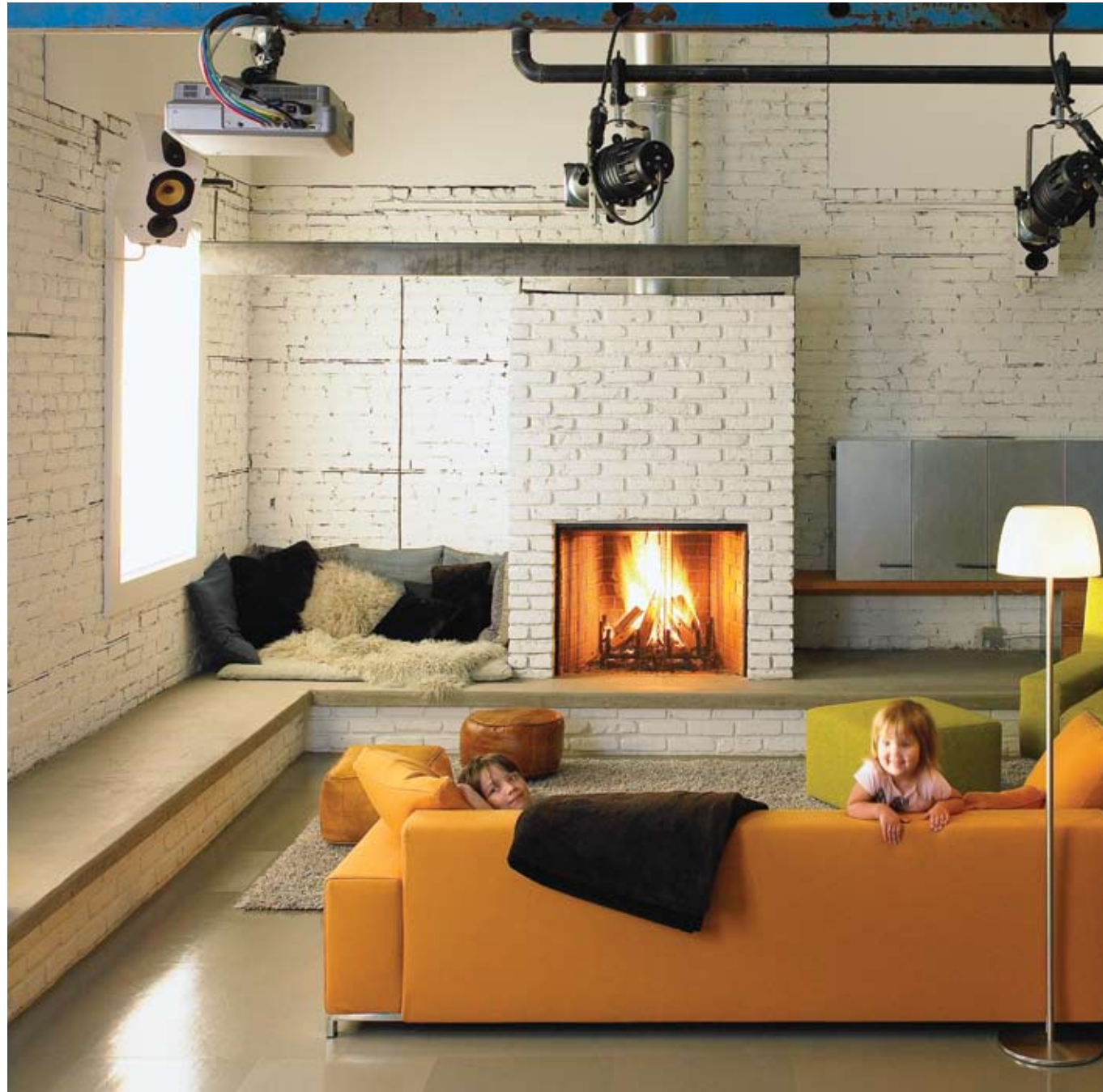


new kids on the block

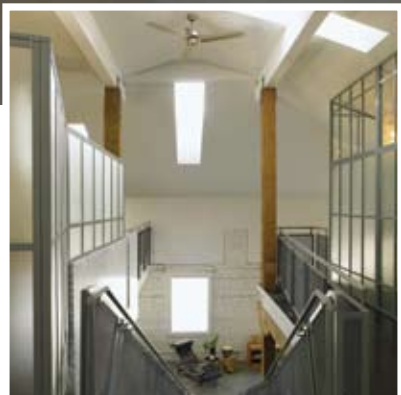
