

WORK OF HEART

Deciding to jump in and buy a duplex penthouse in the building where they already lived was a leap of faith for a stylish couple.

BY LAURA HINE
PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARGARET RAJIC





The penthouse's new custom kitchen is now on the home's main entry level. Builder Jane Levy and designer Leah Phillips led the extensive two-year complete renovation.



From left: The lower-level living room includes a sofa by Article and a pair of black leather chairs by Cisco Brothers; the upstairs seating area has one of the home's many Turkish rugs. This one has meaningful symbols handstitched into the rug.



Newlyweds Katie and Mehmet Tasci quite obviously love their River North building. Mehmet and Katie bought a two-bedroom condo in the building, but when one of the building's four penthouses came on the market, they jumped on it, even though it was, as Katie says, "in dire shape." The duplex condo hadn't been updated in years and needed a lot of love to turn it into the modern, warm space the couple knew it could be.

A few things convinced the couple that they were up for the challenge. First, they had already worked with Leah Phillips, partner at Phillips + Gilligan Interiors, on their two-bedroom apartment and knew she could help them figure out the design. Second, they had Jane Levy on board as their builder. "She makes the impossible possible," Katie says. The impossible included relocating the kitchen from the lower level to the upper level, which is where the home's main entry

is located; closing a portion of an open stairwell to make a dining space; and getting multiple permits and approvals for the whole project.

"We were brought in to help them figure it out," Phillips says. "They asked us to make every room feel like it's telling the same story, and also to marry their two styles." The couple describe Mehmet's style as modern, while Katie's is understated boho with a minimalist feel. They also had the advantage of knowing what they didn't want. "We met with a few other designers and they all had very elaborate plans—pearl wallpaper, velvet everything and bold colors—despite us saying we want something that's more inviting, inclusive and approachable," Katie says. "I felt like everyone was thinking that we must have drapes." Instead, Phillips helped them focus on what they were passionate about, which is their art collection. The couple work with Erica Barrish to collect art they love and they wanted their home to reflect that passion. Impressively, one of their paintings by Toyin Ojih Odutola is



From left: Rest & Repine made the husband's custom desk to hide an oversize computer monitor; Rest & Repine also made the bed and dresser in the serene master bedroom.



currently on loan to the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago for its exhibit *Duro Olowu: Seeing Chicago*.

Phillips gave them white walls that accentuate their art, and added texture and color in other clever ways. “My husband is Turkish, so he really wanted Turkish rugs,” Katie says. “But when we looked in Turkey, everything was too vibrant.” Phillips brought in Yoruk Rug Gallery to find vintage and custom rugs for most of the rooms in the condo. “In their own way, rugs are art too,” Phillips says. “The look we were going for was more muted and faded, but still lush.”

Other details that give the home great personality are all the custom built-ins that Phillips designed and Levy’s team—working with Roecker Cabinets—made possible. The white kitchen’s finishes and fronts reference the alder wood bar without exactly matching it. And while the staircase is original, Phillips refinished it and changed out the stainless steel hardware for new wood railings. Each bathroom has custom vanities, and other ingenious touches include a custom desk in the office made by Rest & Repine that hides Mehmet’s large-screen monitor he uses when working from home. When the workday is done, it only takes a touch of a button to lower it into the desk.

In all, the project took two years to complete—the outside terrace is this summer’s project—but the ability to pop upstairs whenever there was a question definitely made the process easier. “When it was all done, we left for a trip to Japan and Leah styled the whole house while we were gone,” Katie says. “We came home and it was like a dream come true. They unpacked everything; we just had to bring our clothes upstairs.” ■



DESIGN DETAILS

TYPE

Duplex penthouse

LOCATION

River North

BUILDER

Levy Custom Homes
levycustomhomes.com

INTERIOR DESIGN

Phillips + Gilligan Interiors
phillipsandgilliganinteriors.com

CABINETS

Roecker Cabinets
roeckercabinets.com

RESOURCES

CISCO HOME

Downstairs black leather chairs
ciscohome.net

DESIGN WITHIN REACH

Dining room table and chairs
dwr.com

EAB FINE ART SERVICES

Curator for most art in the
common areas
eabfineart.com

THE FINE LINE

Tile for most of the bathrooms
finelinetile.com

LAWSON-FENNING

Upstairs living room sofa and
wing chairs
lawsonfenning.com

MADE GOODS

Bedroom nightstands
madegoods.com

MILLS TECHNOLOGIES

Motorized shades
mills-technologies.com

REST & REPINE

Master bed and dresser, custom
office desk
@restandrepine

SPROUT HOME

Indoor plants
sprouthome.com

VISUAL COMFORT

Bar and master bath lighting
visualcomfort.com

YORUK RUG GALLERY

Turkish rugs
yorukruggallery.com