

Friday, January 5, 2018

at home

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Let the light in

Dramatic stairway links and lightens renovated town house

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Architect Jim Romano describes the new kitchen as “really simple and long.” The red barstools echo the interior color of the elevator behind them (out of frame).



The top-level master bathroom was updated and opened up, with a giant mirror, a makeup desk and dressing table, Abodian cabinetry and a slipper tub by Victoria + Albert.

GLASS

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envisioned the whole thing open.”

As it turned out, “opening it up” became one of Romano’s three remodeling mandates (along with improving flow and organization, and transforming colors and finishes, with interior designer Markie Nelson).

“It felt very dark and closed-in, and the kitchen and living space on the second floor didn’t really work, and inhibited the connection to outside,” Romano says.

The exterior facade was off-limits, but inside, Romano opened the remodeling floodgates to open the home: reconfiguring rooms; removing all the walls on the first floor and introducing steel columns, which were left expressed; adding even more steel, glass and wood — and in essence creating an all-around refined retreat with a

coolly contemporary industrial vibe.

The living room relocated to the eminently more-livable first floor, taking over a space previously weighed down by low ceilings, marble floors and heavy molding. Original French doors connect directly to a re-imagined deck surrounded by new planters, loads of greenery — and not many humans at all.

“In this building, patios pretty much go unused,” Joan says. “We’re usually the only ones out here. We had a patio we could improve.”

More improvement awaits just inside the entry (notable for Joan’s “favorite thing,” a front-door door-knocker crafted from a fox figurine she found): a brand-new, stand-alone powder room directly across from the elevator. “We needed a powder room,” says Romano. “The box floating in the room creates a desk area.”

Up that supremely open, floating staircase, the former kitchen has become Rick’s office, filled with custom cabinetry and facing a fabulous view of the grounds. At the other end of the not-scary-at-all glass bridge, Romano “carved room for a guest bedroom, study and bath” from a space that had held a step-down living and dining area, Nelson says; there’s also what Joan calls a “pretty good-sized laundry.”

And on the top level, the tranquil master bedroom stayed pretty much the same configuration, Romano says, but with a new fireplace and cabinetry, and what Nelson calls the “ultimate closet/dressing room.”

The adjoining master bathroom modernized as it opened up — “It had a drop soffit and felt enclosed,” Romano says — and a door from the original dining room now slides across for “just enough privacy,” Joan says.

Those doors found a new purpose, but otherwise only the skylight, the elevator and part of the master bedroom remain, Joan says — and she and Rick are openly happy about their opened-up town house.

“We redid everything inside; we took the stairway out,” she says. “This was our second summer here. We spent our first summer patting ourselves on the back.”