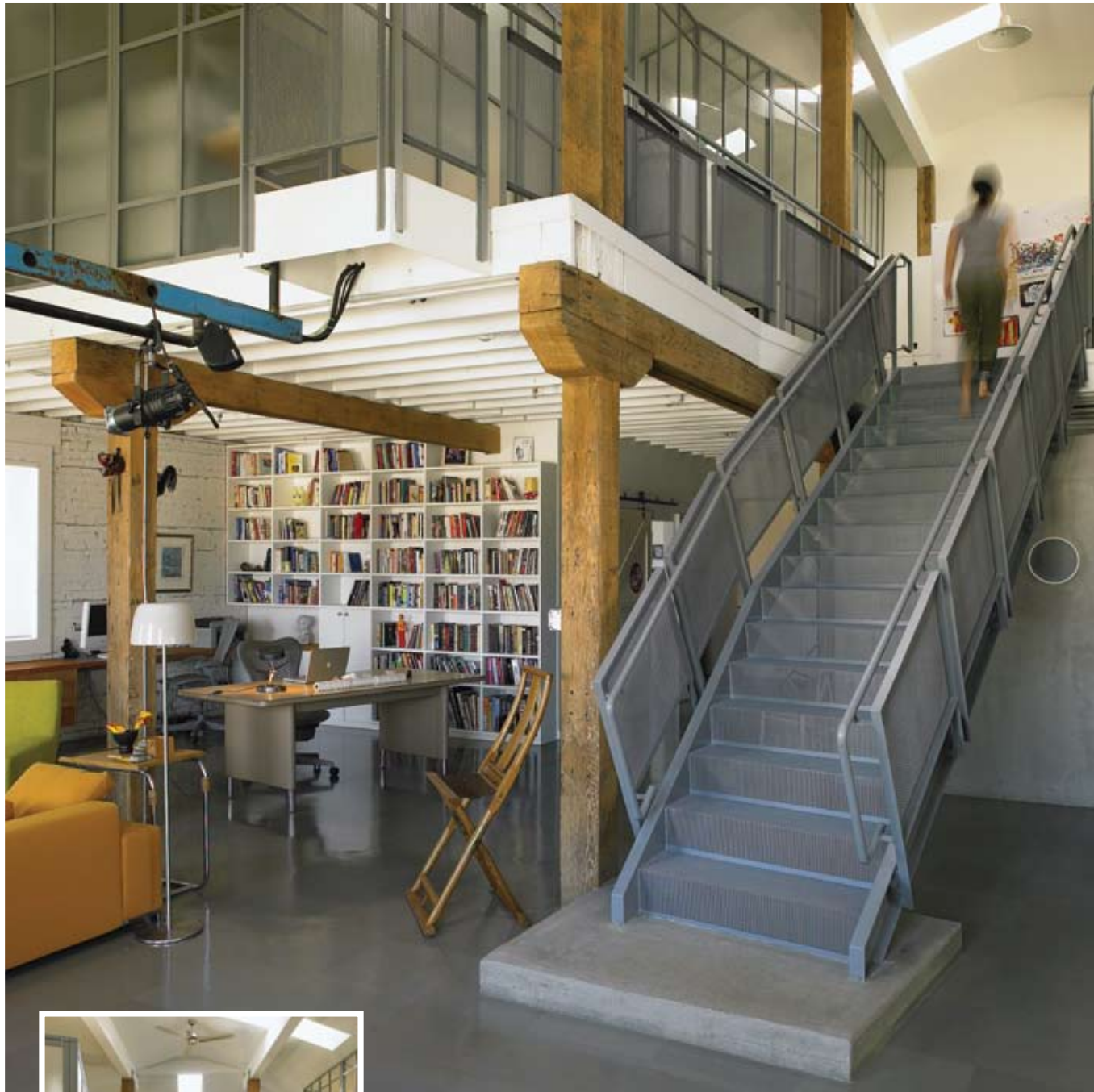
How a Regina couple kept their cool with an inner-city loft that's child friendly too.

