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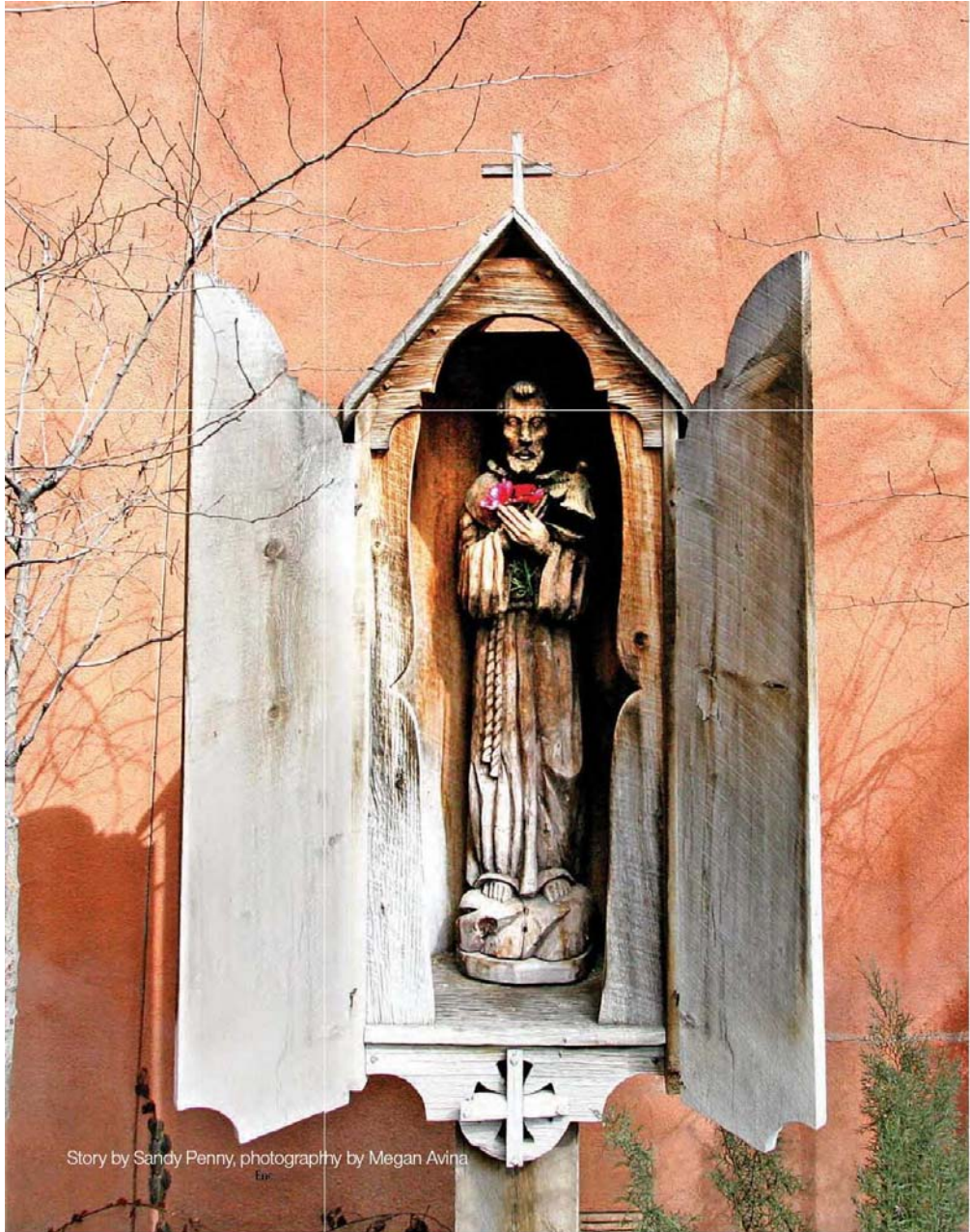




