

Built off the original house, a sunroom filled with artifacts from all over the world becomes a light-filled sanctuary for a quiet cup of morning tea. It overlooks the spacious courtyard (opposite).



PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATE ROTH STYLING BY ARDEN NELSON



A WORLD APART

How an odd but alluring Lincoln Park house became the perfect home for two dogs and their globetrotting, art-collecting owners BY DEBORAH WILK



Mirroring the sanctuary space in the original house, the addition has a two-story space known as the "green room," which can be accessed from the kitchen (to the right of the fireplace) or the master bedroom (the doorway at the top of the stairs). The fireplace is double sided, opening on the other side to the kitchen.

WHEN YOU HAVE WEIMARANERS, your life is sort of all about your Weimaraners. So when Heather Heinlein, a decorative arts dealer, and her husband, Peter Mullett, decided it was time to move, that, too, was really all about their dogs. Tired of rushing home to walk the precious pups at night and worrying that they didn't have enough time in open spaces, the couple went on a search for that most elusive of all urban dwellings: a house with a big yard.

"We needed to find a place that could accommodate our dogs," Heinlein says. (They currently have two.) "It was either that or move to the suburbs." As luck would have it, the eagle-eyed dealer spotted a "For Sale" sign outside a late-19th-century classic worker's cottage on an afternoon drive through the West Lincoln Park neighborhood. A peek over its stone wall revealed a brick-paved courtyard the width of three city lots, where several big dogs roamed and rested unsupervised. "I took one look and thought, 'This is it,'" Heinlein says.

The setting was perfect for canines and the owners who love them, but the house needed an overhaul. Originally a blue-collar residence, the building was later taken over by the Romanian Orthodox Church, which turned it into a house of worship. In the mid-sixties, the house became a home again after the church sold the building; the new owners left the ground-floor sanctuary and choir loft intact and built a kitchen, sitting room, and master bedroom in the basement. There were only one and a half bathrooms.

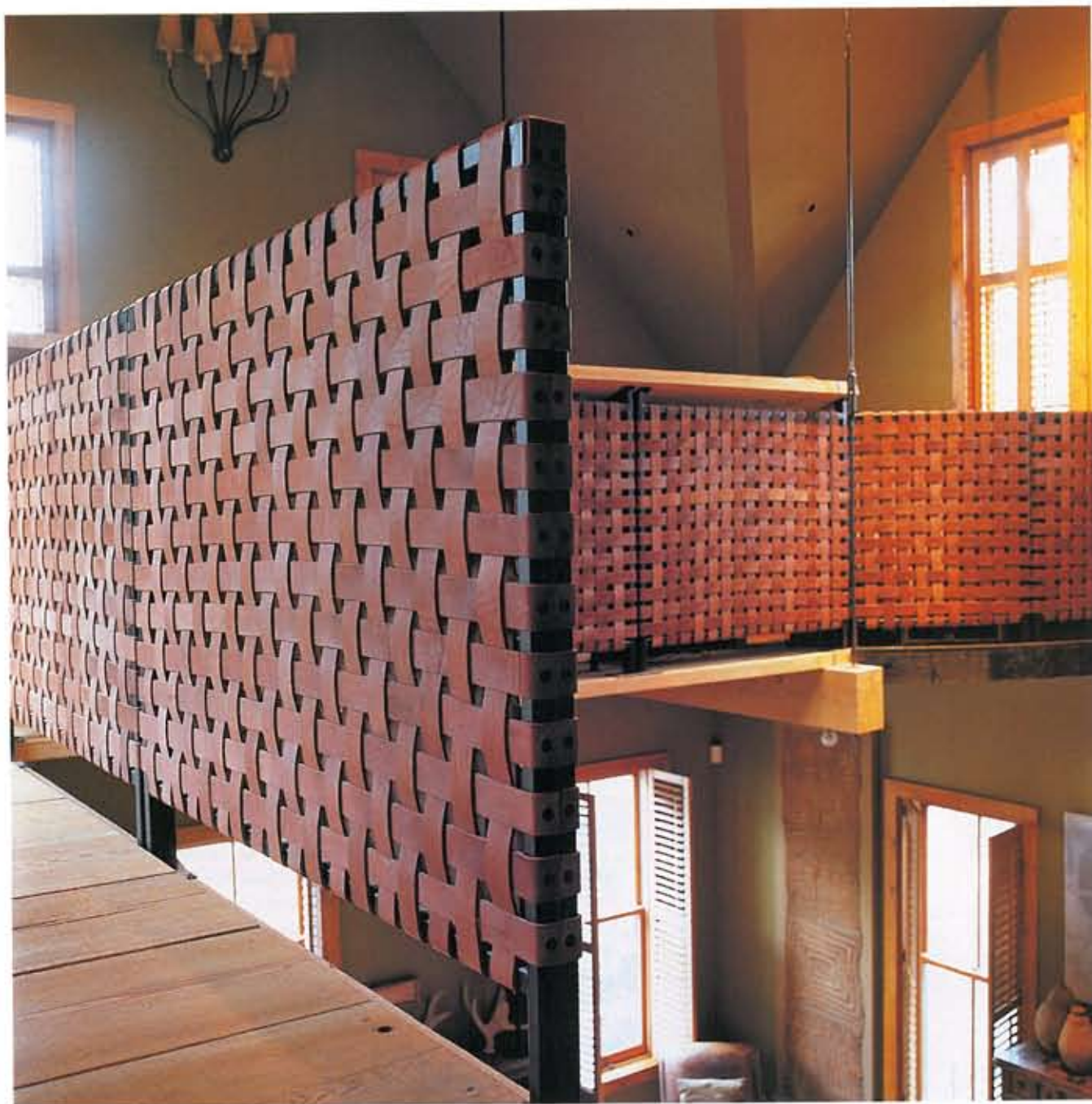
Heinlein and Mullett had no use for a sanctuary or choir loft, per se, and set about creating a more secular arrangement of spaces. After making a few simple structural changes—including adding a skylight to the roof of what is now a sun porch—the couple hired Gary Beyerl, an architect with the Chicago firm Burns & Beyerl.

