



On the patio, homeowners Gina Coccimiglio and Dennis Romankowski share a toast. Their view to the west incorporates brownstone rooftops framed by the neon of the Rio Grande and Union Pacific depots. Inside, a folding screen separates Dennis' work area from the rest of the interior.

842 SQUARE FEET

A loft-living couple discovers quality, not quantity, is the key to living well

On the concrete wall of a small downtown loft in central Salt Lake City hangs a numbered print by the one and only Dr. Seuss. It depicts a collection of typical Seussian characters (imagine the Whos of Whoville), lounging on bulging couches amid a scene of Mulberry-Street chaos with beatific grins on their faces. And if you ask the loft's owners, Dennis Romankowski and Gina Coccimiglio, why they chose to give this print such prominence in their teeny, tiny, 842-square-foot metropolitan living space,

they'll say: "It's just like our life, and the calm at the middle of the storm is our loft."

Gina and Dennis themselves are as whimsical and merry as this Seuss print, and their come-as-you-are personalities inform and inhabit this cozy space in the heart of downtown SLC's reemerging west side. Dennis is an environmental consultant, and Gina co-owns a hospice facility with her daughter. They are busy, ambitious people, and their loft represents a change for them—a movement toward a new way of thinking about living, about spaces and needs. While they still maintain a

BY JEREMY PUGH PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOT ZIMMERMAN

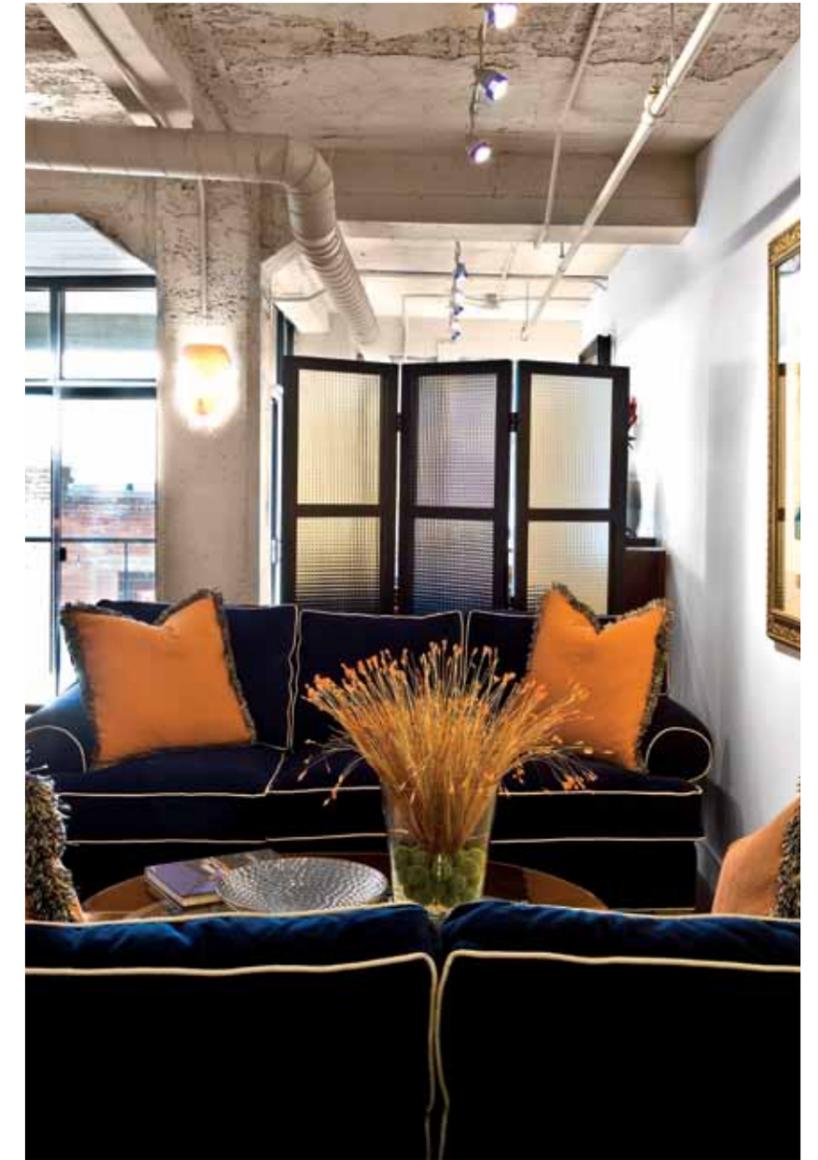
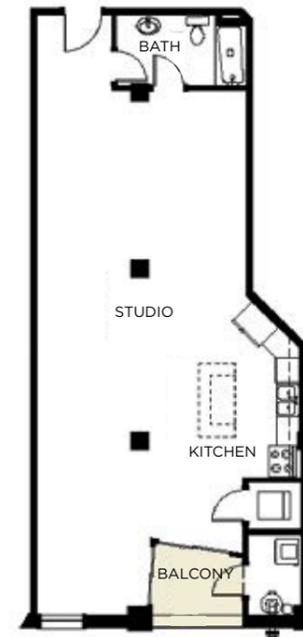


