

"The clerestory windows allow for borrowed light from the large skylight. We wanted privacy, but we didn't want to sacrifice light," says architect Tyler Engle.

The architect called for butt-joint glazing so that the walls appear to float. The slope on the 8-foot-by-12-foot skylight draws light down and increases its apparent width.

The etchings over the sofa are by Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin. The glass piece on the coffee table is by Nancy Mee, and the silhouettes by Alfred Harris.





"It is as if we have two upside down U's, like croquet wickets, of blackened steel that we've pulled apart to create the working part of the kitchen," says Engle, of the black bands on the right, in the hallway. "They are blinders like on a horse, so you don't look at the mess in the kitchen. It also provides a pretty dynamic aesthetic."

Northwest Living by Rebecca Teagarden |
photographed by Benjamin Benschneider

A Fresh Start

REMODELING IS RAISED TO A FINE ART

THE LITTLE COMMERCIAL brick building does nothing to give itself away.

Single story. Nosed up to the sidewalk. Eyelids closed with storefront windows cloaked in blinds.

But the front door, etched glass with three small circles top, middle and bottom, is a tipoff that behind this poker-faced facade lurks a big smirk.

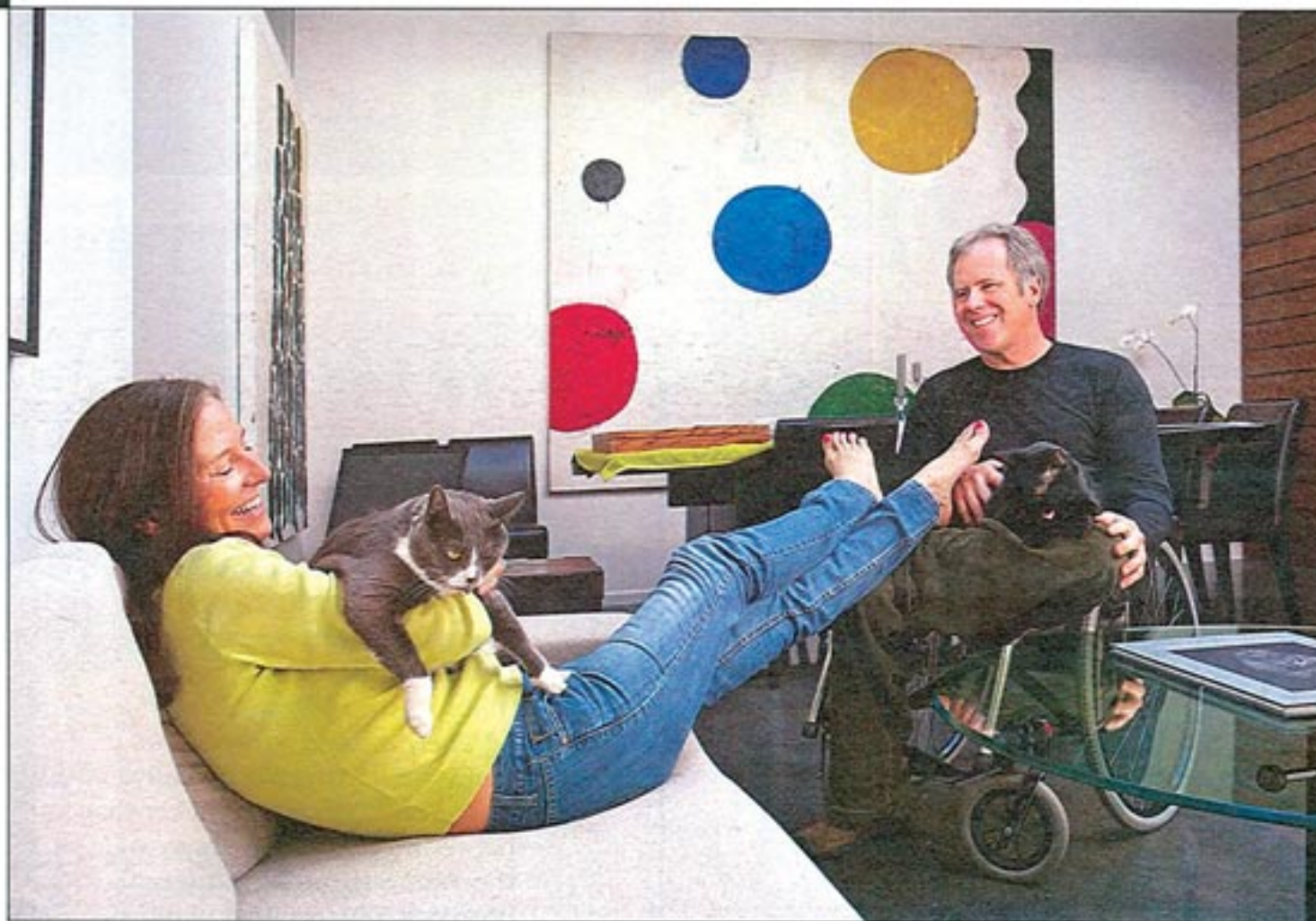
This live-work space, the contemporary reinvention of an old building that began life as a drugstore in 1916, is all about the live. The dimples in the door are peepholes for those who live inside: top for Tina Jacobsen, middle for her husband, John Kucher, and, the bottom for their cats, Thor and Kate.

