when he saw the chandelier—clear incandescent bulbs suspended on wires from a chrome ceiling fixture—he realized, "Oh, you're more modern."

The Rathes now had a design direction. They never looked back.

The trouble was, neither Chris nor Charles felt particularly knowledgeable about modern design. They knew what they liked when they saw it, but not how to find it or how to navigate the nuances.



The unassuming exterior of Charles and Chris Rath's Westside home belies the imaginative contemporary aesthetic within. Below: Clear incandescent bulbs informed the modern interior.







## a shared vision

Charles was already spending time on the Internet, browsing design sites like houzz.com for ideas, so he used a consumer-review website to check out interior designers. One name popped up with good reviews: Steffany Hollingsworth, ASID, of HVL Interiors in Santa Fe. So Charles arranged a meeting of all the players.

“I felt like a matchmaker,” he says, conceding that the first couple of dates—er, meetings—were a little bumpy.

“I was hesitant to work with a designer,” Porter admits, “but with Steffany, once we started picking out materials, we fed off each other really well. We had the same vision.”

Hollingsworth agrees, saying, “It was a really nice collaboration of ideas.” She, Porter, and the homeowners “all worked together to make selections so everyone would be happy and proud of the house. We went back and forth on a few things. The Rathes knew they wanted high contrast, but should it be dark floors and light cabinets, or vice versa?” They ended up with bleached-gray wood floors, dark Shaker-style cabinetry by Najera Builders Custom Cabinets, and dark wood-beam accents—the lone nod to Southwest style—against the whitewashed tongue-and-groove ceiling in the living room and elsewhere, along with dark wood doors.

And so it went throughout the home. The Rathes wanted wallpaper in the master bedroom and front powder room; Hollingsworth found it, a dark gray textured paper that gives the room depth. Porter designed a kidney-shaped cutout in the kitchen-dining ceiling. Hollingsworth was skeptical, but then embraced the way its curvilinear lines offset the straight-edge geometry prevailing in the home. Hollingsworth worked with

The free-flowing, kidney-shaped ceiling cutout softens the crisp corners in Chris’s espresso-and-white kitchen. Mosaic and white frosted glass tile from Statements pops as a backsplash against the dark cabinetry, while the stainless Thermador appliance package from Builders Source ties it all together. Apple green chairs in the dining set shout the contemporary feel.



The homeowners re-created tile artwork they'd seen in a photo with a painted wood-block wall sculpture by Rosemary Pierce. The vibrant colors of the blocks became their décor palette.



The cast and crew. From left, homeowners Chris and Charles Rath; interior designer Steffany Hollingsworth, ASID, HVL Interiors; and builder Jimmy Porter, Patriot Homes.

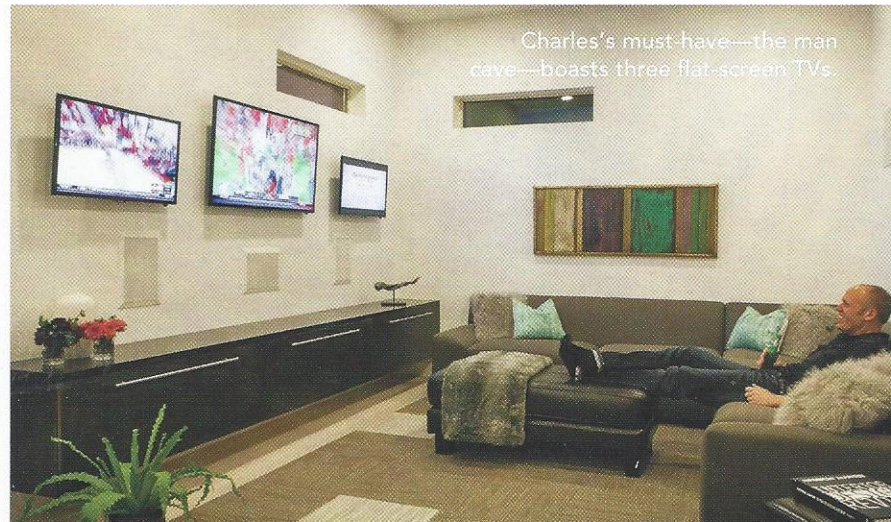




After searching locally and online, the Raths found the perfect red vessel sink for the powder room in Florence, Italy. The metallic wallpaper, in Collage-Aluminum, is by Innovations. ProBuild supplied the distinctive modern doors throughout the home.



