

Style

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Corporate Cachet

Style home

Living in color

Reich residence



BY MARTY FUGATE / PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG WILSON

The house surprises you before you even see it.

The location is east of I-75, off a two-lane road flanked by pastures and ranch houses. It looks like a typical country lane, until you see the mailbox, a creation of sculptor John Chamberlain. It's wrapped in a tangle of screaming-yellow wire, like a frozen spiral of cartoon lightning. Two modernist sculptures, also by Chamberlain, rise up from the front lawn — a vast sea of green with a house and artist's studio at the other end. Pulling in, you know this is no ordinary ranch house.

You know you've arrived at the home of Dr. Charles and Andrea Dasha Reich.

Their main house is sheathed in fieldstone and sheltered with an overhanging roof. It's full of windows, and you're easily spotted when you arrive. The couple invites you to sit in one of the deck chairs scattered around the umbrella-covered tables. Before taking you inside, the Reichs tell you the house's story.

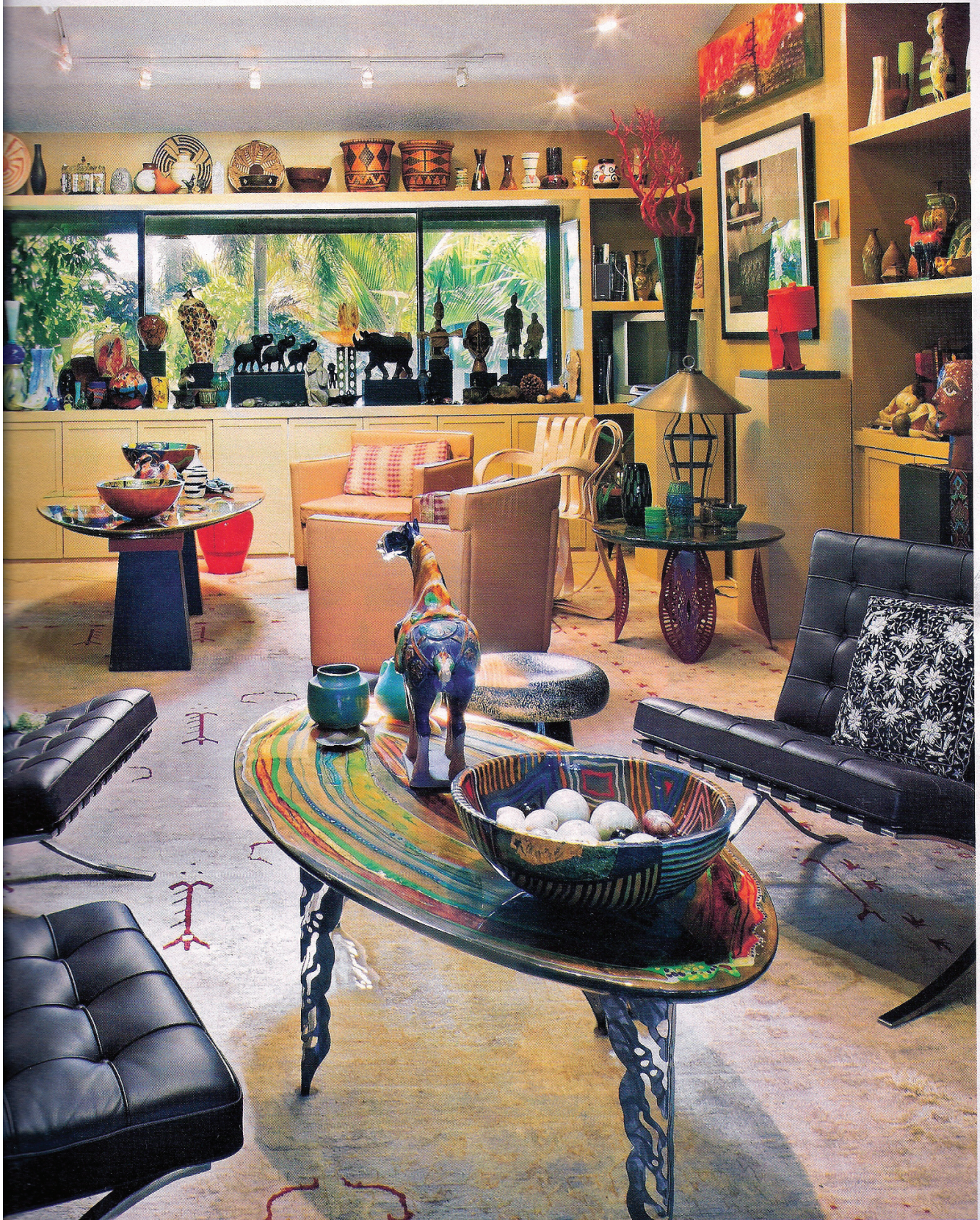
Here's the short version:

This place has been their home since 2001. Well, not exactly. That was the year they bought it and moved in. At the time, it was a standard-issue ranch house. It wasn't quite home, yet. But that would soon change.

