



MAKING IT PERSONAL

A creative couple in Portland, Oregon hired high-profile architect Brad Cloepfil to renovate a home designed by Pietro Belluschi in the 1930s.

WHEN JOHN AND JANET JAY and their two sons moved to Portland, Oregon, from New York City in 1993, they weren't looking for a midcentury-modern home. "We were thinking perhaps colonial or arts and crafts," chuckles John, who is the executive creative director for Wieden + Kennedy advertising. But serendipity arrived courtesy of Diane von Furstenberg, with whom Janet—a developer of fragrances and cosmetics—was working at the time. (Together, the husband and wife team run Studio J, an interdisciplinary design salon.) "Diane told me, 'I know someone there, and they just happen to be selling their house,'" Janet remembers.

It turned out the home's original architect, Italian-born Pietro Belluschi, was a pioneer of Northwest modernism, defined by its combination of clean lines and open spaces with warm, natural materials, particularly wood. He also designed the Portland Art Museum and the Juilliard School at Lincoln Center.

Completed in 1937, the house the Jays bought showed the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright in its slivered-brick exterior, tall strips of windows and open floor plan. Nestled onto a sloping site, the U-shaped house wrapped around a small courtyard. The interiors were suffused with light, with each of the three principal wings (bedrooms, living area and dining room/kitchen) having windows on at least two sides. Still, the house needed work. A previous renovation had created a caricature of Belluschi's original design: The curving bay window in the courtyard, for example, was replicated in other windows. And the original kitchen was tiny by today's standards.

THE JAYS TURNED to local superstar Brad Cloepfil. In 1999, John helped select the then-unknown architect to design his agency's headquarters; the converted warehouse, with its pristine light-filled atrium, won international acclaim. Since then, Cloepfil's firm, Allied Works Architecture, has won a string of design competitions against high-profile architects like Rem Koolhaas and Herzog & de Meuron for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Seattle Art Museum and New York City's Museum of Arts & Design at Two Columbus Circle.

"Brad is spectacular in his ability to articulate the idea, to be able to talk you through it," John explains. "You sit down and you have a conversation about space and concepts of the usage of space: What are we about, what are our values and how does space help to express those values? The joke I always use with him is that he's great at nothing. He has a tremendous feel for negative space—the site lines and the feeling of spatial relationships."

Today, after a six-year detour spent in Tokyo, the Jays live in a new "blended home" that has been expanded and renovated by the most celebrated Portland architect to come along since the house was built. "If you connect the dots, that's a pretty amazing lineage," John says.

Among his improvements, Cloepfil added floor-to-ceiling glass and horizontal overhangs in an extension of the U-shaped floor plan, deferring to but never aping Belluschi's original. "It turns the courtyard into a kind of garden pavilion," Cloepfil says. "Before, it made for a dark, dead spot in the back of the house. We wanted a kind of glass pavilion where the light would go all the way through."

THE JAYS CONTRIBUTED as much to the finished home as the architects, through their involvement with the building and their idiosyncratic collection of artwork, furnishings and keepsakes. Builder Don Tankersley worked closely with the Jays to unify and create a sense of transition among the varied wood floors and walls. Moving from private to public space, the floors gradually become brighter. "As a contractor, I'm used to taking a million possibilities and having the customer choose three or four options," he explains. "Janet wanted to see the million. I was really impressed by that."

In fact, the Jays are so expert at interior design that two of their previous residences were featured in *Metropolitan Home*: a renovated Connecticut barn in 1984 (which they still own) and a Tribeca loft in 1989. "We love interiors, we love architecture, we love finding new things," says Janet. "Sometimes it's hard, because we get attached, and yet we find more things that we love. So it's that whole process of editing." Some of their favorite pieces are actually still in storage. John speaks lovingly of two tables from the Memphis furniture movement by Ettore Sottsass, with whom he once worked on a project. "We keep saying that we're going to bring them out," he says wistfully. "It just seems time again. Suddenly you think it's going to fit."

Indeed, although each piece in John and Janet's home seems to come with a different story, or from a different era or culture, the overall narrative they've woven together isn't overwritten. No clutter exists here. And while the house includes one-of-a-kind artwork and antiques, it's also interspersed with simple found objects.

THE HOME FEATURES thoughtful contrasts and transitions throughout. A shaggy cream-toned carpet anchors a master bedroom clad in rich, brunette wood. In the living room, a massive graffiti-inspired painting by Jamaican DJ and artist Dexter (aka B-Mega) hangs above a gray marble fireplace. But this house is designed for more than display. It's a family home to both the Jays and their son, Keenan, 14, and the basement has been turned into an apartment for his brother, Matt, 19, a student at New York City's School of Visual Arts. "We really live in this house," Janet says. "Every square inch is used and appreciated."

The Jays, and the house, are used to quick transitions. In one moment, Keenan and a posse of teenaged boys are boisterously describing a movie they've just seen; a few moments later, John is speaking tenderly about a photo on the wall by legendary fashion photographer Horst: "That was actually the last photograph he took as the Germans were coming into the suburbs of Paris in World War II," John says with great affection. "He gave me that as a gift."

It's those few degrees of separation between artists, colleagues, places and objects that John in particular seems to cherish about his career and his life. "I don't think I've ever met anybody like him," says Cloepfil. "He's like some kind of electrical conduit."

With such breadth to the Jays' home and its treasures, a unifying element is the transparency of Cloepfil's renovation. "You can look from anywhere and see the entire house in one view," Janet says. "I just love that."