



# GO WITH THE FLOW

*Etobicoke reno works all the angles to find the right rhythm*

BY JANE AUSTER • PHOTOGRAPHY: EK PARK

DESIGN

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**SOMETIMES PATIENCE REALLY IS A VIRTUE.** Lucy D'Angelo, her husband Steve and their three children lived in their approximately 3,200-square-foot Etobicoke bungalow from the 1970s for nearly 10 years before they finally decided to do something about the less-than-perfect first floor.

They had already undertaken other renovations to supplement changes by previous owners in the '90s, including creating an addition above the garage, where Steve has his music studio.

But the downstairs interior had been neglected, and it was a definite candidate for a major rethink. It felt "gated," according to Lucy, especially in the kitchen area. The floors were white ceramic with a lot of chips, and the kitchen cupboards were cream-coloured with a Formica base. Plus the kitchen was separated from the dining room. There was a wall in what is now the peninsula area and it all lacked natural light. The '70s design was boxy and dark, especially since the D'Angelo family enjoys enter-

taining and spending social time in the kitchen.

"I wanted the space to have an airy feel about it because when you were in the kitchen before, you felt you weren't part of the rest of the house," said Lucy, who had definite ideas about reimagining the first floor. ☞

*Looking at the home in terms of a 3-D sculpture led designer Adriana Mot to place a custom-made seven-foot-high maplewood chair near the entranceway so that the eye naturally peeks left and right.*

