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Risk and Reward

A creative couple makes every inch of their home their own.

BY KAREN APPOLD

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When TR and Marcie Risk started looking for their second home, they knew they wanted a fixer-upper. Marcie, an interior designer and design consultant, was eager to put her creative talents to work and make a personal retreat that reflected the couple's eclectic tastes. TR would do what he does best: create custom furniture from sustainable, recyclable materials.

They found what they were looking for in a three-story Old World European home in Lower Merion Township that hadn't been touched since its construction in the 1960s. "It had a great structure and elements we could work with," says Marcie, who also owns Origin & Ash, a Bryn Mawr home furnishings store.

The couple didn't make any structural changes, but they did remove walls and raise doorways for a more efficient and functional floor plan. "There's no wasted space," Marcie says.

Though they completed the major changes two years ago, decorating the home is an ongoing project. "We're always improving and changing," she says.

The Risk home has a clean, modern feel. "While it's traditional as far as furniture placement, the pieces are eclectic," Marcie says.

Owner of Ruins Recycled, TR made the built-ins, case goods and interior doors. He describes his work as sophisticated yet cool. "People have trouble grasping that my furniture is newly made, because the lumber looks old," he says.

TR typically uses wood from structures that are 150 years old. "Each piece is one of a kind," he says.

"TR doesn't throw anything away, while I'm a minimalist," adds Marcie. "We complement each other."

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Marcie says she and her husband work symbiotically. “We’re attuned to each other’s energy,” she says. “I’ll be designing an upholstered sofa, for instance, and he’ll be building the perfect coffee table for it. We both share the same aesthetic, so we never argue over the details.”

The Risks also enjoy buying smaller antiques and vintage items. “Everything has a place and a meaning,” Marcie says. “It’s more about the art of using space appropriately—not necessarily about having a lot of it. Small spaces often create the most warmth and personality.”

Their home abounds with green features, since existing materials were repurposed. Most of the slate originally on the exterior was laid for walkways; pine paneling in the lower level is now a backsplash; and door hardware was removed and used in other places.

For the Risks, being in business for almost 12 years has brought its rewards, among them TR’s 1997 first-place win in the Manayunk Arts Festival.

“Both TR and I have had great recognition for our work,” Marcie says. “But it’s been the relationships and friendships we’ve cultivated through the store and our work that have really enhanced our lives.”

What follows is a closer look at the Risk home—inside and out.

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