RENEW IT REHAB IT LOVE IT

Chicago magazine

HOME

70 PAGES OF CHICAGO'S BEST
Kitchen designers, painters, landscapers, contractors, lighting stores, and more

SPRING/SUMMER 2005

Fresh!

Rooftop decks and gardens
A bold Bucktown makeover
Shopping Lincoln Avenue
Outdoor kitchens

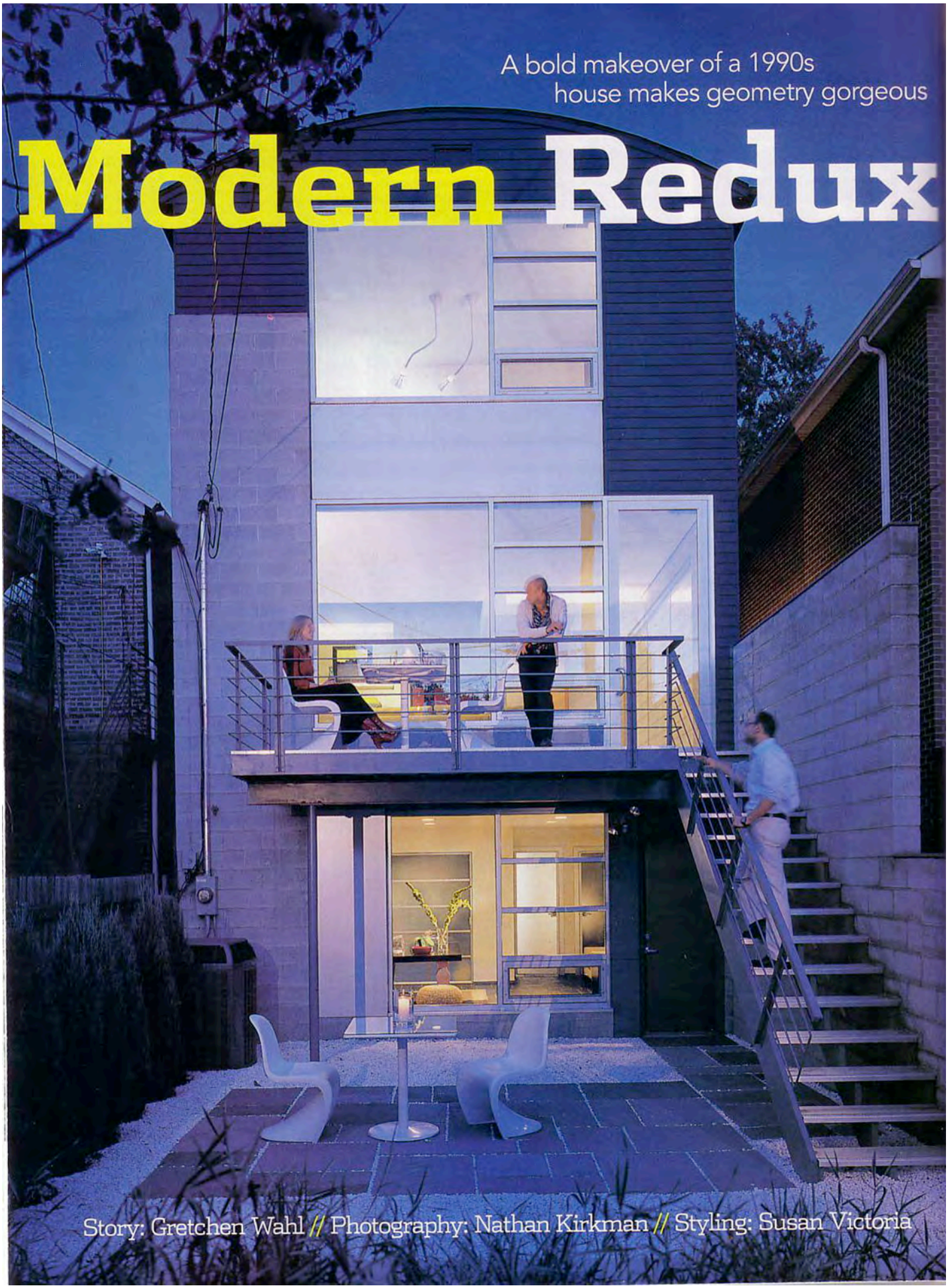
U.S. $4.99 CANADA $5.99

0 74851 08216 4

CHICAGOMAG.COM

A bold makeover of a 1990s house makes geometry gorgeous

Modern Redux



Story: Gretchen Wahl // Photography: Nathan Kirkman // Styling: Susan Victoria

Crisp rectangles are everywhere, from the exposed cinderblock walls of the living room to the strongly graphic new windows, doors, and patio slate at the back of the house, opposite.

