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# A Detailed Study

A FRESH TAKE ON PRAIRIE-STYLE ARCHITECTURE ADDS UP TO A LESSON IN ARTFUL LIVING.

Writer **Mara Boo** Photographer **Janet Mesic-Mackie** Field editor **Hilary Rose**



THIS PHOTO The colonnade simultaneously unifies and delineates the home's interior spaces. The living and dining rooms are to the right; all other spaces lie to the left.

OPPOSITE The exterior displays stone, cedar shingles, stucco, and Douglas-fir beaded board.





OPPOSITE The Katz family often eats meals in the dining room. The round table—evidence of the informality that Pam and Jim prefer—creates a pleasing juxtaposition against the sharp-lined display shelving behind. RIGHT The beams spanning the ceiling in the living and dining rooms conceal the home's mechanical systems. Though they appear to support the upper level, they're not functional.



Pam and Jim Katz see a lot to admire in the work of architect Frank Lloyd Wright. And what better way to admire the Prairie style he shaped than from the comfort of home?

The couple brought that idea to architect Fred Wilson as they planned a house for their wooded property near Chicago. Inspired by their thoughts, Wilson suggested a design beyond a classic rendition of the Prairie style. "Things become more interesting if you take an idea like Prairie style, but don't literally express it," he says. "This has a more contemporary, cleaner feel. We developed it into something richer through the detailing."

Pam and Jim were eager collaborators with Wilson during the almost three-year planning process. "We knew if we stayed focused on maintaining the details," Wilson says, "we would come up with something beautiful."

Indeed, Wilson's ability to create exquisite architectural detail defines the Katz home. The geometry established at the front door—outside the front door, actually, thanks to the four stone piers that foreshadow the colonnade

within—extends proportionately to ceilings, windows, stairs, railings, and cabinetry. The detailing tempts the eye to rove, curious to discover what lies around the corner.

The airy staircase, for example, provides a glimpse upstairs while offering a tactile counterpoint to such heavier elements as the living room's stone fireplace. Beneath ebony handrails stained to match the hardwood floors, vertical rectangles form a grid mimicking the mullions of the home's 100-plus windows. "The vertical plane pulls your eye up," Wilson says. "But it's not a formal, frontal stair you just walk in and see. It's a much more dynamic stair that wraps you up into the second floor."

Because Pam and Jim are grounded in family and often entertain, the living and dining areas unite to support their informal style. But the spaces are no less architecturally dramatic. An elongated built-in along the wall, for instance, provides storage and connects to the living room's massive fireplace. And the dining room's display shelves extend the linear quality to create a key architectural feature. A graphic



ABOVE Glass-door upper cabinets along one wall of the kitchen hang in front of windows, allowing sunlight to stream inside. RIGHT Shaker-style cabinets mix surprisingly well with the industrial-style stainless-steel appliances Jim favors. The room's television is concealed behind cabinet doors above the oven, because, Pam says, "I love to watch it, but I hate to see it."

articulation of an exaggerated grid, the shelves provide a museumlike home for favorite objects. Wilson intentionally blunted the left side of the shelves so they appear to be supported only by the adjacent window.

A similar geometry extends to the kitchen. Sinkside cabinetry varies in depth by 1½-inch increments as it stretches across the upper wall, creating a medley of right angles. The crown molding echoes the variations. Even the mosaic tiles form a diminutive repetition of symmetry on the backsplashes. To soften the kitchen's rectilinear elements, the granite surface of the center island has a gentle bow.

And then there's the light that streams through the room's wraparound windows and continues the play of motion. Perhaps its most unexpected point of entry is through the backs of the glazed-door cabinets. "There are mornings I've had to wear sunglasses in the kitchen," Pam says, smiling.

Further blurring the distinction between indoors and out is the well-used sunroom. Comfortably furnished with nap-enticing seating and a crowd-worthy dining space, this is where the family loves to relax. To emphasize the serenity of the wooded surroundings, Wilson says, "We tried to make the posts and the horizontal members as small as







THIS PHOTO A limestone checkerboard floor sets the quiet tone of the master bath. BELOW A narrow band of windows wraps one end of the cozy master bedroom. Four-foot eaves help shade the space on sunny mornings.

possible, so it's really the minimal amount of shelter you could achieve."

The wooded site also lends calm to the master suite, where transom windows invite sunshine inside while preserving privacy. In the bath, the heights of the vanity and makeup areas vary, and mirrors seem to float over the windows to layer and reflect light. It's further evidence of what Pam and Jim call Wilson's "amazing level of detail."