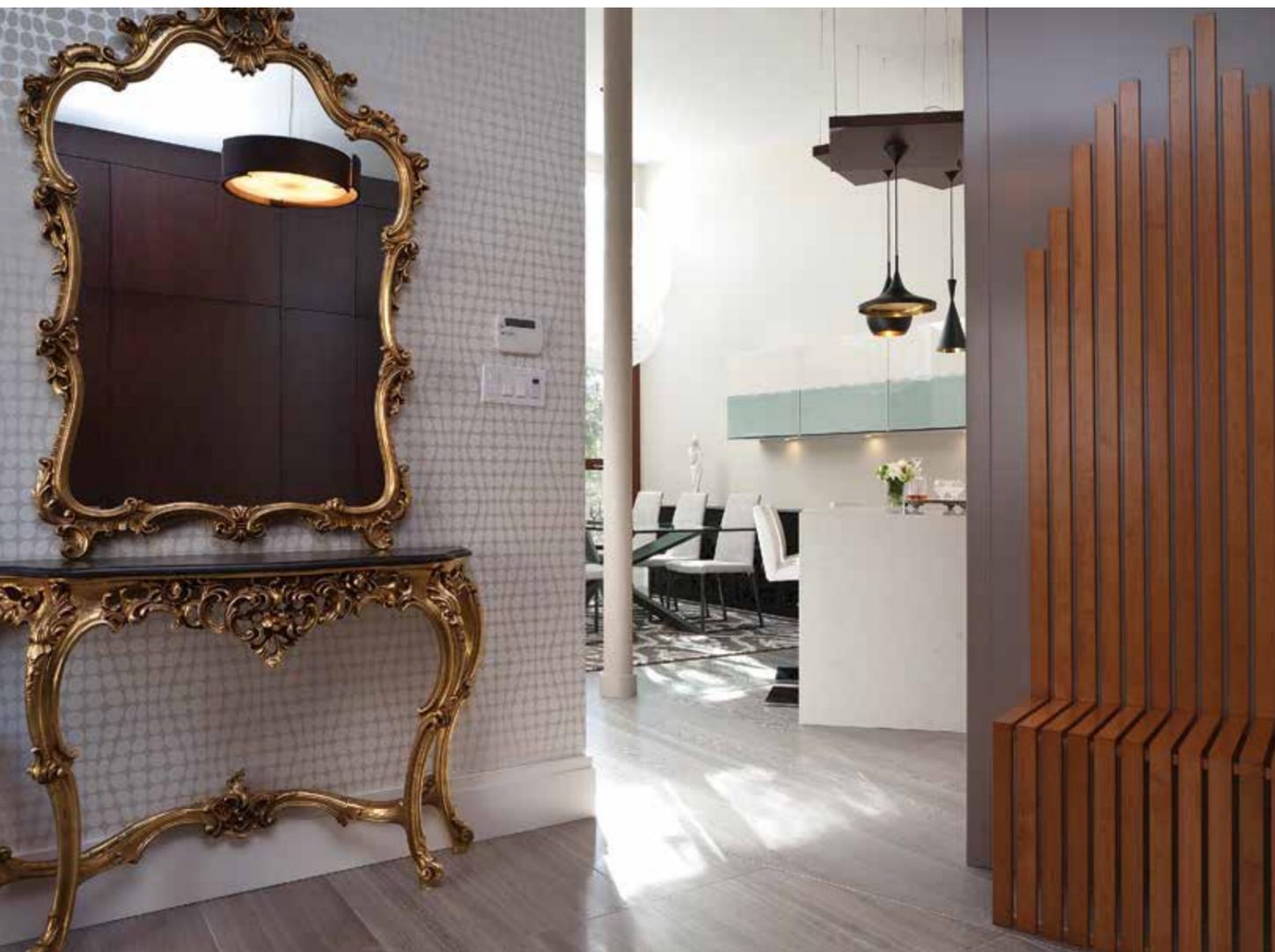


Finding the right designer for this chopped-up, angled space proved to be a challenge. The D'Angelos interviewed three candidates before choosing Adriana Mot, principal with Dochia Interior Design, whose energy and ideas won them over.

During the renovation, Lucy and Steve were feeling hesitant about some of the changes Mot was suggesting, but Lucy said the designer assuaged their fears by getting them to take the time to