



NEW MEDICINE

THE REHAB OF A UKRAINIAN VILLAGE LOFT IS JUST WHAT THE DOCTORS ORDERED

Everyone involved in rehabbing this Ukrainian Village loft has an opinion on the shape of the new kitchen island.

"It looks like a bird taking flight," architect Bill Rodon-Hornof insists with a laugh.

"It is more like a cresting wave," argues decorator Eric Schrader.

The homeowners, busy young medical professionals, prefer to call it "the boomerang."

So, did anyone see eye-to-eye throughout this gut renovation?

Actually, it was more like a love fest. The architects and the decorator became soul mates. It even got a little spooky. "Our color schemes worked together, paint colors worked perfectly with tile, without us having to consult each other," says Schrader, owner of the 3-year-old firm ejon interiors, "We thought, 'Wow!'"

The owners responsible for putting together this happy band,


Estelle and Michael, knew just what they wanted when they went shopping in 2003 for a new apartment: lots of square footage, outdoor space and a city view.

Rodon-Hornof, who has many clients in the neighborhood, says Chicago's Near Northwest Side is a neighborhood in transition, its wide lots attracting renovation, single-family home construction and new residents who are sophisticated about architecture.

The tri-level loft that the couple chose rambles over an expansive 3,500 square feet and has another 1,100 square feet of rooftop terrace. There are beautiful views of the Chicago skyline and a 19th-Century brick façade wrapping around a courtyard containing a Japanese-inspired communal garden. The only glitch was that the former industrial space had been converted into its 20-condo units in the early '90s and it felt a little tired.

"The place needed a face-lift," says Rodon-Hornof, who quickly enlisted his wife, Colette, his partner in 2RZ Architecture and Construction, into the project. With Schrader advising on finish and fur-

BY LISA CREGAN | TRIBUNE PHOTOS BY BILL HOGAN



Chicago's 2RZ Architecture conceived of the soaring open living space with a kitchen island as its centerpiece. The island's tri-level counter consists of three different types of granite and the cabinets are cherry. Opposite: The owner ascends a spiral staircase that leads to an atrium and an 1,100-square-foot rooftop terrace.

niture and 2RZ acting as general contractor, the new homeowners threw themselves into an extreme makeover. Incredibly, it took only eight months to finish. You can wait longer than that for a Toyota Prius.

Stepping inside the front door, it is clear the '90s have been exorcised. A glistening partial wall, constructed from two overlapping panes of translucent glass, separates the entryway from the dining room. "Your eye goes to the left, and you know something is behind that glass. It piques your curiosity," says Michael. "To make the glass free-standing in that spot took a lot of engineering," says Colette. "We didn't want it to go crashing into Eric's expensive dining room table," adds her husband with a smile.

The table he's referring to is a dark wood stunner from Chicago's Manifesto showroom that the decorator chose for the space. Schrader also chose to steer clear of the traditional line-up of dining chairs in that room in favor of adding a stylish bench. He thinks it loosens things up. "The bench says let's kick back and relax—we just had a nice dinner."

"Estelle and Michael aren't about a Louis XVI chair in the middle of a glass room. They wanted an informal space," says Rodon-Hornof. "They wanted it dressed down." 2RZ conceived a breathtaking open central living area that is contemporary, but not in a hard-edged way. The cozy, bare-brick walls and Douglas fir beams were preserved from the original renovation.

"A lot of the things we put into the loft are actually in contrast to the brick and Douglas fir, like the dark-stained cabinets in the kitchen," says Rodon-Hornof. "We wanted to showcase the contrast." His philosophy is that placing strikingly dissimilar materials in close proximity catches the eye and creates beauty. For instance, in the master bath, glass tile is juxtaposed against natural river rock. The loft's overall design feels like Miami Modern as interpreted by Ralph Lauren.

Schrader's interior design style dovetails perfectly. "I like to mix the traditional with the modern," he says, "I don't like things all Miesian; all sterile steel and black leather."

To keep the marriage counselors at bay, Schrader devised what the owner calls his "dual living space." "Mike likes to kick back with buddies and watch football while Estelle does her own thing," he says. Harmony was maintained by creating two back-to-back living rooms. One group of friends can quietly contemplate the fire while the other watches a raucous sports event.

A decadently comfortable sofa and four ottomans from Bright Chair Company provide plenty of options in front of the television, "Those four ottomans instead of a coffee table work really well," says Michael, "People sit on the chairs and put their feet up and we also use them for extra seating."

A great party space is always fun, but most evenings this hard-working couple just perches and unwinds at that indescribable kitchen island. Light streams in through the enormous old cantilevered windows that line the ceiling, and as dusk is turning to night the light takes on a soft amber glow. At that point, neither one really cares what shape the island is; it just feels right. □

Lisa Cregan, a Lake Forest writer, is a frequent Magazine contributor.

RESOURCES Architecture and construction: 2RZ Architecture, Chicago. Interior design: Eric Schrader, ejon interiors inc., Chicago. Dining room: Promemoria table—Manifesto; chairs and bench—Morson Collection (out of business), Chicago; rug—Peerless Rug Co., Chicago; hanging fixture—Lightology, Chicago; large urn—A New Leaf, Chicago; large custom mirrors—Eric Schrader, ejon interiors, Chicago; silk window treatments—Kachi Bachi, Chicago; armoire—Mig & Tig, Chicago; translucent glass partition—2RZ Architecture, Chicago. Kitchen: Design—2RZ Architecture; tech lighting—Lightology, Chicago; Granite—Green Pearl polished, Green Pearl honed, Nordic Green polished—Stone Design, Glendale Heights, Ill.; cherry cabinets stained in Wild Cherry—BCS Cabinetry, Chicago; Viking range and hood, Bosch dishwasher and under-counter wine storage—Abt Electronics, Glenview; counter stools—Bright Chair Co., Merchandise Mart, Chicago. Living room: credenza and standing lamp—Manifesto, Chicago; vases and footed bowl—Sprout Home, Chicago; large planter—A New Leaf, Chicago; club chair, arm chairs, ottomans—Bright Chair Co., Merchandise Mart, Chicago; Ralph Lauren sofa facing TV—Beacon Hill, Mart; sofa facing coffee table, small side table, round cocktail tables—Koch-Smith Furniture, Mart; lamps between the sofas—Mig & Tig, Chicago; coffee table—Summer Hill Ltd., Mart; window treatment—Kachi Bachi, Chicago; painting—by Marketa Sivek, Chicago.



Decorator Eric Schrader calls his style "comfortable contemporary." In the living room, earth tones and casual furniture blend with a painting by the owners' favorite artist, Marketa Sivek.