The homeowner's collection of midcentury modern chairs is refreshingly mismatched. Opposite: Theatre lights create a stage for the kids at show time.



BY Adele Weder | PHOTOGRAPHS BY Robert Lemermeyer | STYLING BY J. Paul Jaras

SHE'S A FUSION OF WHAT MIGHT SEEM LIKE CONFLICTING PERSONAE: conceptual artist, mother of three, loft-dweller. But it's precisely this 3,700 square feet of converted industrial warehouse that enables the owner of this loft to lead such an urbanly diverse life in the prairie city of Regina. Of course, she hasn't converted all the local sceptics: "Everybody thinks we're completely nuts," she allows.



The place was designed by Marc Bricault and Paul Crowley, a Vancouver-based design team renowned for gems like the Thomas Haas café-pastry shop in North Vancouver. Bricault's team isn't the first to make a warehouse into a home, but it's one of the very few to have done it for a middle-class family with kids. The client, her spouse and their three children, aged two to eight, are breaking an unspoken rule: They're supposed to be living in one of the

city's conventional family neighbourhoods—in, say, a faux-traditional patternbook house framed by a neat carpet of grass. Instead their home is moated by derelict buildings, plus a few other warehouse conversions more suited for singles and daytrippers. Cracked neon signs advertise the erstwhile Maytag appliance warehouse, an A-1 Rentals outfit and a dowdy storefront touting Party Supplies and Tools. This is *not* Mr. Rogers's neighbourhood.

The family's indoor space is not only exceedingly generous but also strategically defined. A concrete bench subtly marks the edge of the living room. You



Open Secret

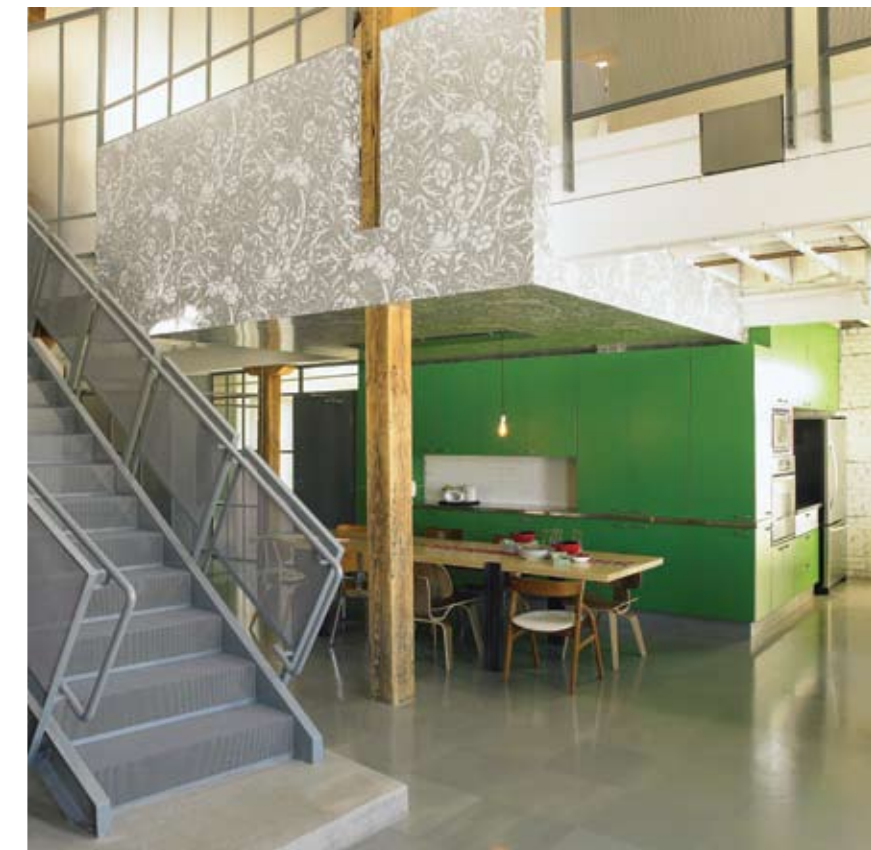
DESIGNER MARC BRICAULT OFFERS HIS TRICKS FOR CREATING INTIMACY IN AN OPEN SPACE.

