

Urban Nesting

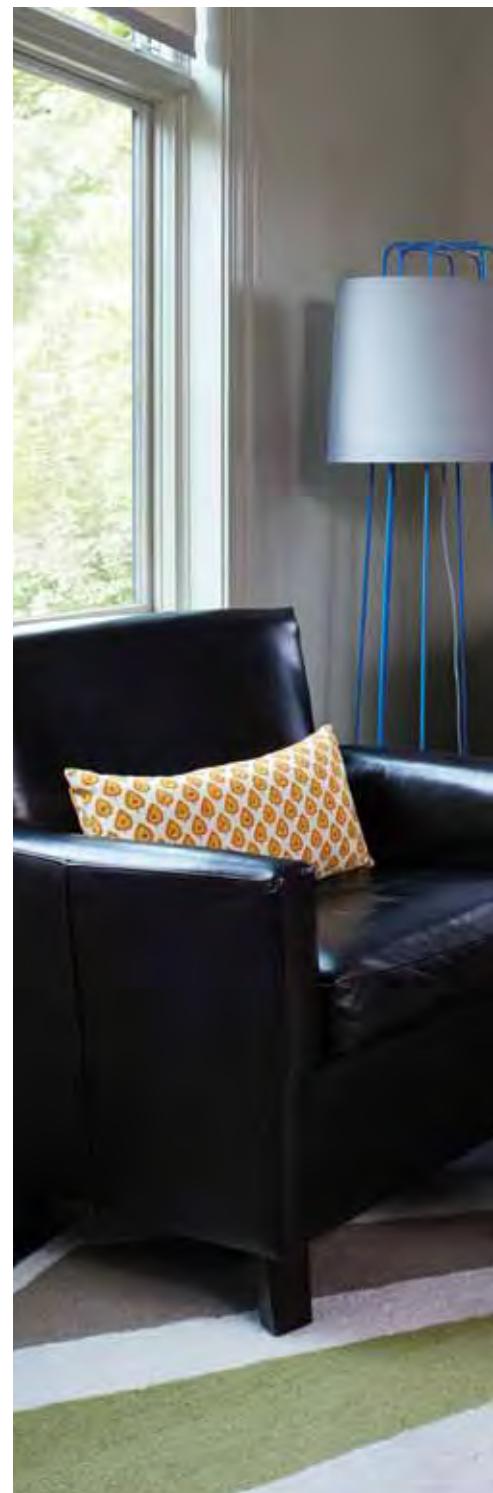
How a bold remodel turned one historic Denver house into a home.



MODERN ORGANIC

Facing page: In this Cheesman Park remodel, a Sundance School House table complements the nest, by Denver artist John Cunningham, over the island. Lowe leather side chairs from Crate & Barrel pair neatly with the contemporary West Elm Swirl rug. *This page:* Black-and-white Fez tile by Granada and Irpinia MDF cabinets (painted vivid blue) add a modern contrast to the rustic elements.





THE FIRST THING YOU NOTICE WHEN YOU WALK INTO THE HOME of Tim Macdonald and Jodi Blomberg is the whirl of twigs and branches that gracefully hangs over the kitchen island. When Macdonald, an attorney, and Blomberg, a mathematician, bought their Seventh Avenue Historic District house—a circa-1895 Queen Anne/Tudor hybrid—they had distinct ideas for the remodel. He envisioned an open floor plan with abundant daylight and a seamless connection to the outdoors. She, a little more specific, wanted a modern kitchen with cobalt blue cabinets and a bird nest, of some kind, somewhere in the house. (She was inspired by childhood memories of playing in her family's apple orchard in Minnesota—and also by a nestlike structure she'd once seen in *Dwell* magazine.)



INSIDE OUT
At left: Tim Macdonald and Jodi Blomberg's Denver home is a circa-1895 Queen Anne/Tudor hybrid. The blue trim and yellow shutters only hint at the exuberant design on the inside.

FANTASTIC FOYER
Facing page: A geometric pendant from Visual Comfort and the Escher-like Cole & Son Circus wallpaper set the tone for the rest of the house. DuChateau Floors' wide-plank flooring (stained a black-wash finish) runs throughout the main level.

IN LIVING COLOR
Above: Sisters Fiona and Violet cozy up on a Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec sofa. Floor lamps by Blu Dot (available at Mod Livin') and a Lourdes Sanchez Bull's Eye rug from West Elm introduce a joyful color palette, while a warehouse cart table, by Fin Art, acts as centerpiece.