It turned out that Beyerl was familiar with the house, having worked on a row of town homes designed by Booth Hansen across the street. "The house was always an alluringly cool thing," he says, while noting "it was a little overwhelming to figure out how to make it a cohesive project."

It was clear the house needed an addition, but both architect and client were determined that the new structure not overpower the original house or the outdoor space. "We ended up building very tightly to the edge of the property to preserve the trees [in front]," Beyerl says.

"A lot of people ask me why we didn't build all the way to the street," Heinlein says, "but looking onto trees or a garden was really important to me."

The design sequence was as unusual as everything else about the project. Plans for the exterior were drawn first, with the interior scheme left for later. Heinlein "wanted to see the volume of the space and come with interior ideas at that point," Beyerl says.



Once that time came, there were some interesting challenges. "Most of what we did was what the house dictated," Heinlein says. The finished house, all 3,625 square feet of it, offers a lot of willful play on height. "There is an idiosyncrasy of discovery in building a house like this," Beyerl says. "You have to accept that things won't be perfect."

The home has barnlike open spaces and no set path of movement. Rooms open into one another, creating a sense of floating from space to space and level to level. Aside from the kitchen and sleeping chambers, the rooms defy specific purposes: the former sanctuary adjoins a similarly large room in the addition, forming a kind of living room; cozy lofts that overlook the larger rooms are glorious places to spy on party guests or harbor visiting friends. Up the staircase is a window-walled garret with a suspended daybed and a 360-degree city view, the perfect place to catch a catnap or work on one's laptop uninterrupted by anything save for a passing cloud.



A small central hallway connects the kitchen, sanctuary space, a guest bathroom, and a guest bedroom. A placid rock garden beneath the stairs leads to a tower room with a panoramic city view. The green room includes a loft (opposite, top) used as a home office. Handmade screens serve as railings and keep computers out of view. The screens were woven from leather bought in bulk and cut into strips by a company that makes dog collars. A striking painting by one of Heinlein's former employees hangs above an apothecary cabinet from The Golden Triangle (bottom).



An Indonesian bed—one of Heinlein's favorite pieces—claims most of the space in the master bedroom (above). The diptych of doghouses is by William Wegman; the photograph of a flower is by Tom Baril, who printed the works of Robert Mapplethorpe. In the master bath (middle and right), a luxurious soaking tub, contemporary bowl sinks on an antique table, floor tiles from Malta, and a photograph by Herb Ritts



The unique, dreamy configuration is utterly unlike the sleek, severe chic of modernism or the mannered propriety of traditional homes, yet it marries classic and contemporary styles seamlessly. The home's ethereal architecture is grounded by decor that draws on the couple's love of nature and global cultures—pieces from Africa and Asia coexist beautifully with objects from Italy, Mexico, and the American West. As the owner of Arms Akimbo, a now-defunct gallery of African artifacts in River North, Heinlein had a tremendous palette from which to choose.

"We traveled for years before we settled in the house," she says. "It was really a matter of taking the objects we had collected and finding space for them." Beyerl created architectural niches to showcase exotic objects and textiles. Meanwhile, the basic furniture came from sales at Mart showrooms.

After finishing the addition, the couple took one last trip—to Bali—to buy pieces specifically for the house. The most prized of these is an Indonesian bed that holds court in the master bedroom.

Of course, dog beds and accessories are strategically placed throughout the house. "A lot of the colors of the surfaces and textiles were chosen with the dogs in mind," Heinlein says. "They are everywhere. People always ask if I want them to remove their shoes when they visit, but, please! Dogs live here."

For information on resources, see Buyer's Guide, page 138.

Out of Africa

A passion for world cultures has taken Heinlein and Mullett everywhere—from Africa and Asia to Italy, Mexico, and the American West—making their home a veritable gallery of ethnic objects and textiles.

ELEPHANT MASK

From Cameroon. Heinlein says this is her most cherished mask: "I love its pure simplicity, its childlike form, and the fact that it's unadorned and perfect." This type of mask sits on top of a performer's head during funerals and annual festivals.



FANG NGIL MASK

From the Fang people in Gabon, Cameroon, and Equatorial Guinea. Elegantly elongated abstractions of the human face are traditionally worn during initiation ceremonies.



THREE RITUAL DOLLS

Foung Fall men in Cameroon make these dolls when they are engaged to be married. A fiancée wears hers on her back in a baby carrier; it symbolizes the couple's marriage commitment and represents their first child.

SPIRIT MAIDEN MASK

From the Puno people in Gabon. In masks such as this, representing idealized female ancestors' faces, the white color is thought to symbolize peace, deities, spirits of the dead, and the afterlife.