"I told John that I'd love a kitchen, I'd love a living room, I'd love a bathroom," said Jacobsen, who married Kucher in 2007.

It was a time of new beginnings. The remodel was on.

Kucher, who served as executive director of a Seattle non-profit development company and board member of On The Boards theater, was well used to the rabbit warren of office spaces divided by a hallway. He has worked out of this building since the 1980s and lived here

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Tina Jacobsen and John Kucher get cozy with their cats Kate and Thor in their living room, a space their architect calls the interior courtyard. "In the Northwest we can't have them outside; this is what we do instead," Engle says of courtyards. The painting behind Kucher is by Ken Kelly.

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"I don't think things have to be either open or closed, they can be open and closed," Engle says. "You don't feel like the kitchen is totally open to the other room, but it can still engage the room." The cabinets are Europly in 15 thin layers of maple. "The advantage to this is you don't have to do pulls or edge bindings," he says. The counter is precast waxed concrete from Dogpaw Design, slightly lighter than the floor.

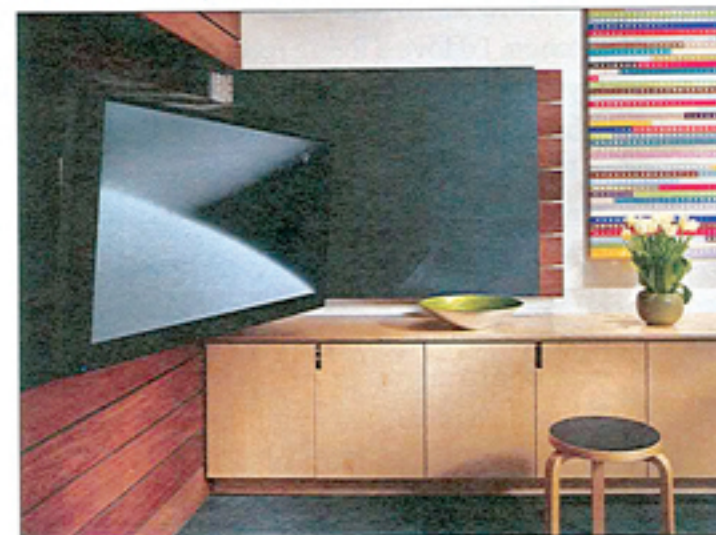
Space on a sliding scale

ARCHITECT TYLER ENGLE wanted to get the most he could out of the space in the Jacobsen-Kucher home. He found pocket doors to be the answer for morphing multiple-use rooms.

