

# GLOBAL ACCESS

Searl Lamaster Howe Architects builds a young couple's dream home—a unique, modern interpretation of a Mediterranean retreat inspired by their travel around the world.

By Tate Gunnerson // Photography by Tony Solari

Ten months after Nadim and Beth began dating, they embarked on a yearlong journey around the world, visiting far-flung locales such as Turkey, Egypt and Uganda, where they volunteered in an orphanage. "Make it or break it," Nadim explains. "It felt like three or four years of dating, and it brought us very close together."

They approached the construction of their first home in Evanston's historic district with similar abandon, signing the construction contract before their six-month long engagement. Three months into their life as newlyweds, they learned that they were expecting their first child, a daughter. "Our goal all along was to move into the new house before she arrived," Beth recalls. "It was a race to get everything done in time." To help them realize their vision of a modern Mediterranean home, they called upon Greg Howe of Searl Lamaster Howe Architects, who had designed Nadim's parents' sleek downtown apartment in the early 2000s. "The general layout is pretty much a direct development of a sketch that Nadim put together," Howe explains. "We tend to attract clients with a really strong aesthetic who become very engaged in the project, and Beth and Nadim are the extreme of that."

Indeed, while traveling together, the couple had



**WINTEREST**  
A palette of neutrals with a clean white backdrop and accents of blue radiates the Mediterranean vibe Beth was going for.



**PAST TO PRESENT**  
From above left: The antique chandelier was a gift passed down from Nadim's parents. It had hung in his grandparents' home in Beirut. Beth and Luke in the hallway that faces the courtyard. Arched doorways and Moroccan lanterns add an exotic element. Opposite page: The open-concept kitchen features a large island with plenty of storage and a textured, modern Tolarno tile backsplash and concealed Wolf, Black and Sub-Zero appliances.

discovered that they shared an appreciation for design and a similar taste in architecture. An interior courtyard in Ecuador, for example, evoked fond memories of Spain for Beth, who had lived there for two one-year stints, and reminded Nadim of his grandparents' home in Syria. "Wherever we traveled, we saw unique architectural styles," Beth explains. "It was so inspiring."

In turn, the house Howe designed is a pair of gable-roofed structures built around an intimate courtyard with a rustic stone wall. A corridor with a barrel ceiling connects the segments. Like the facade of the home, the hallway is stripped of ornaments, walking the line between tradition and modernity. "It's about light, shadow and form," Howe explains. "The visual interest comes from the play of light and dark."

On the second floor, the passageway overlooks the living area, which has 19-foot cedar ceilings and tall windows that flood the area with daylight. Its railing includes a trio of iron pieces, two of them fabricated from the original that the couple won at auction. It's just one of a large bounty they scored that day, including Juliet balconies and a set of antique double doors from Argentina that now hang in the living room. "We felt like we won the lottery," Beth says. "It was so exciting."

Inspired by the idea of designing her own home, Beth took the lead on the interior design. For the open kitchen, she worked with Howe to select modern Italian kitchen cabinets in a similar hue to the contemporary porcelain flooring in the adjacent living area. The modern elements coexist peacefully with an antique Persian rug and a Cleverfield sofa, thanks to a palette of white and cool blues that unites them. "It's a quiet backdrop that lets the architecture speak for itself," Beth explains.

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**MORROCCO RETREAT**  
Architect Greg Howe incorporated structural beams into the design for Old World flair. An antique iron gate from Jerusalem is used into the sliding door that divides the bedroom and its study. Opposite page from top: A custom poured concrete vanity is joined with Greco florets and an inset shower with Kohler fittings; the home's crisp view belies the grandness of the architecture and courtyard courtyard walls.



"THERE'S A STORY BEHIND EVERY DETAIL IN THIS HOUSE."  
—NADIM

A custom bookcase includes a bench for extra seating and a place to display souvenirs from the couples' global travels. "There's a story behind every detail in this house," Nadim explains, pointing to a large brass-and-crystal chandelier illuminating an intimate seating area in front of a custom limestone fireplace that Howe designed. The ornate piece is one of a trio of fixtures in the house that came from his grandparents' home in Lebanon. "Having these kinds of meaningful things is what makes this a home," Nadim explains.

Not to mention their 8-month-old daughter, Lola, who was born just two weeks before they moved in. The new family recently hosted friends with a daughter the same age for an afternoon of food, conversation and salsa dancing by the outdoor fireplace. They are quick to give credit to the entire design team for the success of the project. "Greg was the deciding factor whenever we had a disagreement, and he really cared about making us happy," Beth explains. "We use and love every part of this house."

## DESIGN DETAILS

- TYPE**  
Single-Family Home
- LOCATION**  
Evanston
- ARCHITECTURE**  
Greg Howe, Searl Lamaster Howe Architects  
searllamaster.com
- BUILDERS**  
Schmidt & Haegeland Builders  
shbuilders.com
- RESOURCES**  
Surface Group International  
All tile and limestone floor in bathroom  
surfacegroup.com
- Lightology**  
Kitchen pendants  
lightology.com
- Avanti Kitchens and Granite**  
Kitchen cabinetry  
avantikitchensandgranite.com
- Restoration Hardware**  
Living room sofa  
restorationhardware.com
- Room & Board**  
Living room chair and leather chair  
roomandboard.com
- Architectural Artifacts**  
Antique iron and door accents  
architecturalartifacts.com

- So Concept**  
Small living room sofa  
soconcept.com
- Dwell Studio**  
Upholstered living room chairs  
dwellstudio.com
- Anthropologie**  
Living room rug, coffee table and kitchen stools  
anthropologie.com
- Marvin**  
Windows  
marvin.com
- VA Robinson**  
Kitchen hood fabrication  
773.205.4364