The home the Reichs had left behind was a Bohemian loft in New York City. Both had recently reinvented themselves as artists. Dasha had shut the door on a successful career as a high-end fashion designer. She became a painter, celebrated for her massive abstractions — energy fields of swirling color created with a multi-layered resin technique. Her husband had retired as a periodontist to devote himself to visionary architectural photography. (He's currently branching off into the art of comedy.)

Having redefined themselves as artists, they defined a home as a place to cre-

Dr. Charles and Dasha Reich have redefined themselves as artists, a fact reflected in the beautiful exterior and art-filled interior of their home.



Including jet-black Barcelona chairs and peach-colored club chairs, help to create inviting conversation centers.



er, glass bricks, large abstract paintings and a wire-mesh sculpture of a woman, only hint at the artistic treasures that lie ahead.



ABOVE: The master bedroom is awash in color, yet provides a private, soothing sanctuary.

BELOW: In Dasha's bathroom, suction cups provide a unique way of displaying her jewelry.



ate and enjoy art. After buying their new house in Sarasota, they knew exactly what they wanted to do with it.

"My goal was to make it look like our loft in TriBeCa," notes Dasha. "Transforming it became my art project, obviously with lots of advice and input from Chuck."

Dasha came up with the remodeling scheme. She drew up simple plans and sketches. To turn those plans into reality? "We worked with John Creter, of Carpentry Unlimited," Dasha says. "He was willing to take risks and experiment. Where others said 'no,' he always said 'yes.'"

Creter got to work. The job was more a matter of taking things away than putting them in. He knocked down walls, ripped out the oversized stone outcroppings around the fireplace, uncovered the 14-foot structural ceilings and opened up the flow. It took three years of remodeling before the house had the loft-like feel for which Dasha was striving. But, like all artists, she's never fully satisfied. And the work has never stopped.

Judging by the pneumatic "pop-pop-pop" of a nail gun punctuating the morning air, it's still going on.

"Pop!"

The handy-but-loud device is the property of John Dowd (son of area-based sculptor Jack Dowd). Back in 2006, Dowd spent six months building Dasha's studio to the east of the main house. It's white on the inside, rust-red on the outside. Dasha has affectionately nicknamed it "the barn."

"John built it, but I designed it," notes Dasha. "I'm a frustrated architect."

Today, Dowd is busy creating walls-on-wheels for her studio.

A quick peek inside reveals it's a barn in name only. It's a 2,800-square-foot, steel-framed structure with everything an artist could possibly need. The natural light shines in on an explosion of paints and paintings, works in progress and works completed, a colorful controlled chaos with the exuberance of a toy store. Dasha cleverly controls the chaos with an "Abstract" modular shelving system, an "indestructible" filing system created by Knoll, and storage devices of her own creation.

"Pop! Pop! Pop!"

"We'll get out of your way," says Charles.

You follow into the main house.

A step through the front doors reveals a dramatic transition space: a wall of glass bricks to your left, with a wire-mesh sculpture of a woman in front of it. Facing you, a massive abstraction.

Dasha drops the names of the artists on request. The wire woman is by Monica Noble, a Colombian-born artist. Françoise Schein created the misty color field. "She's a wonderful artist," notes Dasha. "Very famous for spelling out the rights of man in ceramic tiles in a Paris subway."

A step around the glass bricks reveals the living room.

Designer chairs cluster around ellipsoidal tables: Mies van der Rohe chairs (jet-black Barcelona chairs and peach-colored club chairs), a basketwork chair by Frank Gehry and a wire-mesh "bird chair" by Harry Bertoia. Below it all, a vast Persian rug extends out like a sea. It's an inviting archipelago of conversation islands. And there's plenty to talk about. If you like art.

Walls, shelves and cabinets burst with art books and art. On the western wall, Dasha's incandescent landscape glows above the fireplace; an oversized photograph by Steve Katzman reveals the collision of youth and old age. On a display shelf before the south-facing windows, there's a procession of ceremonial figures and masks from Kenya, Ghana and Brazil.

If you like art at all, you're starting to feel the kid-in-a-candy-store effect.

"Our philosophy is 'more is more,'" Dasha says, laughing. "As you can see, we are not minimalists."

Definitely not.

You can also see the Reiches enjoy living in color. The walls alternate with hot



One of two modernist sculptures by artist John Chamberlain that capture your attention from the front yard.

and cool colors like playful musical chords.

“The color shows the influence of the Mexican architect, Barragán,” she says. “He’s famous for crazy colors in crazy combinations, like this. My work is all about color, so obviously my house reflects that. I love the way the colors interact with each other in your eye.”

You love it, too. Then you start to wonder why.

“More is more” can easily turn into too much. Somehow, in this house, it doesn’t. The abundance of art and alternating colors never goes into sensory overload. How does she pull it off? Dasha’s design scheme succeeds with a little sleight-of-hand — some practical magic based on her understanding of color and space from her years as a designer.