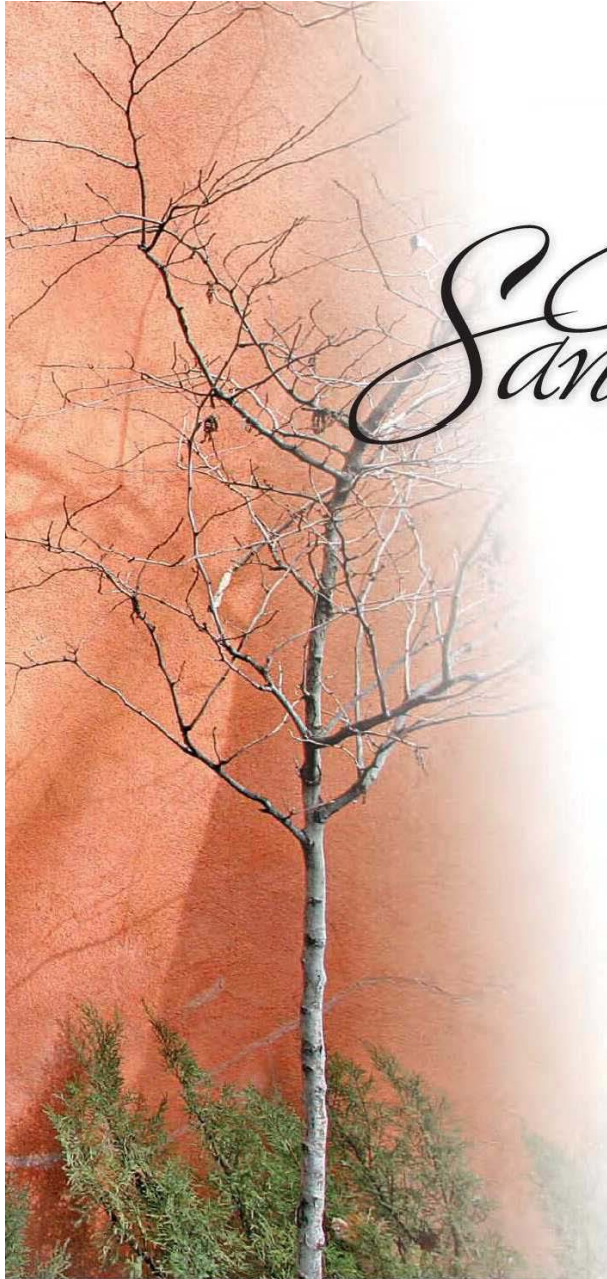
A Five Star Real Estate Experience:
The Lora Company

Art and Sanctuary at the Max & Sandra Hulse Home

Turning Ordinary Into Extraordinary:
9 Questions With L & G Interiors



Story by Sandy Penny, photography by Megan Avina



Simple Sanctuary

Behind an adobe privacy wall, through a carved green wooden gate, past giant silver leaf poplars, a one hundred year old adobe farmhouse shelters a genteel life of self expression. Hidden less than a mile from the Taos Plaza, Sandra and Max Hulse have created a work of art – their home.





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- Sandra Hulise



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Photo By Greg Osborne



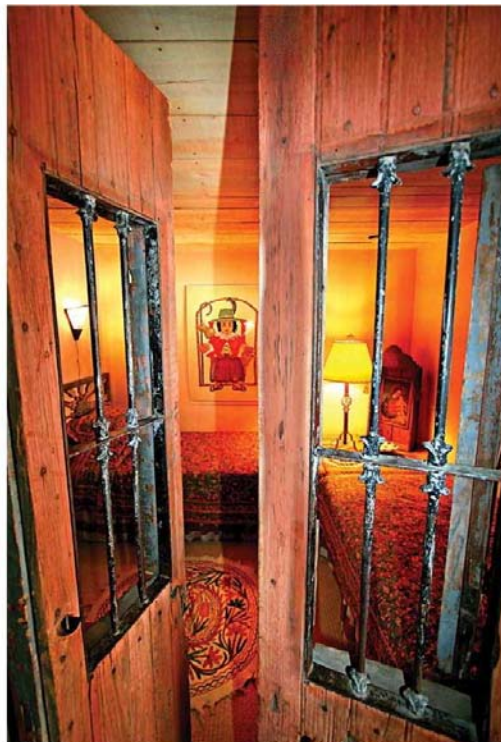
Like many other artists, the Hulse's moved to Taos for inspiration and respite from the hectic business world of Dallas, Houston and San Antonio. Soon after marrying in 1973, they bought their first New Mexico hideaway in Santa Fe. As the town became more crowded, they craved a quieter place.

Sandra was tired from over 20 years creating her sought-after appliqued wall hangings. In the early 70s, she launched her art into a business when Roger Rasbach, an internationally known architectural designer based in Houston, arranged her first show at the opening of Houston's new Prudential Building. Sandra was an instant success when the Houston Chronicle wrapped its Christmas edition in a photo of her "Madonna" wall hanging. She was so busy that she hired skilled hand-sewing assistants from around the world. When ready to close the business, it took two years, as she and Max were determined that all her helpers would find appropriate work before she quit.

As she pined for rest and a simpler life, Sandra fondly recalled childhood vacations with her fly-fisherman father in and around Taos. Since they already had friends here, one day she simply said, "Max, let's sell our Santa Fe house and move to Taos." He agreed.

When they saw this property, the house was not much to look at. It was a simple three-room adobe with a barn next to it, but they fell in love with the spectacular vista of the mountains. She knew it could be turned into a wonderful sanctuary to live, paint and relax. "Most of all," Sandra recalled, "Trees are the most precious commodity on a piece of land. It's why we bought this place."