"There are five pocket doors in this house, to make it totally convertible. There is a pocket door between the master hallway and the courtyard; at the bathroom, bedroom, and the other two are on the front side and provide the privacy barrier between the spaces facing the street and the courtyard.

"Multifunctional space, that's what's really important. Instead of megamansions, why can't we just get more function out of our space? We should be designing multifunctional spaces that are convertible and work for different times of day and different functions in our life."

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The TV is hidden in the ipe wall in the interior courtyard.



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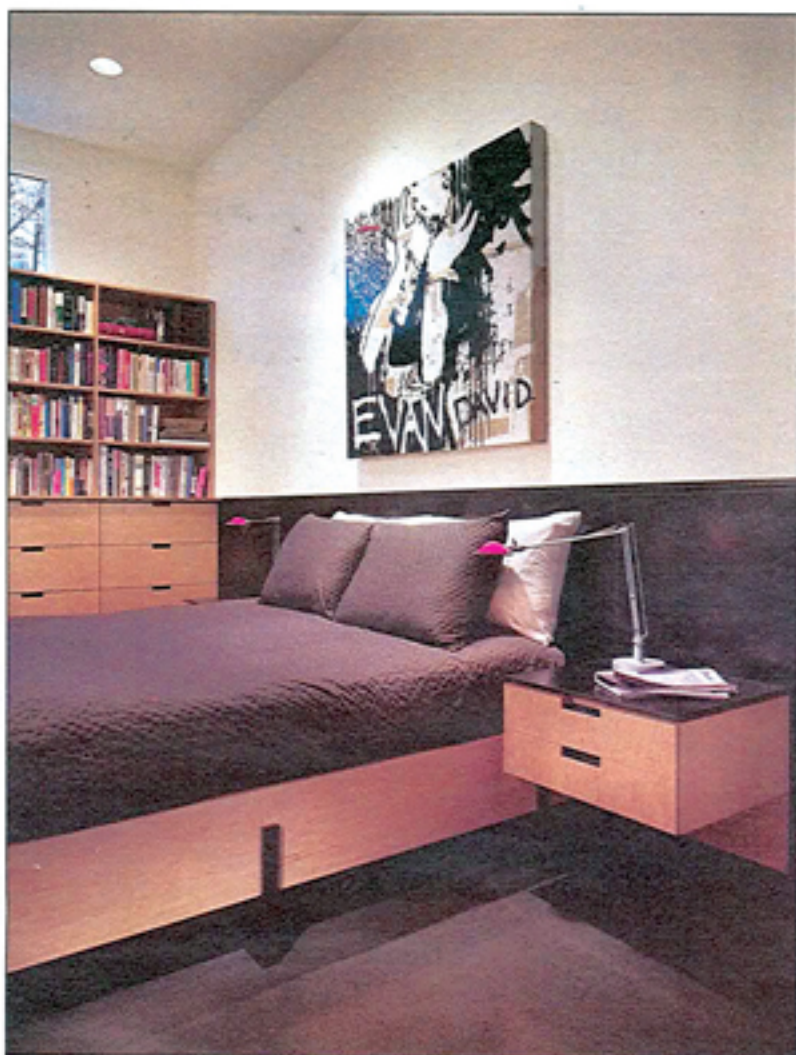


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Engle designed the bedroom and its furniture, including the wall-length cabinetry. The headboard is blackened steel. He made a new bed using springs from an old favorite of Kucher's. Four steel drawers under the bed are used for linens. The painting, newspaper on plywood, is by Portland artist Nicholas Walker from the Mark Woolley Gallery.

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with his wife, gallerist extraordinaire Linda Farris, until her death in 2005.

On a trip to Africa in May 2006 Kucher remet Jacobsen. (It's a long story. Friends talked him into the trip. She was there to celebrate her 50th birthday. Everybody got to talking; turns out Kucher had dated her 35 years earlier, in high school.)