First, Dasha uses color to integrate and unify the disparate elements. She painted the skylights in the kitchen and living room a transparent shade of sun-

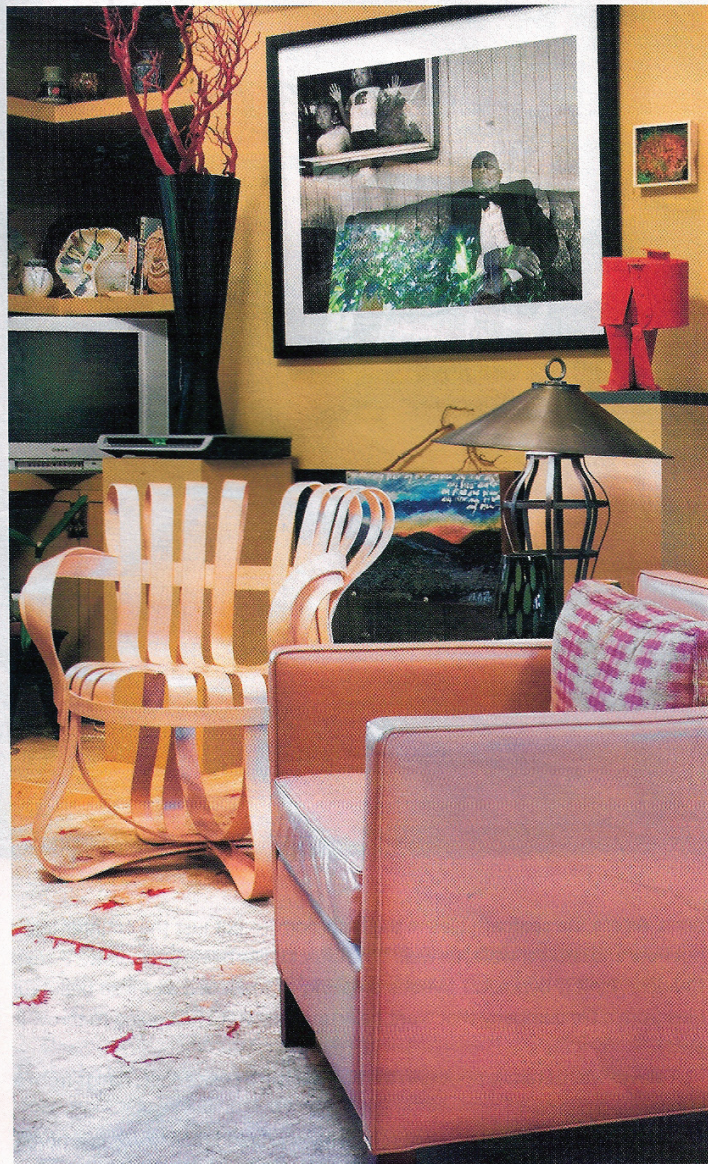
shiny yellow. The light streaming down gives everything a subtle yellow cast and helps pull it all together. She also used darker hues in the house's consistent elements. The tan floors are simple Mexican tile. Doors, bookshelves and baseboards are chocolate brown. The darker tones create a backbeat to the high notes of jazzy color. The eye finds excitement, but also finds rest.

Her second trick was the use of space. The living room flows into an open kitchen to the east and a pool and patio to the north. The ceilings are exposed — a slanted roof, going up to a 14-foot peak. Nothing obstructs your eye. It never feels claustrophobic.

Your eye is free to wander. You feel free to enjoy the house's many surprises:

A brooding armadillo, a carved wooden figure from Brazil, sits on the patio table.

Green and red tiles line the kitchen counter tops, gleaming metallic like the scales of a fish when they catch the light. One of Charles' creative contribu-



A basketwork chair by Frank Gehry and a Mies van der Rohe club chair create a comfortable conversation niche.



tions. As are the seafoam tiles in the bathroom — not just the counter tops, but floor and shower walls, as well. “The effect is like being under water,” says Charles. “Isn’t it beautiful? What’s amazing is, I rescued all these beautiful tiles from a tile company that went belly up. They were just going to throw it away.”

A clever wall of family photos in the hall, each in a Lucite case, hangs from a ribbon like a pendant.

In Dasha’s bedroom, a chain-stitched, hand-painted tapestry was embroidered by artists in India who painstakingly duplicated one of her paintings.

In her bathroom mirror, an array of Dasha’s jewelry hangs from suction cups. “Women love this,” she says proudly. “They always go crazy when they



ABOVE: This cozy nook carries through the home's colorful theme. **BELOW:** "The barn," Dasha's 2,800-square-foot studio, is white on the inside and rust-red on the outside.



nate fragments of the John Ringling Towers as its base; a butterfly-shaped coffee table by Dasha; as well as her custom lamp with a laser-cut metal base and a fixture resembling the Statue of Liberty's flame.

The tour leads easily to the eastern wing of the house, a little alcove stuffed with more eccentric art, including a pen-and-ink portrait of a cozy cat couple in a cushion by "Punch" cartoonist Ronald Searle.

"That's us," smiles Charles.

"And our house, too," says Dasha. "We've made a big comfy cushion for ourselves. That's all we've done, really."