

# the original

INFLUENCED BY FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT (BUT ALSO INDUSTRIAL LOFTS AND TRADITIONAL JAPANESE), AN EDMONTON COUPLE MAKES A HOME THAT TRULY STANDS ON ITS OWN.

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# before moving back to their

home town of Edmonton, homeowners David and Jacqueline lived in Chicago's Oak Park neighbourhood, where they fell in love with the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. His clean-lined yet artisanal aesthetic became a guiding principle when they started to plan their own house—although not the only one.

To design their house, the couple teamed up

**Below left: The stairs are constructed from a non-offgassing MDF known as Medex, traditionally used in outdoor settings, and the spindles are made from rolled steel. Right: Shoji screens throughout the house re-**

**flect the couple's appreciation of Japanese design. Upstairs, a shoji was created out of a parlour door salvaged from the original house. Opposite: The large kitchen island is also a work space where the kids do homework.**

with Peter Amerongen and Bruce Watt of Habitat Studio and Workshop, but this was hardly a case of architect leading client. "Jacqueline and Peter had a really strong vision," explains Amerongen. "And I just completely bought into it."

In addition to the Wright infatuation, they admired industrial-style lofts, and David's Japanese heritage would also figure in. Most fundamentally there was the challenge of how to deal with the building site, a long but very narrow lot in Strathcona, one of the city's oldest neighbourhoods. Handy to everything, it also offered a rare unobstructed view of the river valley and the Legislative Building across the way.

While David's top priority was to maximize the view (the solution being to extend the house two-and-a-half storeys to an attic studio and essentially to design it from the top down), Jacqueline's was to incorporate natural materials, and if possible recycled ones. "Her first request was for recycled grain elevator beams and posts," recalls Amerongen. Luckily Habitat had just acquired a source for this from grain elevators that were being taken down in southern Alberta.







This page: The fireplace in the main living area is a focal point for most of the main floor—you spot it as soon as you walk through the front door. The concrete surround was poured in five pieces and hoisted into place. Opposite: When Jacqueline and David's daughter Tora gets a little older, her bed will be moved up the stairs to a sleeping loft.



"It's instant character," says Jacqueline, motioning toward the posts, which stand as exposed structural supports both vertically and horizontally for the free-flowing main floor. Jacqueline admits that during construction she had to scold well-meaning workers when she caught them trying to sand her rough-hewn posts and otherwise "clean them up."

Nothing was to be machine perfect. In fact the crown mouldings (made of angle iron) for the posts were purposely left outside for a few weeks so that they could grow a bit of rust. Other iron elements were run through the carwash and left out in the winter weather to acquire character.

"I also really believe in the whole recycled ele-

ment," she adds, pointing out other recycled garage-sale finds of light fixtures and furniture pieces. A claw-foot tub from the original house was also salvaged, refurbished and placed as a balance to a very modern poured-concrete double sink in the master bathroom.

The Japanese connection is most evident in the shoji screens used to section off Jacqueline's main-floor office and also in the bedroom, where the couple get separate changing areas, a consequence of David's shift work. (A thin panel of milky textured fibreglass was used in the shoji screens; two young daughters made the traditional rice paper impractical.)

The only oh-my-god moment, it seems, came when copper panels were installed on the front of the house: bright orange sheets "as shiny as a new penny," as Jacqueline remembers. Less than two years later, however, the metal has mellowed to a rich, weathered bronze, lending the house a sense of permanence in this historic neighbourhood. See SOURCES.

Several of the rooms upstairs feature graphic treatments to the walls painted by local designer Katheryn Kern, including the red motif in daughter Tora's room (see page 67) and the textured block pattern in

the master bedroom, below. Right: Grain elevator posts were used to great effect both inside and outside the house; copper panels, once shiny, have now mellowed into a weathered bronze exterior.