SCREENS The concept is obvious, but the materials don't have to be. In this loft, screens vary from rolling tile walls and soundproofing felt-and-cedar walls to a bookcase and an in-floor container garden.

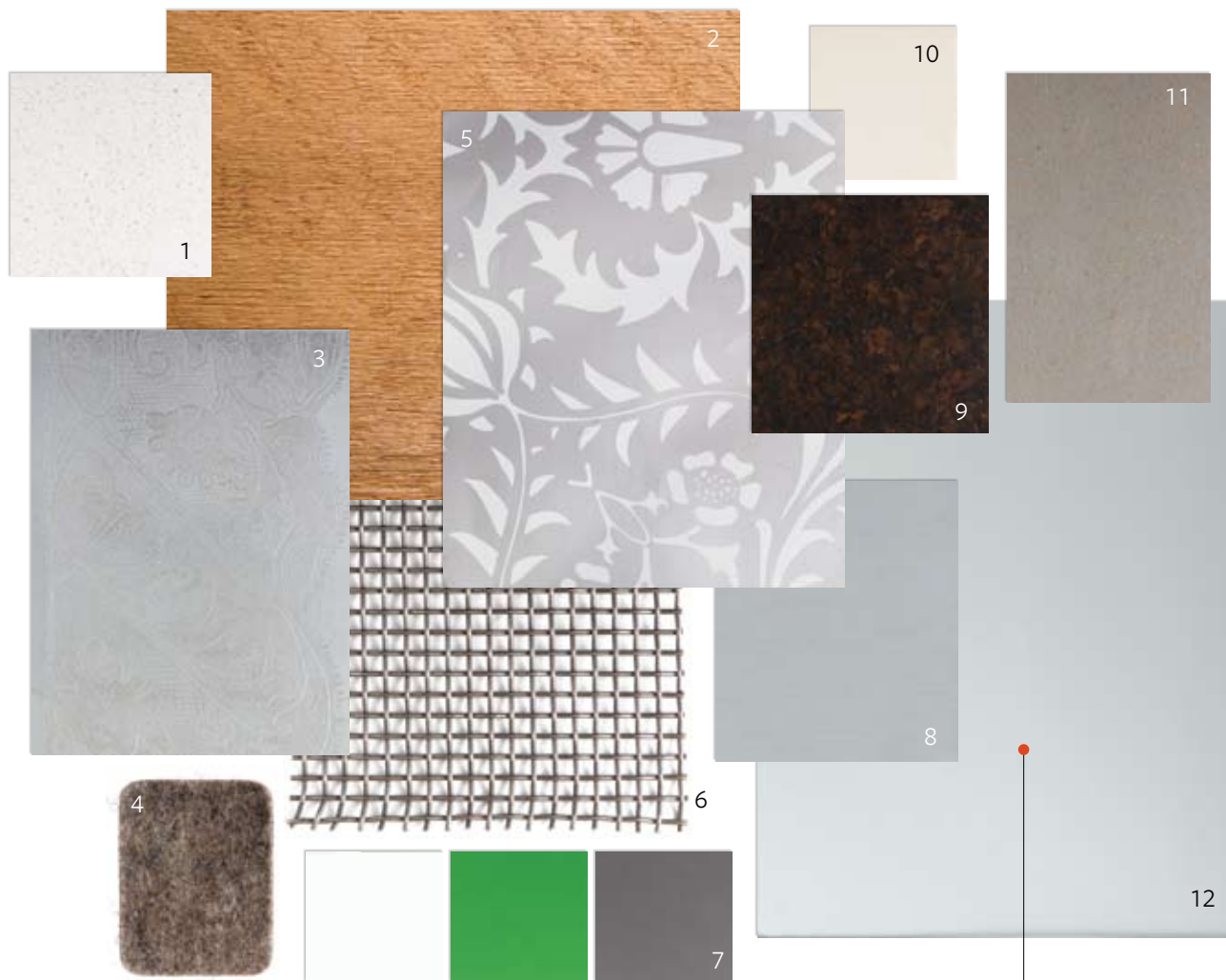
HIDDEN SPACE Private spaces don't have to disrupt an open plan. Here the children have a secret tunnel out of their bedrooms behind a garden.

LIGHTING An over lit environment lacks intimacy. Lamps or pendant lights create warm pools of light and shadows.

