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A conversation pit
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area of a home in
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For Kathryn and Josh Thole, Denver was the perfect catch. Josh, a professional baseball player now with the Arizona Diamondbacks organization, is on the road from mid February to mid October, leaving just four months a year for the family to spend time together at home. Denver, with its central location, sunny winters, and nearby mountain recreation, offered a place where the Tholes could make the most of the off-season.

Finding a house quickly, however, required difficult choices: The Tholes could snap up one of the city's many bungalows or Tudors—marked by classic, middle-of-the-country charm but also by small rooms and cramped kitchens—or they could slide into a recent build, sacrificing historic character for sleeker design and more flexible living spaces.

They were able to get the best of both worlds by acquiring a late-19th-century Victorian in the city's Highland neighborhood in 2013, with plans to invest in a year-long renovation that would instill it with a distinctly modern sensibility.

Creating a mash-up of traditional and modern styles was Kathryn's idea, although explaining her concept wasn't easy. After a few meetings with a local >



The third floor houses the master suite and an 80-square-foot wet room. Existing walls (inset) were moved in to create a higher "pinch point" in the gable. Linear drains

along the room's glass partition (not shown) capture the flow from twin Hansgrohe showerheads. The tub is by Victoria + Albert; the floor, wall, and ceiling tiles are from Arizona Tile.

Home Base

Putting down roots in Denver, ballplayer Josh Thole and his family renovate a 19th-century Victorian.

Architect Caroline Wilding, then of Denver-based Design Platform, led the renovation. The staircase needed some treads replaced, but

“was left as original as possible,” she says. Wilding created the chandelier using wires from Color Cord and brackets from Home Depot.



An addition created space for a half bathroom and a mudroom. The sink is by Signature Hardware; the Luxe hexagonal tiles from Arizona Tile were custom arranged by Wilding.

architecture firm she had hired for its focus on restoration, it became clear the relationship wasn't working. “They were sticking too much to Victorian,” Kathryn says, and not enough to modern.

Then she found Design Platform, a Denver design-build firm with more contemporary leanings. Owner Jonas DiCaprio and then-in-house architect Caroline Wilding got it right away, says Kathryn, coming up with a plan to maintain the

home's essence while accommodating a workspace for Fig & Fawn, the online children's boutique Kathryn runs with interior designer Jenny Walsh, as well as room to display Josh's growing collection of career memorabilia and play space for the kids.

Completed in late 2014, the resulting residence comfortably straddles two eras. Imbued with both old-world charm and modern-day comforts, it features exterior brick walls and gabled roofs but is stripped

down inside with a black-and-white color scheme and a spacious, open floor plan.

Wilding preserved the structure's traditional touches where it made sense, keeping the window and door trim in places and shoring up the elegant but squeaky stairway that connects the first and second floors. Small moves, like exposing the brick around the fireplace, root the structure clearly in the past.

But she did take a few liberties as part >

renovation

"The kitchen, dining area, and family room were originally three separate rooms," says Wilding. "We opened the space by knocking down walls and installing two large flush beams in the ceiling." The

original kitchen (inset) was located in what is now the family room. The walnut cabinetry was designed by Wilding; shelves have high-output LED tape routed into a continuous reveal (bottom) for accent lighting.



of the contemporary update, starting with the entrance, where the Design Platform team installed a steel, flat-roofed canopy over the front porch and a simple steel frame around the door, as if to signal this is not your grandmother's Victorian.

When the project started, the home, now a unified 3,200 square feet, was actually two units, "so it involved a lot of undoing the weird decisions that had happened through the years," says Wilding. She had walls removed on the first floor to connect reconfigured living, dining, and kitchen areas and pulled it all together with pre-finished white oak flooring. The architect then removed most of the rear wall to install a large set of windows overlooking

the backyard. Rather than repartition the main space, she built an addition on the west side of the house to make room for a mudroom and an extra half-bath.