All the home's features combine to give the couple a perfect 21st-century take on Prairie style. "We wanted our house to be different," Pam says. "Fred [Wilson] gave us more than we ever anticipated. It's like functional art." **BH**

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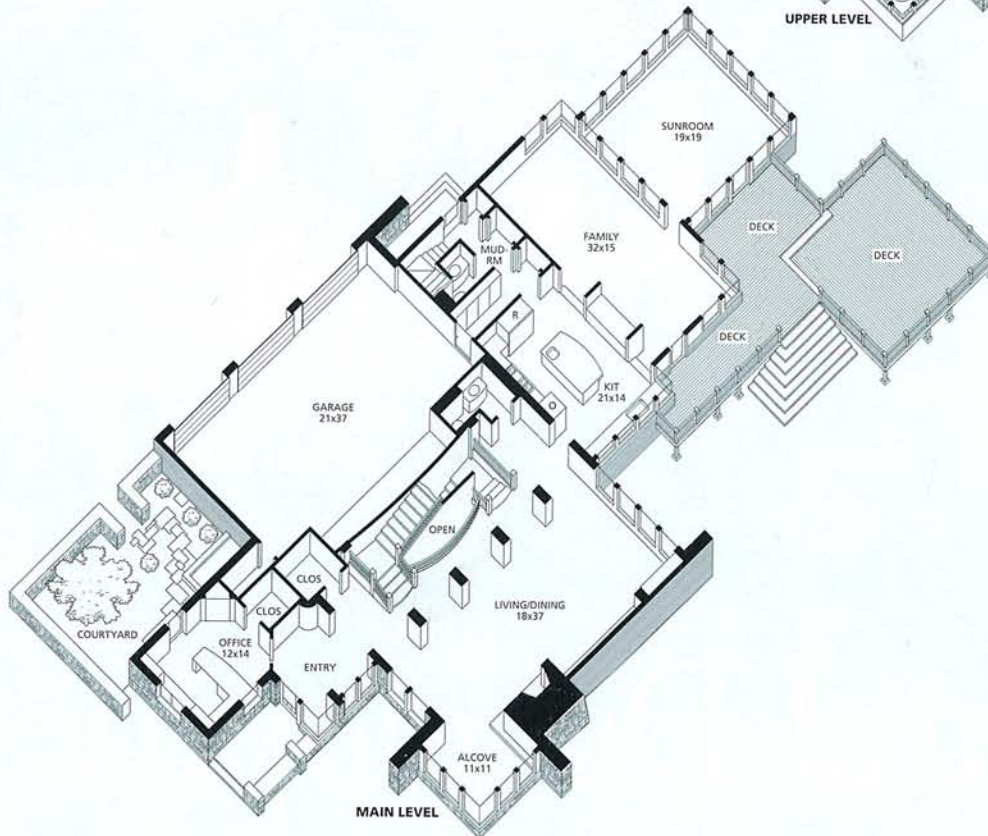
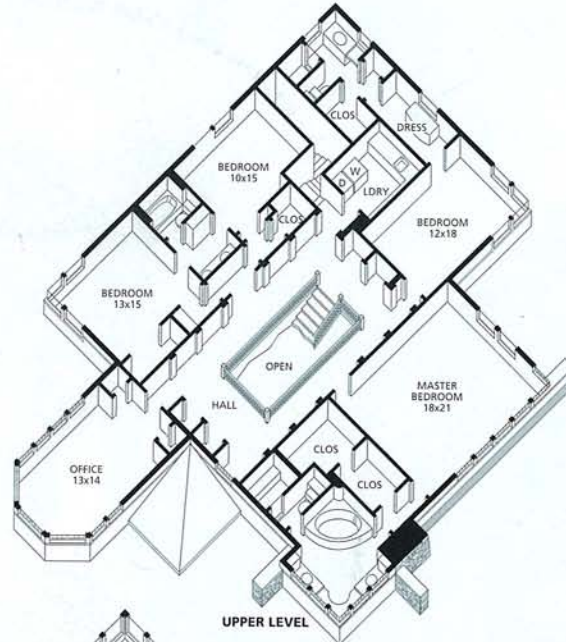
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AN INFORMAL FLOOR PLAN meets a medley of architectural flourishes in this new home, which was inspired by the Prairie style of the early 20th century. Although the palette of materials creates a rather simple look, the level of detail is extensive and consistent in its use of geometric shapes and lines.



MAIN LEVEL SQ. FT.: 3,400  
 UPPER LEVEL SQ. FT.: 2,550  
 BEDROOMS: 4  
 BATHROOMS: 3 full, 2 half



Architect Fred Wilson Project manager Tricia N. Charbonneau Contractor Thomas E. Fox Homes