

INTERIOR DESIGN / JESSICA SUPERA, S.O.F.T. HOMES  
ARCHITECTURE / SETH ROMIG, SETH ROMIG ARCHITECT  
HOME BUILDER / JEFF BERRY, GOLDBERG GENERAL CONTRACTING, INC.  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / DENISE ROSENBLUM, BOTANICAL CONCEPTS CHICAGO



# SHAPE SHIFTER

INSPIRED BY BROOKLYN HOMES, A MULTI-UNIT DWELLING IN LINCOLN PARK BECOMES A SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCE.

WRITTEN BY LIZ ARNOLD / PHOTOGRAPHY BY TONY SOLURI

The bright and bold front parlor of designer Jessica Supera's Lincoln Park residence—formerly a three-unit building—serves as her office. A double-arm Nickey Kehoe pendant from The Urban Electric Co. in Charleston, South Carolina, hangs over a Mark Albrecht Studio desk, whose warm leather-inset top counters its lean steel base. Behind it is a vibrant mixed-media work by David Kramer.

Designer Jessica Supera has a passion for historic homes. “I love them,” she says. “But they get torn down all over Chicago.” So when a three-unit 1886 building in Lincoln Park became available, she jumped at the chance to make it a home for her, her three children and the family dog. Together with architect Seth Romig and builder Jeff Berry, she transformed it into a single-family residence, drawing inspiration from the layouts of Brooklyn brownstones. “We took it apart and put it back together in the way I’d imagine a home would’ve been,” Supera says.

Everything changed during the gut renovation. “We kept the front and side walls and rebuilt everything on the interiors,” Romig says. “Rather than tear down, we could repurpose for contemporary use.” The façade saw a restoration and a new masonry stain. The layout—mostly true to a Brooklyn brownstone—positions a vestibule at the entry, a front parlor (which serves as Supera’s office), a dining room and, at the rear, a family room and the kitchen. The two upper levels each contain two bedrooms, while the lower level, which opens to an outdoor space, holds a large entertainment area, a guest room, a craft room and a kitchenette.

Supera wanted exterior spaces on all public levels, so each has an outdoor area connected by an exterior stair. Landscape designer Denise Rosenbloom set out to create “a contemporary twist to match Jessica’s style while sustaining a welcoming old-world feel,” she explains. The look comes together through elements such as a large window box at the front, fluffy Carex grass instead of sod and exterior wall art with ferns, ivy and leaves.



**Right:** Linen Zak + Fox draperies from Holland & Sherry add a graphic element to Supera's office while allowing in plentiful light. Peter Dunham Textiles' Fig Leaf print on the Montauk sofa draws the eye to the window box, which shows off seasonal plantings by landscape designer Denise Rosenbloom. The brass-and-walnut table is by BassamFellows.

**Opposite:** Black accents unify the office, as seen in small accessories, the standing floor lamps from Plug Lighting in Los Angeles, the steel-and-leather Mark Albrecht chair and the print of the sisal-and-suede Merida rug. The vintage marble mantel is from Architectural Salvage in Exeter, New Hampshire. Although the home's interiors are new, architect Seth Romig designed the trim to look original.





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-JESSICA SUPERA

**Opposite:** A casual family room nests in the spacious open kitchen, where layers of texture add tactile interest. Plentiful seating is offered by an Interior Define sofa and a pair of spindle-back Nickey Kehoe chairs covered in a Timorous Beasties print. The circular coffee table from CB2 brings a low-key sculptural surface to the mix. A sculpture by Ann Carrington made of vintage silver spoons rests on the Au Petit Parisien shelves from Ghislain Antiques in Saint-Ouen, France.

**Below:** Supera bricked the dining room windows and created her own views with *Kolorit* by Katrin Korfmann from Kopeikin Gallery in Los Angeles through Patti Gilford Fine Arts. A plaster chandelier from Bourgeois Boheme Atelier accents the shape of the room over a custom oak table by Nickey Kehoe, who also designed the L-sconces. The oak Roche Bobois bridge chairs are covered in a birdcage print by Timorous Beasties.



**Opposite:** Adjacent to the kitchen, O'Brien Harris designed a bar. The space continues the kitchen's encaustic Clé floor tile and adheres to the palette of white, gray, black and pale wood.

**Below:** Supera and Romig created a bistro feel in the kitchen, covering the walls with white Clé subway tile. A Gaggenau induction cooktop works seamlessly into the U-shape counter. The Gubi bar chairs are covered in a casual Anta wool tweed, and the pendants are from Istidibs. The kitchen design, including the custom hood, is by O'Brien Harris.



Access to light was also a main consideration, because the building is in the middle of a block on a standard 25-by-125-foot lot. Windows in the front parlor are grand in scale, as are the ones in the kitchen, where the patio door is paned in glass. A 20-foot skylight on the third level casts light over the upper floors and the stair designed by Romig. "I'm a fan of architectural moments of serenity and peacefulness in connection to the exterior, especially nature," he says. As such, coming through the front door, guests see light trickling down the stairs as well as from the parlor, the entrances to other rooms and the kitchen. "The house unfolds with rhythm, connection and interest," the architect says.

As for the interiors, Supera maintained a focused perspective on what she was looking for—and her philosophy on design in general. "I think homes should be somewhat malleable," she says. "The underlying base layer should have texture and be interesting, but the palette should be neutral."

The "base layer" approach, as she calls it, is smart and subtle: white walls and trim; white-oak floors throughout, except for some areas tiled in a white-gray-black pattern; and a pale wood kitchen, designed by Peter Harris of O'Brien Harris. "Blonde is back," Berry says. "Recently, the design community is going toward more natural blonde boards, so we gave these a clear finish."



Modern elements play with traditional details in the master bathroom, which features a generous dressing area. Nickel Ralph Lauren Home sconces accent the oval pivot mirrors from RH. The floor pops with a black-and-white encaustic Clé pattern.

Black accents appear as metal drapery hardware, metal lighting arms, the fireplace opening in the front parlor, tabletop accessories and the occasional furniture frame, like the master's wood four-poster and the dining chairs' metal frames, which support a light-oak form with a natural-rattan caned back.

Throughout the residence, texture brings depth to neutral furnishings—particularly in the master bedroom, where a woven rug pulls together a seating area underneath a rope chandelier. Together with the caned headboard and woven blinds, they create a unified sense of warmth. "There's very little color, but everything has a texture to it," Supera points out. "It's very peaceful."

The designer's taste for furnishings is eclectic, with a mix of old and new, vintage and modern in each room. But they, too, adhere to a clean-lined scheme. "I like things that are graphic, sculptural and well-designed," Supera says. The result is a look that's more curated than designed. "I didn't go from showroom to showroom," she says. "I purchased items in London and in Paris, I went to California, and I brought some pieces from my last house. It's more of a food-truck philosophy."

But that doesn't mean Supera's home is done, per se. "I don't believe in finishing every space," she says. "I have empty walls and corners. You don't need to cover every surface for your house to look finished. You should have room for the next chapter in your life." ■

Woven fibers unify the master bedroom, as seen in the braided Merida rug, the motorized shades from Blinds Gallery, and the rope chandelier and the bed frame, both from Hollywood at Home in Los Angeles. The roll-arm RH sofa in Belgian linen, a pair of William Haines Design chairs wearing material by Peter Dunham Textiles and a Rachel Ashwell table compose a seating area. The layers of bedding are by John Robshaw, Holland & Sherry and Holly Hunt.