The second floor is kid central, with bedrooms for the three Thole children and a communal play space that's brightened with two skylights punched through the steep gabled roof. The entire level serves as a bridge between the home's past and present, mixing familiar elements with new methods. The bathroom floor, for example, is composed of traditional one-inch hexagonal tiles boldly placed in an asymmetrical zigzag pattern. The hallway serves as a gallery for the family's sizable collection of baseballs, bats, and photos >

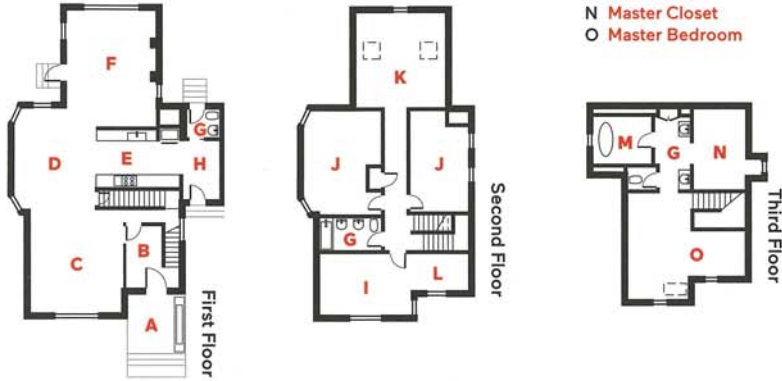


Thole Residence

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ARCHITECT **Design Platform** LOCATION **Denver, Colorado**

- A Porch
- B Entrance
- C Living Room
- D Dining Room
- E Kitchen
- F Family Room
- G Bathroom
- H Mud Room
- I Guest Room
- J Bedroom
- K Playroom
- L Office
- M Wet Room
- N Master Closet
- O Master Bedroom



commemorating the home runs and no-hitters that mark Josh's career as a catcher.

The biggest challenge—and the biggest success of the project—was arguably the third floor, which now houses the master bedroom suite, where an airy and ultra-modern perforated-metal staircase replaces what was once a tiny set of wooden steps. Wilding also had to work with existing roof conditions, making the most of the compound geometry, and sloped ceilings so steep they doubled as walls. The set of constraints inspired a series of spaces that serve as a bathroom, a walk-in closet, and a sleeping area. An additional skylight was also installed in the sleeping area at a height that allows it to serve as a low window, offering Kathryn and Josh a skyline view of downtown Denver, about a mile away, from the comfort of their bed.

The most notable feature, however, is a wet room encased in floor-to-ceiling tile >

ILLUSTRATION: LOHNES + WRIGHT



In the living room, layers of plaster were removed to expose the original brick fireplace surround, and a brick

step was added; the black metal gas insert is by Heat & Glo. Tablo Tables from Normann Copenhagen sit on

a rug from Safavieh, and the light fixture was designed and fabricated by Nathan Warner of Warbach.

The facade was enhanced with a new porch, steel canopy, and planters, as well as new windows (below left). The second floor houses the children's bedrooms and a sunny playroom (below right). The wood floors throughout are prefinished distressed white oak.



“With all these gables we had to figure out the right circulation to make the square footage work. It created opportunities that maybe we wouldn’t have had otherwise.”

CAROLINE WILDING, ARCHITECT

with a freestanding tub and two opposing showerheads; at 80 square feet, the space is big enough for the entire family to get clean all at once.

Wilding, who has since left Design Platform to start her own firm called Construct Design/Architecture, is grateful that the Tholes gave her as much freedom as they did to create their new space,

although that was something of a necessity. Kathryn was pregnant with the couple’s third child during the better part of the construction period, and the family was far from Denver, traveling on the road with Josh and his team, then the Toronto Blue Jays. The architect and client communicated through a combination of emails, texts, and calls each day.

“I had two toddlers and a big belly, and my husband was off playing baseball,” says Kathryn. “I was a loose cannon.”

But the project succeeded, Wilding believes, because the two sides trusted each other’s vision for the final results. “We connected so much on the aesthetic, I just felt like I could make decisions for her,” Wilding says. ■