

# both sides now

a capitol hill contemporary indulges its owner's playful spirit

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PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY STUART SILK ARCHITECTS  
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IN JUSTIN BLOCH'S CAPITOL HILL HOME, SPACES ARE DEFINED BY WALL FINISHES, WHICH ARE LAID OUT ON A GRID THAT EXTENDS TO THE WINDOWS AND EVEN THE STEEL FIREPLACE SURROUND. THE DEN, AT REAR, STILL SPORTS ITS ORIGINAL OAK PANELING (AS WELL AS A PAINTING BY DR. SEUSS). THE BOOKCASE OPENS TO REVEAL A BAR. THE FIREPLACE WALL IS COVERED IN CEMENTBOARD, WHICH WRAPS AROUND THE WINDOWS AND CONTINUES ON THE EXTERIOR. SYCAMORE GRACES THE LIVING ROOM CEILING AND WALL (FAR RIGHT). THE FLOOR IS WALNUT. SOFA, CHAIRS AND COFFEE TABLE FROM SEVA, (206) 323-9920.



AN AIRFOIL ROOF (LEFT) HOVERS OVER THE NEW WEST FAÇADE AND A BLOCKY REMNANT OF THE ORIGINAL HOUSE. HIGH-BACKED CHAIRS (BELOW) HELP DIVIDE THE LIVING AREA FROM THE DINING AREA AND WINDOW-LINED OFFICE BEYOND. A STEEL STAIRCASE (OPPOSITE) DOMINATES THE ENTRY HALL AND CULMINATES IN A BRIDGE TO THE BEDROOMS.

STUART SILK ARCHITECTS

Justin Bloch has two portraits in his home. One shows the 33-year-old restaurateur and real-estate developer with a giant apple covering his face, in the style of Magritte's *The Son of Man*. The other, a mural lining the elevator shaft, casts the homeowner as Superman in a sprawling homage to DC comics.

Both sides of Justin—the aesthete and the adolescent—are given full expression in his Capitol Hill home, a buoyant glass box that blends capital-A Architecture with the playful exuberance of a kid's treehouse.

Originally built in the 1950s (one former resident was a Roosevelt), the house was looking a bit tired by the time Justin took possession eight years ago. The interior was dark, and the one-story design didn't take full advantage of the unparalleled views of downtown Seattle, Lake Union and the Olympics. Justin asked the design team at Stuart Silk Architects to add a second story to the house and bring the rest of it up to date while still preserving the structure's Eisenhower-era roots.



"I wanted to make a contemporary home that was very stylish," Justin says, "but I didn't want to end up making a house that would go out of style."

At Justin's request, the architects preserved the garage and glass-walled office at either end of the house, working with Delta Construction to strip the rest down to the framework. The 1:12 roofline that characterized the old house was reborn as shimmering





JUSTIN'S RESTAURANT ROOTS ARE EVIDENT IN THE KITCHEN (OPPOSITE), A THEATRICAL SPACE ADORNED WITH STAINLESS STEEL, MAPLE, CONCRETE AND FROSTED GLASS. THE ADJOINING SITTING ROOM FEATURES A PORTRAIT OF THE OWNER (AFTER MAGRITTE). THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE (RIGHT) SKIRTS A SHARED DRIVEWAY; THE BEACON-LIKE ENTRY HELPS ORIENT VISITORS. THE ALUMINUM AIRFOIL ROOF CURVES BACK INTO THE MASTER BEDROOM (BELOW RIGHT), WHERE THE VIEW COMPETES WITH A CEILING-MOUNTED PLASMA TV. THE NEIGHBORING BATHROOM (BELOW LEFT) IS LINED WITH BACK-PAINTED GLASS. BACK-TO-BACK VANITIES FLOAT IN THE CENTER OF THE ROOM AND SHARE PIVOTING MIRRORS AFFIXED TO A CENTRAL COLUMN.



airfoil wings that ascend east and west, as if poised for flight. Ribbons of aluminum-clad windows hug the eaves, adding to the sense of weightlessness, while exterior sheathing wraps its way inside, bridging divisions between indoors and out.

Instead of trying for a seamless fusion of old and new, architect Stuart Silk and project architect Dave Dykstra (now of Dave Dykstra Architects) used changes in material to codify the house's parts, sheathing some volumes in concrete and stucco and others in cement fiberboard and cedar, producing a Rubik's cube of shifting masses that take on a different appearance from every angle.

Competing staircases were eradicated in favor of a single stairwell housed within a two-story glass tower that draws in light and views during the day and acts like a beacon at night, directing visitors to the entry. There, a floating steel staircase doubles as a sculpture, its mesh

side walls serving as scrims to filter the views beyond.

"Justin wasn't afraid to use metal," says Silk. Steel beams frame the living-room fireplace and outline the perimeter of the kitchen; an aluminum bridge links the bedrooms above. Since all that metal could be perceived as cold, the architects offset it with ruddy Peruvian walnut floors and covered the ceilings and walls with ethereal panels of pale sycamore.

Justin likes to entertain, so the architects merged the old living and dining areas into a single space blessed with floor-to-ceiling windows. (Argon-filled laminated glass reduces energy consumption and diminishes noise from the freeway below.) A neighboring study sports its original oak paneling and a James Bondian innovation: a bookcase that swings open to reveal a hidden bar.

Although others tried to talk him out of it, Justin insisted on serving

as his own interior designer—a role he performed admirably. "It scared me a little bit," he admits, "but I wanted this to be my home." Overscaled contemporary furnishings float atop flat-woven Tibetan rugs like islands of serenity within the home's testosterone-fueled framework. Justin even commissioned the custom dining set: a blocky oak table paired with benches instead of chairs, so as not to block the view. "You can get more people on them, too," he notes pragmatically.

A succession of islands topped with hanging glass shelves divide the dining area from the state-of-the-art kitchen, where stainless-steel cabinets and matching appliances are paired with concrete counters and a frosted-glass breakfast bar. Despite the presence of five ovens (this is, after all, a homeowner who grew up around restaurants), Justin sheepishly admits he rarely prepares anything more complicated than macaroni, owing to the culinary demands of his 6-year-old daughter.

Justin is more likely to be found in front of one of the flat-panel TVs suspended from the ceiling of both his office and his bedroom—or in his closet, a two-story affair fitted with a spiral staircase, a dressing table, and space enough to entertain. "I actually had a party once where I made that the VIP room," he laughs.

Justin took an active role in the home's design, often faxing drawings to Dykstra to review. The architect, in turn, credits Justin with some of the home's unique touches, such as the luminous master bath with its aqueous walls of back-painted glass and sculptural vanities.

As Justin lounges in the limestone-framed tub, with city lights twinkling off the glass walls and taillights skimming the roadway below, he can feel both close to the city and happily removed from it—the perfect dichotomy for a man who likes to indulge both sides of his personality. ■