

In the living room of designer Ramsey Lyons's home in Pittsburgh, which was built in 1907 by architecture firm McClure & Spahr, the decorative plaster ceiling and leaded windows were all restored. Artwork over mantel, Donald Martiny. For details, see Resources.

With two children, a pair of dogs, and pet bunnies in tow, designer Ramsey Lyons energetically transforms a Pittsburgh landmark into a dynamic home for her family.

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A Damien Hirst spot painting hangs on the living room's original paneling, which was limewashed and given a tinted wax finish. Sofa in an Anna French print; slipper chairs in a Pierre Frey velvet; cocktail table and pendant, David Duncan Studio; antique Oushak, J&D Oriental Rugs.

OPPOSITE: In the entry, the walls are sheathed in Phillip Jeffries grass cloth, and the oak floor was hand-painted by Jon Gluck in a graphic design. Console, Mark Evers Antiques; mirror, Bunny Williams Home; lamps by Christopher Spitzmiller.



It's only human to dwell on the one that got away. Especially when the object of your affection didn't actually go anywhere.

Eight years after Ramsey Lyons and her financier husband moved from Baltimore to Pittsburgh, they still couldn't get a house they'd considered buying out of their heads. A redbrick Tudor that dates back to Pittsburgh's golden age of industrialists, the fortresslike property was one of the Steel City's few remaining marquee historical houses. But it needed a good deal of work, more than the couple—with two children then under two—felt up for at the time.

Still, they never forgot the house. When they passed it a few years later while driving to a son's friend's birthday party, they knew it was time. Lyons rang up a local real-estate agent and issued a challenge: Persuade the older couple who'd been quick to take it off the market to

sell it, while also finding a buyer for the Lyonses' home—all in the space of two weeks. Mission accomplished, the next challenge was on her: Take a 12,000-square-foot house whose baronial vibe conjures an Agatha Christie murder mystery and transform it into a modern home for a family with two kids (now tweens), a pair of dogs, and two pet rabbits.

Design has always been in Lyons's blood. During her first decade out of college, while working ungodly hours as an investment banker in New York, she would unwind at the townhouse her friends were in the process of decorating. "I'd go over and rearrange fabric swatches in their basement," she recalls. "That was my happy place." Once she'd settled into Pittsburgh, she started to work as a designer. By the time she and her husband bought this house, she had a dream team of artisans and builders on her speed dial.

Built in 1907 as a Victorian, the home was expanded and extensively remodeled in the Tudor style in the 1920s. Confronted with heavy window treatments and

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—RAMSEY LYONS



LEFT: In the family room, Lyons’s children sit on a custom banquet in a Groundworks print. Dining and cocktail table, Aronson Woodworks; armchairs (rear), Bunny Williams Home; blue chairs, Coley Home; vintage chair fabric, Tilton Fenwick; artwork by Damien Hirst.



Ramsey Lyons in her bedroom.

an eyesore of a stair hall, Lyons considered ripping everything out and starting from scratch. But the idea of scrapping the original craftsmanship was unthinkable. So she decided to do something much harder: bring it all up to date in a respectful and innovative way. “What Ramsey did is completely outside of the box,” says Jon Gluck, the decorative painter she tapped to instill a new sense of lightness. “It’s an old-world estate home entirely reimagined to be timeless.”

Using limewash and tinted wax, Gluck transformed the quartersawn oak panels that cradled the first-floor walls into surfaces you’d never associate with a fusty

library at a private club. Original leaded windows and stained-glass fixtures were restored and installed, sometimes in new spaces. Room by room, Lyons dialed down the darkness and readied the structure for another century’s use. “She’s a designer, but she’s also the custodian of this house,” says David Duncan, the owner of the eponymous New York studio from which she sourced vintage pieces and lighting fixtures of his design.

Today, the home’s traditional but fresh spirit is in keeping with Pittsburgh’s history as the original epicenter of American disruptors. (If *Succession* was set at the turn of the 20th century, it would have taken place here

among the city’s railroad and steel magnates.) Take the mudroom, a testament to Lyons’s commitment to low-key livability. The heavily trafficked corridor features a wall mural that Gluck based on a 1933 painting by Japanese artist Zenzaburo Kojima. He imagined a treescape with an underwater feel, where jellyfish-like forms float in a palette of blues and greens that, along with purple, pervade the rest of the home.

The mix of contemporary and vintage furniture in the house undergirds its adventurous spirit. There are Frances Adler Elkins loop chairs and Cloud chairs by Art Deco designers Harry and Lou Epstein alongside

newer pieces from Chairish. Contemporary paintings by artists such as Hunt Slonem and Damien Hirst were selected by an exclusive acquisition committee. “Everybody in the family gets a vote,” Lyons says. “The kids always steer us toward more colorful pieces.”

Three years and counting into the project (a small team of woodworkers is still toiling away in the basement), she has pulled off a near impossible feat: Preserve a historic home but make it fun. Craftsmanship and pedigree are disentangled here from pomp and formality. “All my kids’ friends want to be here all of the time,” Lyons says. “I’ve made a space that is about joy.” ■

Minnie, a West Highland terrier, relaxes in the sunroom on a vintage sofa covered in a Schuyler Samperton Textiles print. Cocktail table, Aronson Woodworks; armchairs, Mecox; pendant, Urban Electric; curtain fabric, Quadrille; antique Turkish rug.



An upstairs kitchen in a third-floor apartment Lyons designed for when her parents come to stay. Vintage Frances Adler Elkins chairs, David Duncan Studio; wallpaper, Schumacher; pendant, Visual Comfort.