



# Uplifting Design

POISED ON A HILL ABOVE SEATTLE'S LAKE UNION, A RADICALLY RENOVATED HOME MELTS INNOVATION AND CASUAL LIVING.

Writer **Brian Kramer** Photographer **Laurie Black** Field editor **Linda Humphrey**



OPPOSITE This renovated home surveys Seattle's Lake Union, which bustles with float planes, sailboats, and kayaks. THIS PHOTO A glass-and-aluminum entry tower and the upsweeping curves of an airfoil roof give the home a sense of drama while conforming to tight zoning requirements.





Perched on a steep hill that overlooks Seattle's Lake Union, Justin Bloch's home—a sophisticated yet soothing world of aluminum, glass, and wood—seems like a fantastic new creation about to take flight. In reality, the home is a carefully crafted renovation project and the product of a passionate five-year collaboration between Justin and his architects.

As part of his work as a commercial and residential developer, Justin purchased the property for its location, not the low-slung 1950s structure that stretched deep into the lot. "I figured I would develop the house or the lot and then sell it in a year or two," he says. Rather than jump into a quick remodel or demolish the original building, Justin moved in for a few months to get a sense of how the home worked on the lot. "As I spent time living in the original house, I grew to love the way the house was oriented on the property," he says. "One day I realized it was just wrong to tear the house down. I needed to remodel it."

Architect Stuart Silk and project architect Dave Dykstra soon emerged as the logical choices to update, and ultimately transform, the home. "For budget reasons, we needed to stay within the home's original footprint," Silk says, "but we also wanted to create something wonderful,

something that felt new." The home's study and garage at one end and its light-filled sunroom on the other seemed well-situated, but everything in between was up for discussion. During the three years of planning and designing, Justin and the architects focused on three major changes: adding an upper level, capitalizing on the incredible views, and radically reorganizing the floor plan.

Giving the home a new upper level allowed the team to deal with many of the home's shortcomings. Transom and clerestory windows, open passages between floors, and a steel grid for portions of the upper-level flooring all help flood the formerly dark main floor with natural light. Square footage gained by adding the upper level also created two new sleeping spaces—a master suite for Justin and a mini suite for his 7-year-old daughter, Tatum.

OPPOSITE In the entry foyer, steel I-beams, wire rails, and mesh privacy panels are balanced by natural elements, such as sycamore veneer paneling, birch-topped handrails, and Peruvian walnut flooring.

ABOVE Floor-to-ceiling windows flood the living room with light and afford lush views. A dropped ceiling of sycamore panels and a fireplace wall of cement-fiberboard paneling keep the spacious room warm.





Most importantly, the addition allowed the architects to break up the home's flat, shed-style roof and introduce one of the project's signature features: a curvaceous airfoil roof. With a 7-foot overhang that blocks afternoon sun, the roof has the appearance of airplane wings. It is essentially flat (necessary to conform to zoning regulations), but the curving metal frame and stretched-aluminum skin produce an upsweeping feel that gives the home a floating quality.

To echo that airy feel and make the most of the home's surroundings, Silk and Dykstra lined the west side of the house with a two-story-tall wall of windows. They oriented the long living room and the master suite around this feature to showcase the constantly evolving view. "During the summer and spring, the house is totally engulfed in trees," Justin says. "But in the fall and winter, the house almost unfolds," allowing in more light during cooler months and offering dramatic views of the city beyond.

Taking advantage of wooded vistas to the east, a glass-and-aluminum tower was designed to augment the original, lackluster front door. "The tower creates a new identity for the home," Silk says, comparing it with a two-story prism of light and angles. Although the structure adds little square

footage, it enlarges the visual experience of the home. Outside, it shimmers in the day and glows like a beacon in the night; inside, its industrial yet transparent elements (mesh metal scrims, wire railings, and bridgelike landings of open-grid steel) allow glimpses of the landscape.