really visualize her ideas: "She could see the big picture in her mind."

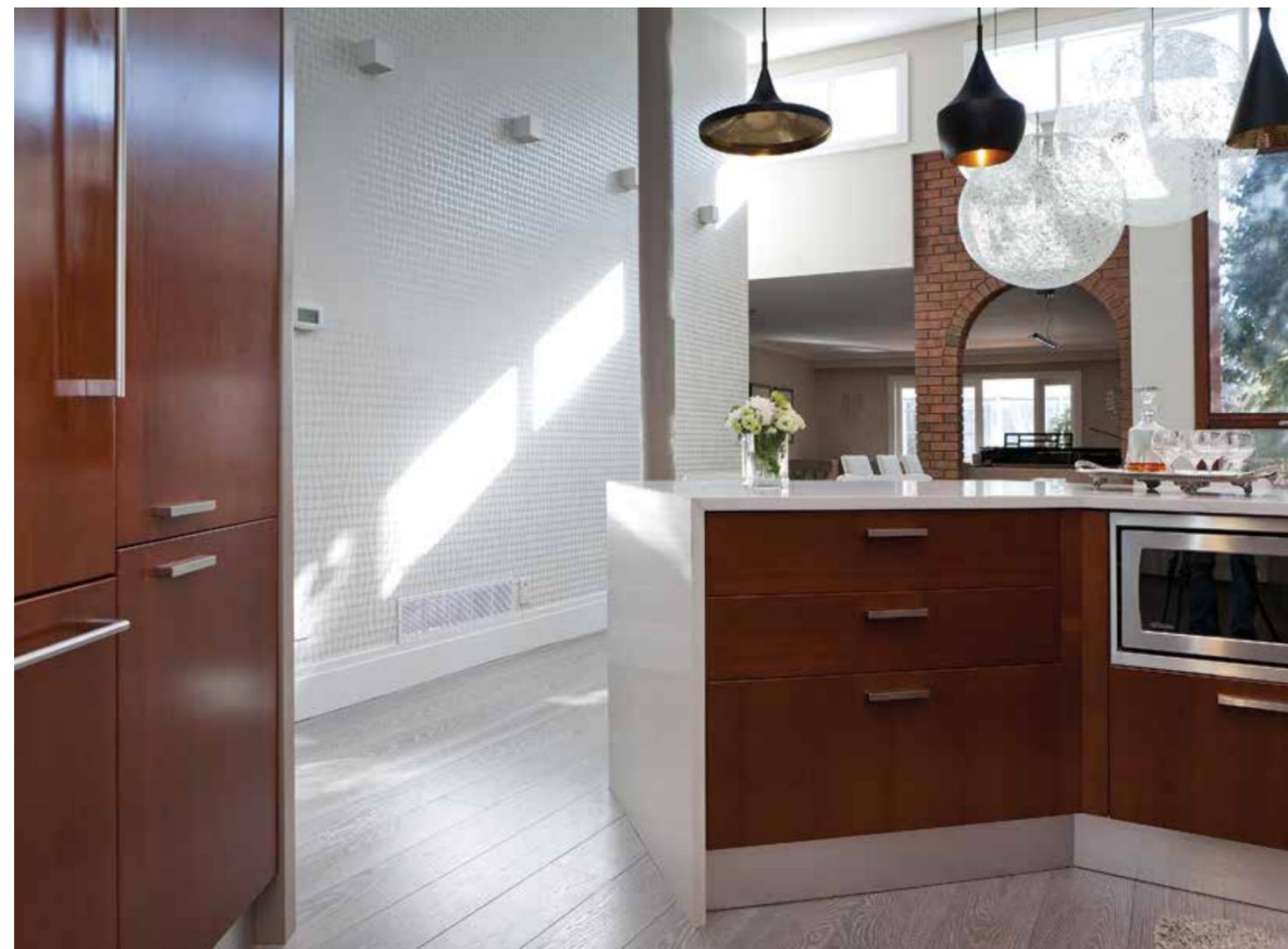
The big picture for Mot involved creating a flowing, cohesive space out of the choppy interior. She looked at the D'Angelo home in terms of a sculpture. She noted the house's unusual positioning to the street, with an entrance from the side of a covered porch, as well as a dramatic, sloped ceiling and an entranceway cluttered with trinkets and mirrors.