CLIENT: JOSHUA SLUSARZ
ARCHITECT: PATRIZIO FRADIANI
LOCATION: BUCKTOWN
SPACE: 2,700 SQUARE FEET

Even new buildings occasionally need an update.

When this three-story Bucktown house was designed and built in 1992, it was among the first of its type in a changing neighborhood. Early photographs show unobstructed views of the house's two outside side walls, but brick houses have since been built on either side of the hosue, close to the lot lines.

Joshua Slusarz and his partner bought the Brininstool & Lynch-designed house in June 2003, after admiring its spaciousness (about 900 square feet on each floor), geometric lines, and concrete block construction, which allowed the house to be eight feet wider than local codes permit for wood frame construction. The blocks were left artfully exposed on several walls inside.

The new owners were less enthusiastic about other aspects of their new house, namely the birch woodwork and other interior finishes, the flow of some of the rooms, and the relative lack of natural light. They hired architect and interior designer Patrizio Fradiani to make the space more to their liking.

"It was a house that had good bones in terms of modernist language, but it missed some occasions to be really outstanding," Fradiani says.

As the new kid on the block in an emerging neighborhood, it included some low-end materials and fixtures. "It was a sea of birch wood everywhere inside—birch walls, birch kitchen, birch built-ins, birch bathroom, you name it," the architect says. "And the façade had small wood win-

A smooth wall of cupboards hides the refrigerator in the kitchen, where a stainless steel island works well for eating and food preparation. Opposite: A birch fireplace surround and storage consoles were painted white, bringing out their Mondrian-like design, top; a marble-topped table defines the dining area adjacent to the kitchen, bottom.

dows. We didn't change the actual architecture of the house. Really, it was a project about light—introducing light and contrast into the whole residence."

Fradiani added windows to the front and back walls and replaced others with larger, more graphic steel-framed windows that echo the shape of the concrete blocks. In the second-floor living room, natural light comes from a skylight, one story above, via a generous light well. Fradiani highlighted one end of that well with large white fabric lamps, whose curvy shapes contrast with the blocks behind. "We created a connection between the two floors by hanging two lamps so that you can see the wires and they lead the eyes up," Fradiani says.

The recess with shelves next to the skylight area used to be a pass-through to the kitchen. Closing off the living room made it more formal, which Slusarz likes for entertaining. "We created a cove so the language of that mirrored what was in the house," Fradiani says.

The fireplace surround and nearby built-in storage consoles were birch; Fradiani kept them and painted them white, highlighting the Mondrian-like design.

The new floors throughout the house are ebonized maple. Fradiani found that the redesigned space became more graphic

On the third floor, the shapes of the windows in the master bedroom are repeated on the closet doors, opposite. Left, the master bath has a simple, doorless shower behind a pane of translucent glass. Below, an adjustable double-gooseneck lamp provides visual interest in the guest bedroom.

through contrast. "The floors are dark gray; the fireplace and shelves are white. The furniture is very light-colored. We created a neutral envelope within which to accent color." Fradiani and Slusarz used classic modern pieces of furniture in the house, such as the white Barcelona chairs in the living room.

The living room is closed to the kitchen, but the dining area is now completely open, with a stainless steel island helping to define the kitchen area. The refrigerator and freezer were given cabinet fronts to match a smooth white wall of cupboards, a look that occasionally confuses guests.

A long stretch of glass-fronted cabinets visually connects the kitchen and dining room spaces. Slusarz loves that he and his partner have room to store all their serving ware near where they use it. The marble-topped oval dining table is a classic design by Finnish architect Eero Saarinen. Guests like sitting on stools at the island and in comfy chairs at the table as they watch their hosts cook. "Everyone gravitates to this area," Slusarz says. He and his partner tend to eat at the island when they're home alone.

The new, larger windows facing the trees give the third-floor bedrooms an arboreal feel. The translu- CONTINUED ON PAGE 50