Although Justin enjoyed the way the home was oriented to the property, the design lacked organization and practicality. Silk and Dykstra paid homage to the free-flowing plan while tailoring it to how Justin and his daughter live by relying on a cross-axis design. Now a wide central hallway on both levels provides a clear path from the entry foyer to the kitchen (on the main level) and the master suite (on the upper level). Architectural fixtures, such as columns and partial walls, impart shape and function to the loflike space. "Columns divide, but they also integrate," Dykstra says, noting that although the kitchen is visible from much

ABOVE The dining area's richly stained furnishings and gridded ceiling and wall panels have a pared-down, almost Asian simplicity. Justin designed the table and benches so that they would not block views. OPPOSITE Maple cabinets and glass shelves between two pairs of columns offer storage and a view between the dining area and kitchen.





"For me, the island is one of the focal points of the house," homeowner Justin Bloch says, "so it had to be both elegant and functional." Its concrete-topped maple-cabinet base houses the sink, while a gracefully arcing glass breakfast bar seems to hover on curvy steel fins.



THIS PHOTO The master bedroom's burl sleigh bed is a perfect spot to look out through the trees and watch the sun set on Lake Union. OPPOSITE A spiral staircase in the master dressing area makes the most of the space's 16-foot ceiling and leads to a clerestory-windowed catwalk level with additional storage.







of the living room, it feels like a distinct cooking zone because it is bordered by serving islands and columns. Ceiling treatments—sycamore panels that drop down a few inches in the living room or steel I-beams that wrap the kitchen like industrial crown molding—further define the spaces.

Upstairs, the floor plan takes the open-yet-divided approach a step further and incorporates sliding panels in the master suite and yet another catwalk around the perimeter of the 12x25-foot master closet. Large-scale features—a king-size bed, a spiral staircase in the closet, and a double vanity in the bath—serve as focal points in each area. “From the start, the goal was to get things away from the walls,” Dykstra says. “For example, we thought of the vanity as an object floating in a beautiful limestone-and-glass space rather than a built-in plumbing feature.”

While many homeowners and architects talk about the give and take of a project, this renovation became a truly collaborative process. “Justin did a lot of research on his own and definitely knows how to refine a detail,” Silk says. Early in the building process, for example, Justin knew he wanted to balance the home’s utilitarian materials with an array of warm woods. After thoroughly researching logging practices, Justin realized that “more difficult to harvest and more expensive doesn’t necessarily mean better,” Silk

says. Justin ended up selecting plentiful varieties—sycamore veneer for wall and ceiling treatments, maple for most cabinetry, and walnut flooring—rather than popular though endangered species such as teak and wenge. “I enjoyed the back-and-forth energy of this project,” Dykstra says. “This type of collaboration makes the architecture richer.”

And the future holds further creative collaboration for Justin. Soon he plans to enhance the property’s landscaping, incorporating more trees and a water feature. He’s also begun working with Dykstra on a garage/guest house as well as a court for volleyball and basketball. Whatever direction these new projects take, the partnership has been an adventure. “We had no idea where exactly we were going,” Silk says. “But with a supportive client who was willing to take chances, we created something innovative.” BH

#### RESOURCES ON PAGE 122

For more on remodeling projects: [www.bhg.com/sipremodelingsteps](http://www.bhg.com/sipremodelingsteps)

ABOVE LEFT A cubical two-basin-sink unit—Justin’s fresh take on the traditional dual vanity—serves as the hub of the master bath. Adjustable mirrored medicine cabinets mounted to a steel pole offer storage. ABOVE RIGHT With a floor and soak-tub surround of limestone and a maple-tree view, the master bath enjoys a soothing, spa-like quality.

**A FRESH ARCHITECTURAL MIX**—from industrial metals and warm woods to dramatic walls of windows and cozy gathering spots—defines this renovated home. Adding an upper level and reorganizing the main level placed key rooms near the best views and created a smart traffic flow.



MAIN LEVEL SQ. FT.: 2,825  
UPPER LEVEL SQ. FT.: 1,920  
BEDROOMS: 2  
BATHROOMS: 2 full, 1 half



MAIN LEVEL

Architects **Stuart Silk** and **Dave Dykstra** Builder **Delta Construction**