Gina requested the cobalt blue of the shower tiles, which appears throughout the home. Designer Linda Briggs-Ashton picked the bright tangerine to balance the color.



ABOVE: Dennis opens a bottle from his bar cabinet, a beautiful hardwood fixture that conceals the bar's inner workings. Behind is his Spartan office space. Dennis takes advantage of the building's wi-fi to work on his laptop.

RIGHT: The living room zone features blue velvet sofas accented by tangerine pillows. The two colors unify the entire loft. To the right of the sofas is a numbered Dr. Seuss print, which the couple says epitomizes their lifestyle.



home in Park City, the loft is a getaway and, increasingly, their true home. Lately this well-traveled and gracious couple, accustomed to the large spaces of their Park City home, feel comfortable in such a small place and have gone quite Zen when it comes to the things one needs to live.

"Most people would be surprised how few possessions you have to have from point A to point B," Dennis says. "Here, we have 840 square feet with two square for the dog. When we told our friends and family what we did, they were like, 'You've got to be kidding. You can't live in that small of a space.'"

But living, and living well, is precisely what they do.

The door of the loft opens directly into what is, well, everything. There's the master bed, the living room, the kitchen island, and a paneled screen discreetly hiding Dennis' office space and an elegant bar cabinet. The only completely cloistered area is the bathroom. Bright tangerine-colored walls mark out this private space, drawing guests' eyes back toward the entry area while everyone is gathered around the kitchen island over Gina's (a former restaurateur) beloved meals.

"I'm used to a big kitchen, but the thing I love about this kitchen is that it's so compact," Gina says, "You don't really need much to cook, and we never need to cook a big meal because we can



The loft's kitchen is small but functional. Gina says she prefers having everything close at hand. The kitchen backsplash is one of the space's most exciting elements and features the cobalt blue and tangerine that energizes the entire loft.

only have so many guests. Our friends love coming here.”

The loft's interior, designed by Hamilton Park Interiors' Linda Briggs-Ashton, is a reflection of the couple's desire for a simple, clean urban environment and, to be sure, “simple” and “clean” are watchwords for such a small space. “I really think that it's harder to design a small space,” Briggs-Ashton says. “There is so little room for error. If you've done something wrong, it's going to be really evident.”

Briggs-Ashton divided the space into zones that are easily understood. Every space, every object works hard at multiple

tasks. The living room area overlaps the kitchen zone (think: a compact, minimalist example of the great rooms anchoring most interiors these days), creating a cozy gathering space for guests both at the swiveling barstools around the kitchen island and seated on the velvet sofas. The television on the wall pivots between the “living room” space and the “bedroom” zone, for lying in bed while watching a cozy screening of *When Harry Met Sally* or sitting on sofas with guests while viewing summer's latest blockbuster. The large armoire opposite the bed serves as the closet as well as a soft



Linda Briggs-Ashton

BIG IDEAS FOR SMALL SPACES

Designing a spatially challenged interior, like this 842-square-foot loft, is no easy task. Designer Linda Briggs-Ashton offers a few tips to keep in mind:

Lighting A key to giving a small space dimension and depth is the lighting. And because loft spaces serve many functions, the lighting must allow for options. “You really have to have many sources of light and a lot of levels,” Briggs-Ashton says. She installed a dimmer system that allows control for different occasions—soft and welcoming for a dinner party, and bright and clean for working.