In 1990, when the remodeling began, Max was busy with his successful businesses. Sandra moved in and oversaw the construction project for two years. She confided, "I didn't dare leave, I knew crucial decisions would have to be made, and I had to be onsite every day." When not supervising, she worked on her art and developed her distinctive oil painting style.



The Hulseos wanted to create a home that is a joyful celebration of life and art. Sandra armed herself with drawings by her Taos good friend, Joan Hughston, who developed the addition. Then she hired local contractors, a husband and wife team, Luis and Olivia Reyes. They could do almost everything. There were no real architectural blueprints, but still they proceeded. They redid the electrical and plumbing and put the heating in the baseboard using water-infusion to alleviate the dryness. They left the original house pretty much as it was, but the barn had to be redone. Sandra laughed, "Upstairs, you could stand under the roof and push up and see daylight. We had a lot to do."

Behind the original house and connecting to the barn, the couple added a large open greatroom with tall, two-story windows to showcase the fabulous Taos light. They intended this to be their studio, and the scenery has certainly been a primary influence in Max's own artwork. Once finished, they loved the room so much, it evolved into an open concept living, dining and entertainment space. Now it has become the hub of their lives, so they are considering adding a new studio. Currently, they set up easels wherever they feel like painting any place in the house or yard. Sandra has a canvas in progress in the kitchen. She is painting a still life of a Mexican trastero filled with hand-painted pottery from Oaxaca. She says, "I collect wonderful creators, and I decided I would just start painting everything I love and see where it takes me."





The home's entrance sets the tone that continues throughout. The exterior double doors are green, and a faux arch above the doors is splashed with bright flowers. Inside, the same green ties together an eclectic collection of art and furnishings. A charming little bedroom features green double doors with bars in little square windows. She says her grandchildren dubbed it the jail room, and when visiting, it's their favorite.

Entering the main living room, one is immediately struck by the large medieval-style fireplace featuring a mantel adorned with dried flower garlands. Sandra revealed that she originally decorated for a "Day of the Dead" party and enjoyed the arrangement so much that it became a permanent altar. The fireplace was suggested and found by her friend, Rasbach, at an architectural recovery house in Houston. Above the fireplace hangs one of her famous appliques, a group of angels watching over the Madonna and child, surrounded by adoring peasants. Sandra's artistic style is heavily influenced by Mexican culture, and her works are filled with Christian images.

While decorating the rooms, Sandra was inspired by Mexican festivals. Foil flowers, traditionally used in celebrations, bloom year round throughout the house. The burst of color contrasts with the snowy winter and delights you like a child's birthday party. "I'm fascinated with festivals. They are so joyous," Sandra said, "I wanted to recreate that feeling every day." Some primitive furniture pieces are also from Mexico, while others of similar style were bought locally.

It is striking that she has a French provincial sofa purchased from the John Young Hunter estate in the lower Cañón area. Discussing this departure in style and what she loves most in her house, she expresses her working philosophy, "I love it all. If

you only acquire things you really love, when you put them together, they will work. And, the results will express the personality of the people who live there."

The house welcomes guests, inside and out. A long simple banquet table evokes memories of happy parties and family gatherings. It is a replica of one she has in her Texas home made by a Russian craftsman. She loved it so much that she had a second one made.

In the back yard, after you recover from the stunning beauty of the mountain landscape, you are drawn to the waterfall designed by Joe Howell who works with Bob Lovelace. The water flows gently over rocks into a pond. In the winter, it's only a trickle as the snow melts in the afternoon warmth. But in the summer, it's a cool respite from the brilliant New Mexico sun. To the right of the pond, a St. Francis statue serenely holds a bouquet of red roses as he watches over the garden.

In addition to other artists, the home proudly displays their gifted family's work. Sandra, Max, their daughter Elizabeth Staving and Sandra's mother Nelda Freeze, are all artists. Sandra has served on the board of the Taos Art Museum and Fechin House, and Max on the Millicent Rogers Museum board. To give back to the community they love, the couple often open their doors to bring together artists and patrons. This affords them an opportunity to share their joyful home set in the natural beauty they are determined to preserve.

Other than an occasional family show at various locations around town including the Trading Post restaurant, attending one of their gatherings is almost the only way to enjoy their art in Taos. This truly is their creative sanctuary, and a work of art in its own right. [\[2\]](#)

realtor profile

The Lora Company

The Lora Company:
A five-star real estate experience

Story by Sandy Penny/Photo by Megan Avina

Prior to founding The Lora Company, Peter and Amanda Lora spent many years in the hospitality industry. They began their working relationship in 1990 at the five-star Kiawah Island Resort outside of Charleston, South Carolina. The philosophy of luxury service is a carry-over from that phase of their careers, and it is what sets them apart from many other Taos real estate companies.