WARM UP

Above: Rich textures and colors transform what was once the dining room into an inviting den. A Room & Board Hudson armoire conceals games and the television, while the crescent-moon wall art and kilim rug (both from Watson & Co.) give the space a vintage feel.

NOT-SO MUDROOM

Facing page: In the mudroom, a sliding barn door—made with reclaimed snow fencing—covers a pullout storage cabinet. The light fixture is by local furniture maker Fin Art. The floor level change is the only remnant from a sunken living room that once filled the back of the house.

OFFICE SPACE

Right: A pair of pocket doors with frosted glass panels allows light to pass through the living area into the couple's home office. In the bookshelves, a pop of bright blue paint (Kwal, Captain Midnight) recalls the color of the kitchen cabinets.





The couple, both marathon runners and avid cyclists, bought the fixer-upper after doing countless laps through the city looking for a light-filled house with ample bedrooms (they were then expecting their second child). "What we left," explains Macdonald, "had a scary basement, no garage, and only one bathroom upstairs for the whole clan." This house was in a great neighborhood and had lots of potential.

They hired architect Reed Stilwell, principal of Studio TBD, and Tom Gruber, of Gruber Home Remodeling, to articulate their vision. By asking the couple to track the family's daily routine for a week, Stilwell derived two important design directives: The kitchen needed to be at the center of the home, and the massive fireplace that bisected the house had to go. Further, the sunken living room (an addition from the '80s) had to be raised to enhance the flow from the front of the house to the back.



These design strategies provided the framework for a series of connected “living” rooms that now radiate out from the newly constructed kitchen. A south-facing, folding glass door that runs parallel to the 15-foot kitchen island provides sunlight and access to the yard. The fireplace removal freed up enough square footage on the second floor for a modern master bathroom, walk-in closet, and laundry space. Their girls—Fiona, 5, and Violet, 2—secured their own brightly painted rooms under the eaves, while baby number three (due this spring) will take over what is now Blomberg’s craft room.



HAPPY YELLOW

Facing page: The girls were allowed to choose the colors for their rooms; Violet picked a lemony shade of yellow (Kwal, Early). Feather butterflies from the craft store adorn the walls over a Room & Board dresser.

GOING GREEN

Above left: In the master bathroom, Ann Sacks' citron-green Angela Adams Concrete Manfred tile adds color to the wall along the bath. The Irpina floating vanity is faced in Tere-sina Matte Thermofoil.



FRESH FUCHSIA

Above right: Fiona chose a splashy shade of pink-purple for her room. A Jonathan Adler nee-dlepoint Zodiac pillow from MK Style and the painted headboard add whimsy.



Sean Hughes, interior designer with Mandil Inc., was enlisted to blend the home's historic details with the couple's love for "bold and gutsy" color and texture. "They are kind of fearless," says Hughes of their vibrant palette that starts with the entryway's graphic Cole & Son wallpaper. The dialogue between modern and traditional continues with a lime green Beckett sofa featuring contemporary lines and classic tufting. "We wanted to be respectful of the old house," he adds, "and use the best of what



MINT, ANYONE?

Left: In the powder room, Silver Screen Vein Cut marble (from Daltile) is laid in a vertical, staggered brick pattern from floor to ceiling. Possini Euro Design's glass-tube mini pendant lights illuminate the narrow mirror. And the retro mint wall color (Kwal, Window Box) adds an exciting pop of color.

PATTERN PLAY

Above: Interior designer Sean Hughes of Mandil Inc. uses a variety of colors and textures that "riff on the same idea." Floor lamps by Blu Dot bookend a Beckett sofa. The Aviator Grey Hive coffee table from Arktura pairs nicely with a Coconut Chair (Mod Livin') upholstered in zigzag gray Donghia fabric (available at John Brooks Inc.).



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(Urban) Nesting



was there to create a good home for them," Hughes also commissioned Denver artist John Cunningham to custom-build the nest for over the island.

"I didn't think it would affect our

lives, having a better thought-out house," Macdonald says, "but I am amazed almost daily at how well the house works for us and how we use every part of it." ■

INDOOR MEETS OUTDOOR
A folding Nana Wall door easily expands the home's living spaces. And the custom-made corrugated metal awning protects the door panels from the weather.

