SQUARE *Deal*

This modern retreat creates an open, lightfilled dream home for its owners while embracing its more traditional neighbors.

By Tate Gunnerson
Photography by Cynthia Lynn

"You kind of just exhale when you walk into this house," explains architect Greg Howe of the modern courtyard home on an ultrawide lot in Lincoln Square that he and colleague Pam Lamaster-Millett of Searl Lamaster Howe Architects designed for an attorney and stay-at-home-mom with two young kids. "I canvassed the architect associations' websites and checked out literally every architect who did modern design," the husband explains. "We had a good idea of what we wanted, but Greg did a great job of translating my chicken-scratch drawings into something so much more."

The couple searched for months before finding the right place for their new abode—a wider-than-average lot in Lincoln Square. "We knew which streets had the larger lots, and it came down to about five streets that we were watching," the wife explains. "We also really wanted to be close to the merchant area so we could just walk out our front door and experience what Lincoln Square has to offer."

Even more importantly, the property included a rarefied and highly coveted detached coach house, which current city codes would preclude. "It's really challenging to incorporate the elements that everybody wants and still have enough room left over to create architectural and design gestures," Lamaster-Millett explains. "Finding a house with a coach house in the back allowed us to do some things that aren't so easy to do on a typical standard-sized lot."

For starters, the two-story structure has been converted into a garage with a second-floor media room. A bronzeway-mudroom with bespoke walnut cabinetry connects the garage with the new modernist house at the front of the property. The area between the two structures has been transformed into an outdoor living area with metal furnishings grouped around a brick fireplace. A second small courtyard with a tree growing in it allows for natural daylight and verdant views in the center of the building. "Bringing light into the house without compromising privacy was a priority, and there are a lot of different gestures in recognition of that," Howe explains.

The kitchen, for example, is filled with light all day thanks to an angled row of skylights along one side. Another large skylight floods the open staircase between the living and dining areas toward the front of the home. A glass railing on the second floor and an internal window at the first landing allow that light to pass through unobstructed. "I'm light sensitive, so I appreciate the way the large windows and skylights really open things up," the husband explains. "Even if it's a gray winter day, it's nice and bright in here."

A limited palette of simple materials, including white oak flooring and walnut cabinetry, enhances that sense of openness. Custom walnut cabinetry frames the rectilinear white marble fireplace hearth in the adjacent family room and has also been used as a handrail for the blackened steel stairway. In the kitchen, a hand of walnut wraps around a long expanse of white laminate cabinetry. "We captured that whole bank of cabinets with one single move," Lamaster-Millett notes. "There are a lot of different elements happening there that this unifies with one simple, crisp line."

Likewise, all the tile and countertops throughout are complementary white materials that enhance that sense of continuity. "The clients really emphasized to us that they wanted a simple mix of materials that would be timeless, restrained and comfortable," Lamaster-Millett explains, pointing to the wood-burning fireplace in the living room, which carries the exterior brick into the house. "Reusing the same palette of materials ties everything together and creates a sense of harmony."

While the home's asymmetrical rectilinear lines create a decidedly contemporary impression, its facade is clad with cement board and brick that allows it to coexist peacefully with the more traditional homes in the historic neighborhood. "We made a concerted effort for a light-hearted, friendly feeling from the street," says Lamaster-Millett.

Although the owners have received many compliments from their neighbors about the new addition to the block, their favorite came from a woman walking past the house with her dog. "She said, 'I hate modern, but I love your house,'" the husband explains. "That was the best validation that we had achieved our goals." ■

HARM WELCOME
Custom walnut cabinetry frames the minimalist white marble fireplace hearth, while irregular furniture is softened by the addition of disequilibrium rugs. Opposite page: An orange front door grants visitors with a pop of color, while walnut cabinetry serves as a gastronomic stage at the front of the home. An inset chair by Ross Wagner and furnishings from Bruce & Board and CB2 fill the home's modern vibe.

FRESH AND CLEAN
The master bathroom carries the home's monochromatic palette through bright white tile, marble cabinets and sleek Eccentric Glass Monogrebe.

DINNER BY DESIGN
By day, the courtyard finish the dining room with light. By night, it forms shoulder by Jonathan Adler Ishiro over, illuminating a metal-and-marble table by Bruce & Board that is surrounded by walnut side chairs by Ross Wagner and a pair of hair chairs by Eero Saarinen.

SUITE DREAMS
The contrasted palette of materials continues in the master bath, which has built-in walnut cabinetry and white oak flooring.

DESIGN DETAILS

TYPE
Single-family home

LOCATION
Lincoln Square

ARCHITECTURE
Greg Howe and Pam Lamaster-Millett, Searl Lamaster Howe Architects
searlarch.com

BRICKWORK
Illinois Brick Company
illinoisbrick.com

RESOURCES

CB2
Occasional tables in family room and transparent trunk in living room
cb2.com

Coalesse
Hans Wagner chairs in living room and dining room
coalesse.com

Crate & Barrel
Chairs in family room and coffee table in living room
crateandbarrel.com

Forestville Builders & Supply
Custom cabinetry
forestvillebuilders.com

Hansgrohe
Faucet in master bathroom
hansgrohe-usa.com

Jesse Chicago
Sectional in family room
jessechicago.com

Jonathan Adler
Chandelier in dining room
jonathanadler.com

Knoll
Eero Saarinen host chairs in dining room
knoll.com

Lightology
Lights in kitchen
lightology.com

Miele
Wall ovens
miele.com

Room & Board
Sofa in living room and marble table in dining room
roomandboard.com

Sub-Zero and Wolf
Range
subzero-wolf.com