Charles and Chris clearly appreciate the jewel-box nature of their home, but they seem to draw the most pleasure from the way it suits their lifestyle.



Charles's must-have—the man cave—boasts three flat-screen TVs.



Porter and Charles on some elements, such as the honed slate tiles in the second bathroom and the carpeting, and with Charles and Chris on others—the glass tile backsplash in the kitchen and granite counters throughout from Arizona Tile, with fabrication by Granite Connection.

In his online browsing, Charles had seen a photo that became a touchstone for the design: Central in the image of a modern living room was an art installation of colored tiles against a white wall. Not only did the couple end up re-creating that tile artwork with a painted wood-block wall sculpture by Rosemary Pierce, but the vibrant colors of the blocks became their décor palette. Working from that guide, Hollingsworth helped them find furnishings and accessories within the color scheme of mustard yellow, green, magenta, and blue—crazy colors that in a more traditional home might create a patchwork effect, but are perfectly artful accents in the Raths' sleek, neutral contemporary.

### inside the jewel box

Porter launched Patriot Homes in 2010 at the nadir of the New Mexico housing slump. Two years later his entry in the 2012 Spring Homes of Enchantment Parade won a Buyer's Choice award, and in the Spring 2013 Parade, the Raths' just-completed home also earned a Buyer's Choice award. Not bad for a guy who describes himself as a "lost soul" eight years ago. Fresh from college, Porter had worked in finance in Chicago, then moved back home to Albuquerque in 2002 and eventually started working for RayLee Homes building houses, a several-year stint that taught him the craft and business of home building.



The master bath is an intriguing study in grays and neutrals. Stone vessel sinks sit atop River White granite from Arizona Tile.

The outdoor kitchen houses a gas grill, a Big Green Egg, and a refrigerator. As guests belly up to the bar while Charles cooks, the LED lighting surrounding the space changes colors to suit the mood of the party.





Stacked Pella windows bring plenty of natural light into the living room, a simple but comfortable arrangement of contemporary pieces that took color cues from the marigold sofa and the wood-block wall art in the entry (see page 43).







"Tango," a bamboo sculpture by Japanese artist Honda Syoryu, adorns the jonquil niche in the hallway (above). Above, top: Textured wallpaper by Innovations gives depth to the master bedroom, which blends traditional elements like leather and wood with contemporary accents.

The home Porter built for the Rathes has a jewel box quality, with an unassuming, unadorned exterior giving way to a meticulously crafted, fine-featured interior that blends the strong-lined simplicity of modernism with warm Southwestern accents. Call it "21st-century Albuquerque modern."

"We wanted a house that was unassuming on the outside but really beautiful inside," Chris says. From the street, the four-bedroom, 3,100-square-foot home is a collection of brown-stucco cubes. When you first step in the front door, though, look up: Porter designed and built a stepped-recess ceiling lined with quartzite and travertine in icy-white tones. Credit Hollingsworth for the stone here and on the tall fireplace surround in the living room. She steered Porter and the Rathes away from more typically Southwestern earth-toned stone to help them "push the envelope," as she says, and take the home to more contemporary heights.

Similar details define the interior, from the silvery wallpaper in the powder room to the Hubbardton Forge wall sconces from Turn On Lighting. The Rathes clearly appreciate the jewel-box nature of their home, but they seem to draw the most pleasure from the way it suits their lifestyle.

"My favorite thing is everything that's going on outside," Charles says—the three interconnecting patios, the outdoor kitchen, and, most of all, the Big Green Egg charcoal grill.

For Chris, it's the indoor cooking space. "We love to cook. He's got his grill, and I've got my kitchen."

Ultimately it's all about relaxing in their custom-designed spaces. "Our ideal night is to sit outside, enjoy some music, char some meat, and maybe get in the hot tub," says Charles.

Cue the sunset. ☼