Restoration



PAST FORWARD

A family of five finds a Boulder home full of history and tons of potential. **BY SARAH GOLDBLATT**

DESIGN NOTES
EAGER TO START renovations on their newly purchased historic Boulder house, Alexandra and Grant Besser began the herculean task of clearing out the previous owners' belongings. The home had been in the same Boulder family for 90 years, and it was sold to the Bessers with everything in it. Knee-deep in clutter, they made an exciting discovery. Tucked under a heap of dusty artifacts, in a loft above the garage, was a worn leather suitcase filled

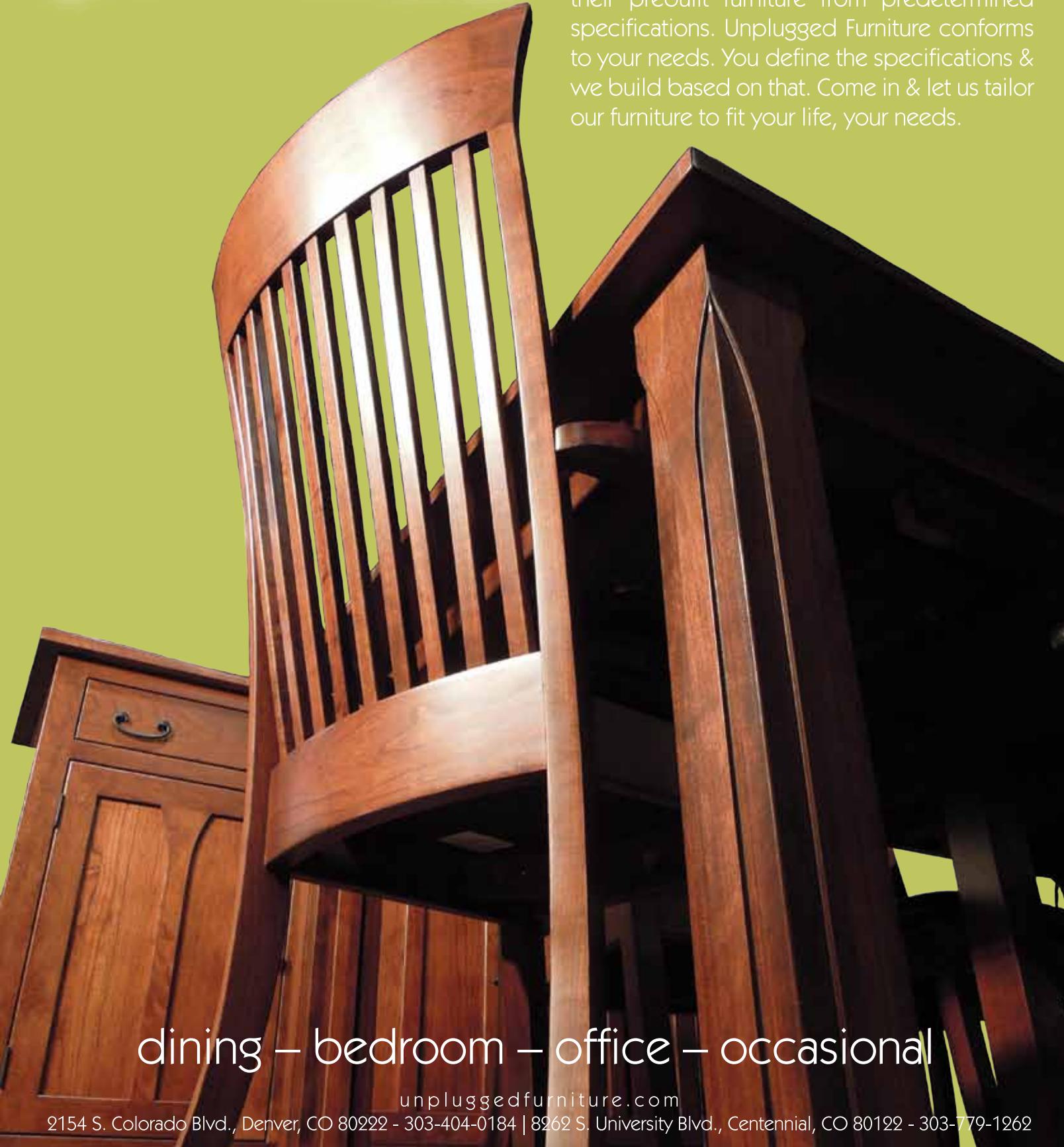
with family portraits dating from the turn of the century. "It was like opening a time capsule," Alexandra says. "The photos had been there for decades, forgotten."