Think zones Because lofts are generally one room, a design must create different operational zones that can easily blend together. In Dennis and Gina's space, Briggs-Ashton used color and texture to mark out different areas. She also incorporated a screen to separate the living and entertaining spaces from Dennis' corner office area.

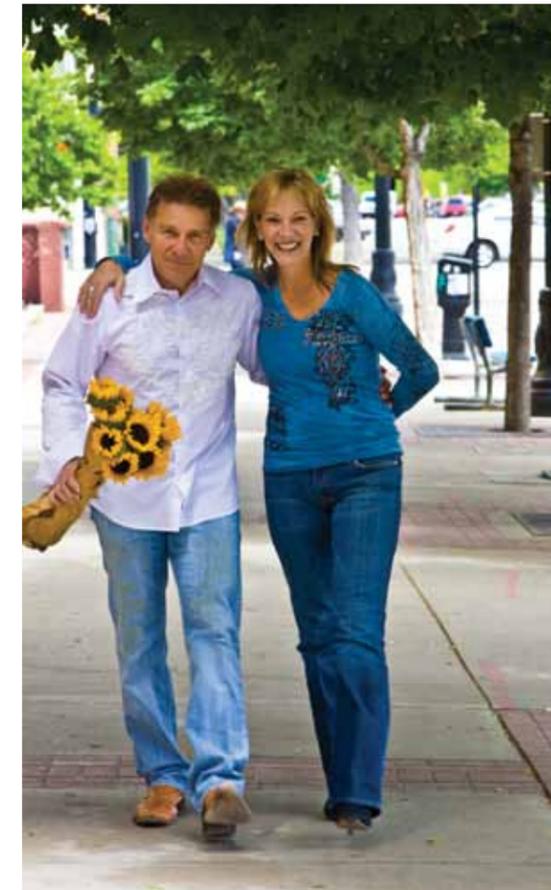
Muffle sound Loft spaces are notorious for having hard materials that bounce sound around. Briggs-Ashton used soft textures on the furniture (velvet sofas) and area rugs to muffle the sound and soften the room's hard edges.



Gina is a former restaurant owner and an enthusiastic and accomplished cook. Here she and Dennis collaborate on a meal. They couple loves entertaining in the loft, which provides an always-intimate setting for an always-small guest list.



Crude concrete arches and exposed ductwork and beams create part of the charm Warren Lloyd, Westgate Loft's principal architect, intended for the modernized warehouse. "By retaining the building's distinct warehouse characteristics, we enabled the owners to become connected to the building's history," he says.



Dennis and Gina stroll down 200 South after a quick trip to the florist. They both love how loft living allows them to have a home base to explore downtown SLC on foot.

break to the concrete walls. The velvet sofas work to absorb sound and inject texture, which breaks up the hard spaces. The brightly colored backsplash in the kitchen draws the eye and adds dimension.

And then there's the view. The panorama to the west underscores Salt Lake City's revitalized urban landscape, a newly rediscovered realm couples like Gina and Dennis are embracing. The same sunsets bench dwellers enjoy from suburban decks are framed with a foreground of brownstone rooftops and the neon lights of the Rio Grande and Union Pacific depots.

"One of the things that sold me was the view of the Rio Grande's neon sign," Gina says. "As a little girl, my mom and I used to catch the train there and go see family. So there's a lot of history here for me. I remember the days when downtown Salt Lake was the place to go shopping, but then the malls took over. Now, though, it's moving back to a

place for people to gather."

For Gina and Dennis, a walkable, simple life is a happy life. Like many world travelers, they've recognized the conundrum of cars—the freedom they provide is offset by the burden of parking and maintaining them. The couple revels in their close proximity to the Farmers' Market in season, and enjoys the short stroll or TRAX ride with grandchildren to see the lights at Temple Square. Life, they've discovered in this cozy loft, should be measured by quality, not quantity.

"You don't realize what a pain cars are until you've spent time living without them," Gina says.

"We've become preachers to that congregation," Dennis adds. "The intermodal hub is two and a half blocks away, and eventually there will be a Salt Lake Airport extension for TRAX. This is the ideal location. We just believe that this whole area is going to become the heartbeat of Salt Lake City." n