"The ceiling caught my attention from my first step in. The space felt very dramatic—den, kitchen, dining room—one big slope," Mot explained. 



*Lighting plays an important role in unifying the kitchen-dining space. Mot used black Beat lights above the kitchen peninsula and white pendants from Moooi above the dining table to impart a sense of rhythm, reflecting Steve's interest in music.*

*"Every designer is fascinated by chairs; I think this is my chair."*



*(Opposite) Lucy and Steve entertain often, so they wanted to be able to interact with their guests but maintain a sense of privacy and separation. They did this by opening the kitchen toward the dining room but leaving the entranceway separated from them by a divider.*

She saw her challenge: find a way to deal with the depth of the hall, which was positioned next to the kitchen. Lucy wanted some privacy, but she also wanted an enlarged kitchen to accommodate the family's entertaining. As well, the D'Angelos wanted to open up the kitchen toward the dining room while maintaining a separate entry between the two areas.

"Looking at the space more in terms of a 3-D sculpture made me think of placing something to take your eye in both

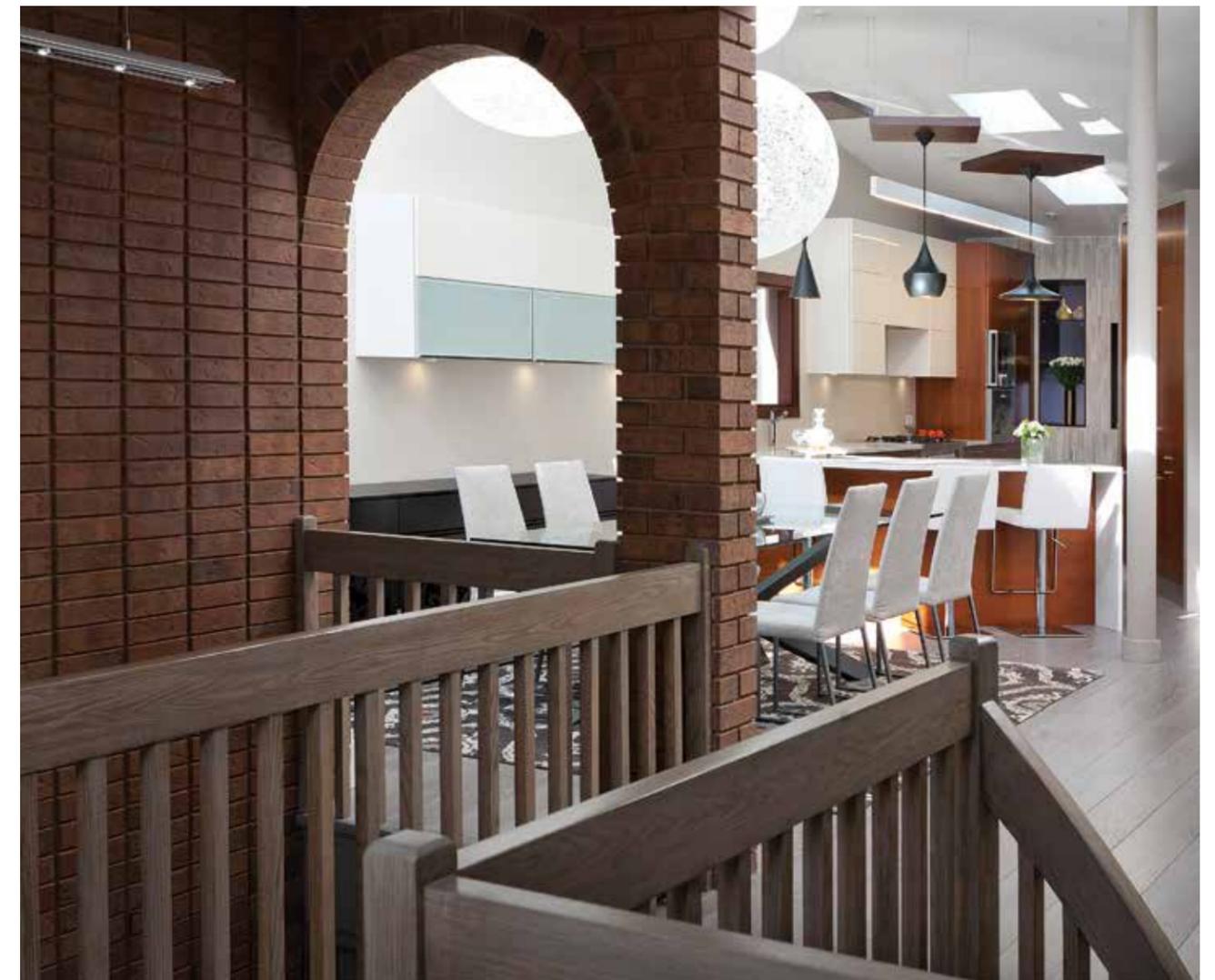
directions so you can peek left and peek right."

She found the answer in a chair, but this is no ordinary seat. To make an opening statement, Mot designed a seven-foot angular maple chair, its back flush up against a divider, on the other side of which stands a tall kitchen cabinet. "Every designer is fascinated by chairs; I think this is *my* chair," she said with a laugh.

This functional piece of art, put together at Built Toronto, replaces a wall that divided the space and now creates a focal point. It also

brings out an audible "Wow!" from their friends.

Once Mot was able to configure the challenging space presented by the first floor, her mind opened to other possibilities: a two-sided fireplace and special niche, angled kitchen counters, white upper kitchen cabinets practically leaning over the dining room, and a contrasting buffet in the dining room. "It's very dynamic," said Mot, who used Scavolini for the sleek, modern kitchen. 





Lighting was used as another tool to keep the energy flowing. The fixtures tell a subtle story, creating a rhythm that links the space from kitchen to dining room to hallway. In a nod to Steve the musician, Mot used understated black pendant Beat lights in the kitchen.

Mot also added a custom-designed fireplace with a niche beside it to tie together the first floor space.

“As a room divider it is just stunning, and it creates a view from one room to the other,” said David Steckel, general contractor with Black General Contracting, who worked on the project from last April to its completion in September. But the fireplace proved to be a challenge to get just right and required a lot of ventilation. Steckel ended up putting a custom grill on one side because the walls were becoming too hot.

He faced a few other challenges in the unusual space: managing a subfloor that turned out to be concrete (instead of the customary wood), matching the existing staircase to the grey of the wood, and changing windows and adding skylights.

Once the renovation began to take shape, Lucy was able to indulge her love of searching for furniture, rugs and other design elements, right down to choosing wallpaper her husband declared to be “so Mad Men.”

“Now there’s a feeling, when we’re cooking and eating, that everything is here,” she said of the finished project. “When I have people over for parties, they say, ‘this house is sexy. You’re in a space that’s very different.’” And worth the wait. ☺

*Smokey, a Ganaraskan dog, was an integral part of the renovations, following the action from room to room. Here he lies near the steps to the basement entertainment area, with its wallpaper chosen by Lucy and declared by Steve to be “so Mad Men.”*

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