Turns out, the house had once been home to the mayor of Boulder, among other interesting characters. And as the Bessers used the photos to piece together the home's past, they found a new perspective on the renovation. "We didn't want to lose any of the history," Grant says.



VINTAGE STYLE A renovation of this 108-year-old Edwardian home in Boulder's Mapleton Hill Historic District stays true to form. In the kitchen (top), the farm-table-style island is made with reclaimed beams from a gold mine. The vintage pendant lights were found in the house and moved to the kitchen.

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Grant took on the job of sifting through the history, which included an 1880s Brunswick pool table, mining tools, vintage radios and clocks, and cases of family papers. Alexandra spearheaded the remodel with the goal of “taking something that is already wonderful and updating it to make it our own.”

The Bessers, Southern California transplants, describe their move to Boulder as an effort to live “a more simple way of life” with their boys (ages 13, 11, and eight). They spent nearly two years scanning Boulder’s limited housing inventory for the

ideal home to put down roots. With walkability and sense of community at the top of their list, they selected the Edwardian fixer-upper (circa 1905) just two blocks off Boulder’s Pearl Street Mall. While other prospective buyers were intimidated by the home’s neglected state, the Bessers saw a masterfully designed house brimming with original details—like the ornate fireplace mantel, Douglas fir floors (never sanded), dark-stained molding, old-growth paneled doors, and steam radiators.

Still, it lacked some of the basic ameni-



MEMORY LANE *Left:* When they bought the home, the Besser family discovered that the previous owners had left behind more than 300 vintage portraits dating back to the 1880s. They created a photo gallery with some of the pictures in the home office.



IN THE FAMILY Seasoned remodelers, the Bessers had a vision for what was possible when they purchased this historic home. They recognized its irreplaceable details (like the fireplace, above), but also spotted its potential for a modern floor plan to accommodate a family of five.

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ties that their modern family desired: easy access to the backyard, a kitchen that could double as a social hub, and more bathrooms. To solve these spatial problems, the Bessers hired architect Lisa Egger and contractor Joel Smiley of Smiley Inc. The pair shared

BEFORE



BATH, MASTERED Architect Lisa Egger transformed what was once a spare bedroom (turned workout space) into a modern master bath with a classic feel. The floor tile features honed Carrara marble in a hexagonal pattern. Bone-colored subway tiles by Ardex were used in the shower.



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the Bessers' vision for stewardship of the home's original layout and detailing and brought a sympathetic approach to updating its outmoded wiring, plumbing, and heating systems and essential living spaces.

The back of the house was the one place



{inspired}

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FINISHING TOUCHES A reproduction claw-foot tub is the centerpiece of the master bath. On the vanity, a Carrara marble slab (from Granite Imports) is accompanied by an oval Restoration Hardware mirror and Schoolhouse Electric Co. sconces.



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where the historic character had been lost (thanks to old renovations), so Egger removed a narrow service stair and opened up a bearing wall to make room for a spacious new kitchen, pantry, mudroom, and powder room on the first floor. She used the reclaimed space on the second floor for a guest bathroom and swapped a spare bedroom for a luxurious master bath.

It's possible the original owners would feel right at home in this updated version.

"We tried to choose materials that are reminiscent of the past, so hopefully there is a blurring between what is old and what is new," Alexandra says of the finishes, which feature Carrara marble on the floor and classic subway tile on the kitchen and bath walls. In the office hang black-and-white portraits left behind by the home's previous residents. And with very little evidence of the interventions required to resuscitate the property, it's possible the original owners would feel right at home in this updated version. ■

