

# A Room of His Own

Art restoration expert Massoud Shiraz describes his backyard studio.



When I start restoring a painting, sometimes I cannot stop," says Massoud Shiraz (who prefers to be called "Shiraz"). The art restoration expert often works until 1 or 2 a.m., repairing valuable paintings that range from family heirlooms to museum masterpieces. Born in Iran, Shiraz was commissioned to work for the Museum of the Vatican and for other private collections in Rome before moving to North Carolina 16 years ago. He came to visit his brother and fell in love with Charlotte—and with his future wife, Sherrill, a native of Stanley. The couple have a young daughter, Arianna.

"I spend a lot of time in my studio, so I've tried to fix a good environment,"

Shiraz explains. "Most of the ambience I'm surrounded with are the things I enjoy—art, music, and books."

Unique features abound in the 1,000-square-foot studio behind his home. Shiraz designed the space, adding 3 feet of concrete for the foundation. "When you restore the paintings, you cannot have vibrations," he explains. Marble floors help maintain the room's constant below-72-degree temperature. During steamy North Carolina summers, a dehumidifier combats moisture—the worst enemy of the paintings. The studio also houses tools of Shiraz's work—a microscope, darkroom equipment, and easels.

Soaring 18-foot ceilings and six large

windows on north and south walls add to the aesthetics. Walls painted silver champagne provide a neutral backdrop for works-in-progress and for pieces in Shiraz's own art collection. Clocks display different time zones to facilitate calls to European colleagues. An impressive reference library helps him pinpoint detailed background about the artists whose work he restores. "You need to know the artist," he explains. "I try as close as possible to put his work to his work, not my work to his work."

The best part of his studio? Its backyard proximity to his home and family. "If I want to see my daughter, I can go see her," says this proud father.

*Nancy Dorman-Hickson*