Peter Lora says, "We try to think like a customer."

Amanda Lora adds, "Good communication is critical. Clients appreciate that we listen and show them what they want, not what we want."

The Lora Company agents put the customer first, and like the five-star hotels the owners have been associated with, pay attention to the details. Customers get the best possible experience. The focus is on building long-term relationships.

The warm, friendly, home-like office offers a comfortable but professional environment for customers to learn about Taos real estate. Educating people about their property investment is primary to the Lora group. There is so much to know about buying in Northern New Mexico, and people from other areas of the country may be unfamiliar with important details.

According to The Lora Company, the top five considerations in a Taos real estate purchase are: 1) Design and construction strategies, such as heating and cooling. 2) Energy-efficiency and environmental issues. 3) Sensitivity to Taos's history and multi-cultural community. 4) Water issues, such as liquid waste disposal regulations. 5) The importance of title insurance and understanding all things affecting a property's title.

In addition to Peter and Amanda Lora, the company includes Brandon Rose, who joined the team two years ago. He is a fully licensed Realtor who handles many administrative functions, in addition to listing and selling property.

"Taos has a lot to offer, and as a real estate agent, I get to share with new people all the amazing things I have discovered about the town and the surrounding area," Brandon said. "I also have a great deal of flexibility to enjoy the outdoors that I love. It's all about lifestyle for me and our clients."



“Good communication is critical. Clients appreciate that we listen and show them what they want, not what we want.”

—Amanda Lora

The Loras also love the natural environment of Taos. They live in an old adobe they renovated and now share with their two dogs, a cat, a llama and a dozen chickens.

Besides working and enjoying life in Taos, they give back to the community. Amanda is past president of the Taos Rotary Club and the Garden Club of Taos, plus a regular volunteer at Holy Cross Hospital. Peter serves on the professional standards committee of the Santa Fe Association of Realtors, and has been on the board of directors of the Taos County Association of Realtors and Habitat for Humanity of Taos.

There is always something new to learn and deal with in real estate, and a good realtor will be aware and knowledgeable of local challenges. The Lora Company's five-star service ensures that no question goes unanswered, no detail is too small on the way to a successful property purchase. ■

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L & G Interiors | Turning Ordinary Into Extraordinary



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QUESTIONS

Interview by Sandy Penny
Photo by Megan Avina

1 How would you describe L&G Interiors to those who have never seen it?

We are New Mexico's premier interior showroom specializing in kitchens, baths, flooring, appliances, and contractor supplies. We feature products in all price ranges from, entry level to top of the line designer.

2 What makes your store unique as a building supplier?

Our expertise in the industry. With years as a building contractor, Scott's knowledge of all aspects of the construction process makes him a valuable resource for anyone building a home or doing small to large remodeling or repair projects. We also know the manufacturing process for our lines and can explain the differences in entry-level, mid-range and high-end products. We can get just about anything a customer wants through our partnerships with suppliers.

3 How do your prices compare with the big chains?

When you factor in the cost of driving to Santa Fe or Albuquerque, spending a day off the job site and lost man hours, our prices are more than competitive. We can usually offer customers something affordable that will work well for them.

4 Can't buyers save a lot of money on a big project by joining a price club?

The up front buy-in is thousands of dollars, and once you're locked into the club, you may find their prices are not that great. Also, they may not offer everything you need, and you could end up having to buy from multiple sources. We're very aggressive with discounts, especially for an entire project, but also on individual items.

5 How do you work with a client who is starting from the ground up?

We encourage the homeowner to bring in their blueprint so we can go through the whole house plan with them, or we can work with their builder.

6 Where do you start on a building project?

We guide customers down the list of items needed first, like plumbing, valves in the walls, lighting, fans, etc. Sometimes we work with a customer for a year or more until the project is completed.

7 What do people typically come in to buy?

We carry everything from flooring and tile-setting materials to thinsets, grouts, caulks and waterproofing membranes. We can get whatever you need.

8 What water or energy saving products do you carry?

We offer new Toto water saving eco toilets that use 1.28 gallons of water instead of the federally mandated 1.6. We carry dual flush toilets that use less water for liquids than solids, water conserving shower heads and fuel-saving on-demand water heaters. Something new is arriving every day.

9 What about green products that earn you LEEDs points?

It's just now really in the spotlight. There are beautiful countertops made of recycled cement and glass, water-based adhesives and sealers, insulated bathtubs that hold the heat better. There are also humidifiers to lower heat bills, and we can use National Testing Labs to test your water to determine the best kind of water filtration system to buy.

Connecticut residents for 25 years, Leslie and Scott Grella moved to Taos in 2004 and bought a local fixer-upper. Discovering that some materials weren't locally available, the Grellas researched the wholesale building supply market and recognized a local need for a store such as L&G Interiors. They have been expanding their product line ever since.