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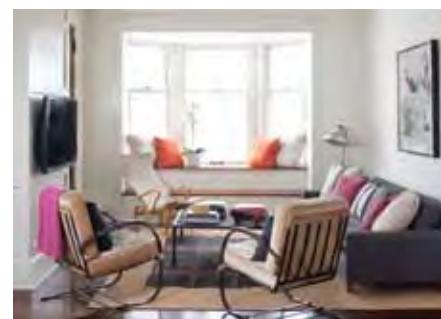
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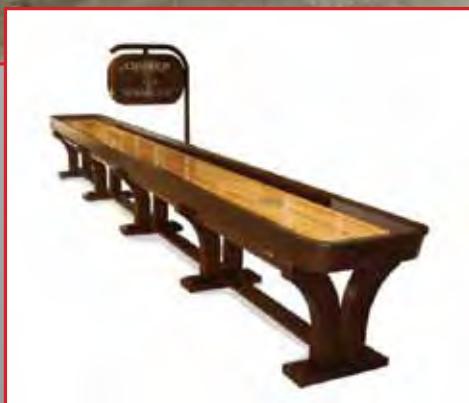
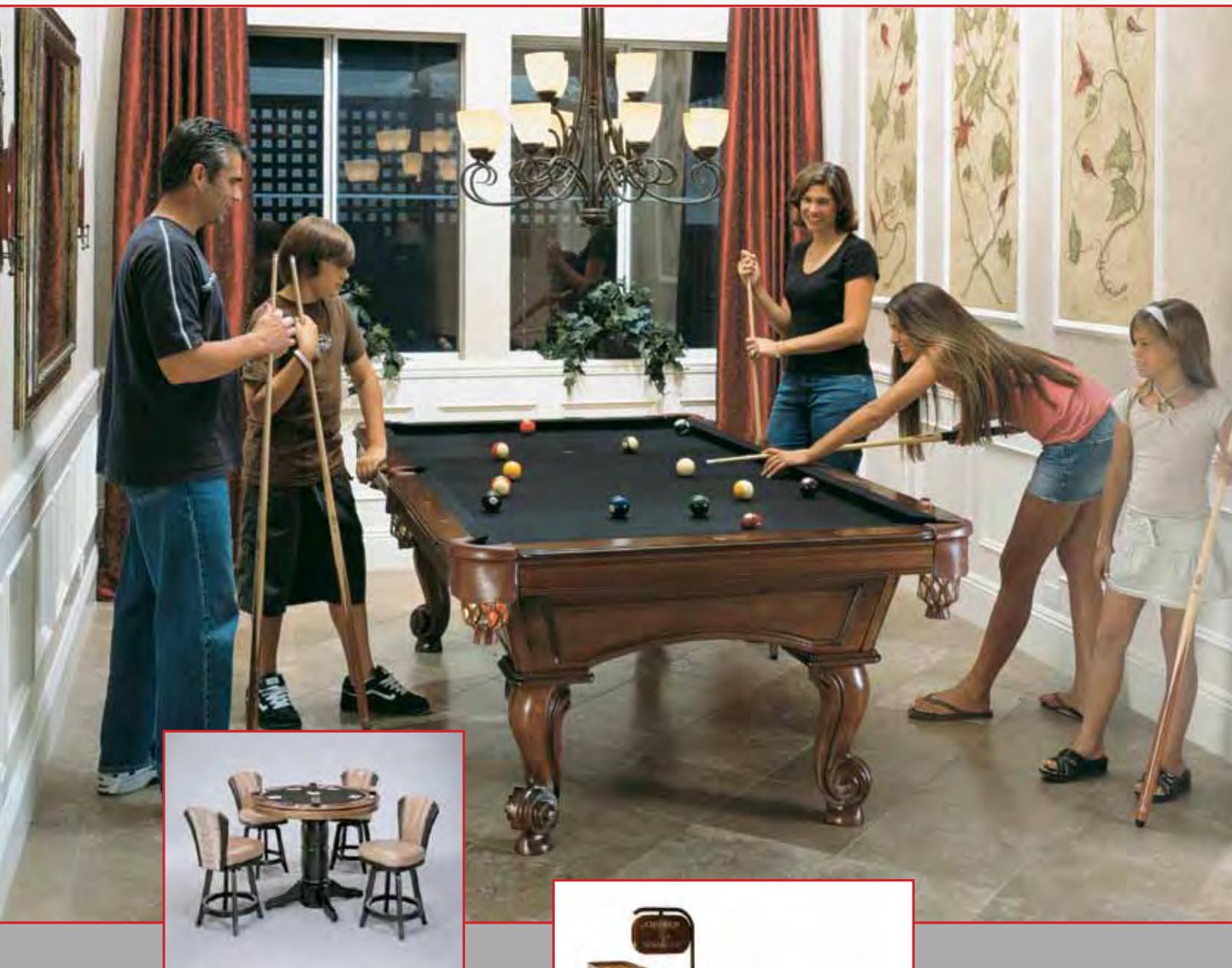
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FRESH START The new family room (at one time a sitting room with garish burgundy paint) got a makeover with the homeowners' updated furniture and fresh paint.