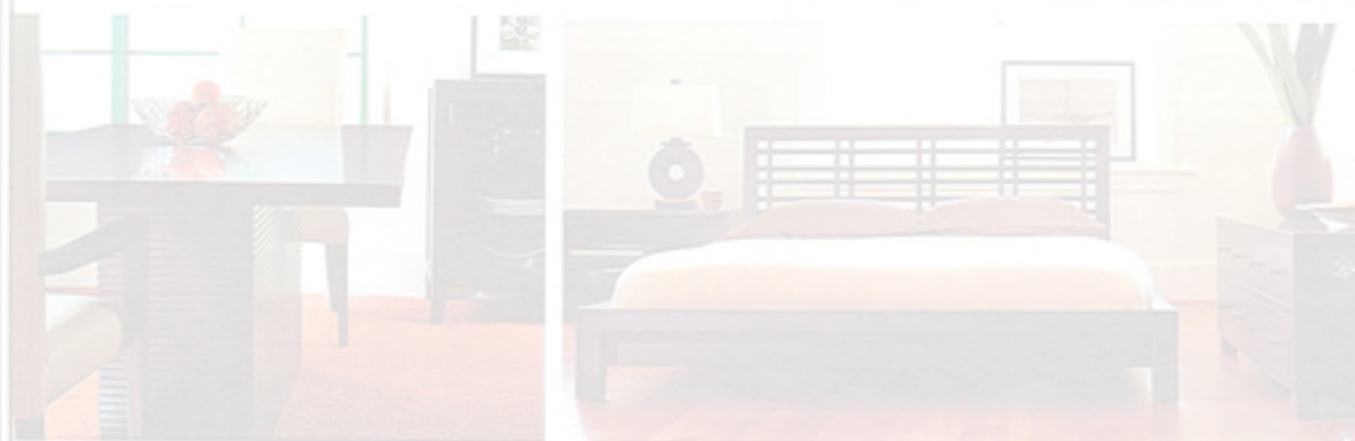
Kucher and Jacobsen have been together ever since. Started the remodel in December 2006. Moved in the following September, two days after they got married.

Kucher called upon architect Tyler Engle of Tyler Engle Architects PS to create an open, loft-like space for living, but maintain work places, too. The result: 1,500 square feet with one bedroom, 2½ baths and two offices. Engle did it by reorganizing spaces from public (the open living-dining-kitchen interior "courtyard") to private (pocket, pivoting and panel doors redefine rooms, conceal media equipment). Her office is in one of those storefront windows, his is in the very back.

Engle calls a bar defined by horizontal spaced ipe boards "the shipping container," and it houses the service functions of kitchen and

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powder room. This bar separates the original storefront from the "courtyard." The master bedroom and bath both draw natural light from the impressive 8-by-12-foot central skylight by way of long clerestory windows.

Talking to Engle about his goal for Kucher and Jacobsen's home brings up words like simple, efficient, honest and flexible. Polished concrete floors speak to the building's commercial past. The radiant heat to the comfort of the present. The look is made complete with bottle-green matte-glass tile, blackened-steel plate, precast concrete countertops and off-white walls to showcase the couple's terrific art collection.

"What we did was pretty much demolish every interior surface," Engle says.

Now, every day on his way to work, Kucher gets some fresh air by rolling out the front door, down the sidewalk and around to the back door — his office.

"I like to commute," he says with a grin. It's funny, but he means it, too. "The sidewalk is my ramp," he says, thumping his hand on the wheel of the chair he travels in. This is the way Kucher wanted it, the short flight of interior stairs to his office forcing him outside.

"And it really feels like he's going off to work," says Jacobsen. She is curled up on the white Minotti sofa, under their piece of the sky, surrounded by world-class art in their great great-room. 

Rebecca Teagarden is assistant editor of Pacific Northwest magazine.
Benjamin Benschneder is a magazine staff photographer.



This space once was Sam Lawson's Drugstore. "The real intent was to make this an incredible surprise, like a chameleon of sorts," architect Tyler Engle says. "The exterior is what is and what was. The interior is where it really starts. The dark gray paint is more modern and a nod to what happens inside."

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