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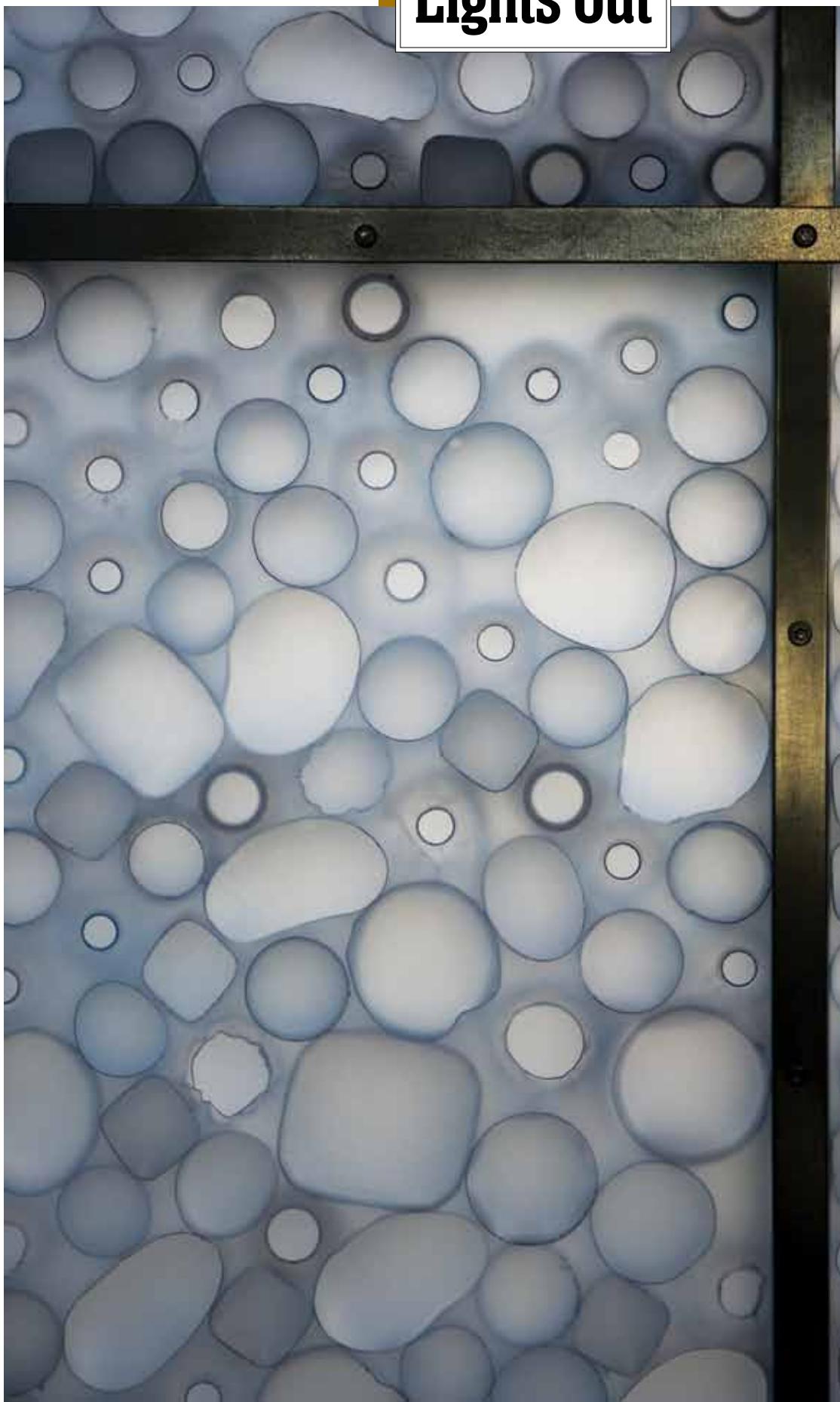
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Lights Out



SEE-THROUGH

A Denver architect finds a new use for discarded plastic water bottles—and the outcome is like a work of art.

Architect Mike Moore likes to see the world through his clients' eyes. So when his firm, Tres Birds Workshop, was commissioned to design the new office for 3i—a Denver biotech company that develops optical microscopes—he asked to see the microscopes' images. What he saw (airy, circular cells) held the answer to one of the project's biggest challenges: how to infill 20-foot garage bays (from a former diesel truck repair shop) with something translucent, insulating, and cheaper than glass. What he came up with—recycled plastic bottles—seemed at first difficult, but now appears inspired. He and his team repurposed the plastic bottles to optimize their thermal potential and replicate the elegant cellular structure seen under the microscope. The result is a frosted-window-like wall, created using about 21,000 recycled plastic water bottles (from Waste Management), that is both highly functional and a beautifully expressive backdrop.

—SARAH GOLDBLATT