CEILING HEIGHT Lowering the ceiling of the dining area and the kids' play area—both places where the users would be sitting down—compresses the space without sacrificing openness. **wl**

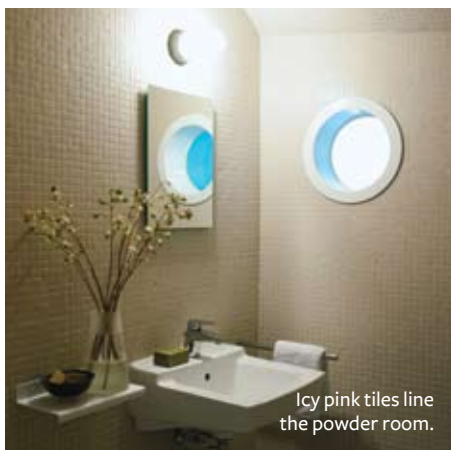


This page: The industrial quality of the loft is carried through with stainless steel counters, in table legs made of C channel, and exposed wooden support structures. Opposite: Bookshelves provide soundproofing for a guest room tucked in behind.



know you're in the kitchen when the material environs transform into metal. The playroom area is sectioned off with cedar and felt screens that dampen noise.

As you walk through the rest of the space, the circulation pattern and multiple levels evoke a sense of promenade. The private areas—bedrooms, bathing areas and even an upstairs yoga room—are defined with translucent shoji-like screens and low curving



Icy pink tiles line the powder room.

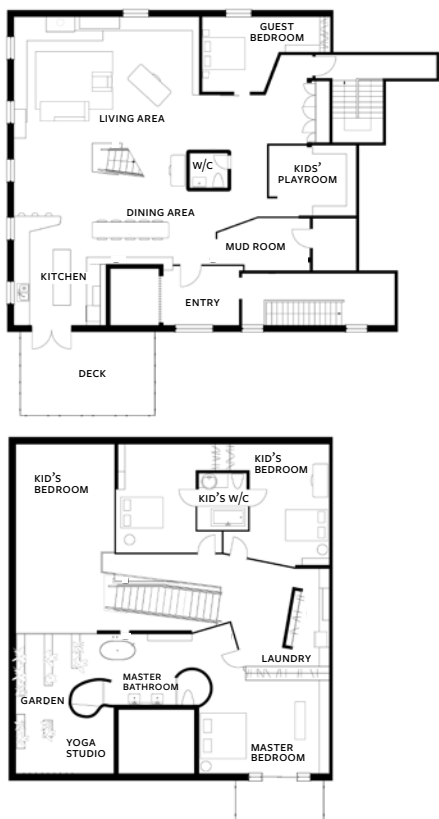
Materials World

THE DESIGN PALETTE FOR THIS LOFT IS COOL AND COLLECTED.

1. The kitchen island is topped with a solid-surface quartz aggregate, aptly named Bianco Regina.
 2. Wood runs throughout the loft: cedar in the kids' play area, fir in the cabinetry, ash for the dining room table and cherry for the master bed.
 3. The master bedroom cabinetry features etched zinc handles.
 4. The kids' play area is lined with a combination of felt and cedar, providing soundproofing and a great scent to the air.
 5. Flavor Paper's Kabloom wallpaper in silver and white lines the dining room ceiling.
 6. Steel mesh covers the railing panels on the stairway.
 7. The colour palette is simple: Benjamin Moore's Grey (for the window wall framing system), Vine Green (on the kitchen cabinetry) and Heron White (for the drywall and ceiling).
 8. Standard steel frames the custom window walls and the railing systems for the second-floor loft.
 9. Burnt cork flooring—warm and sustainable too—is used throughout the second-floor loft.
 10. One-inch porcelain tiles line the master bath's curved walls.
 11. The first floor is lined with a cork-rubber amalgamation.
 12. A combination of clear and view-control glass (for privacy) is used in the window wall system on the second floor. **wl**
- SEE SOURCES



The floors of the second floor are made from environmentally sensitive burnt cork. Note the wallpaper, carried over from the dining room down below: here it provides a privacy screen for the bather.



The garden noted on the floor plan is actually a series of planters that were placed between the rafters, so that the homeowner can develop an indoor garden for her yoga studio.

walls, so family members always seem close but not intrusively so. “It’s a huge volume,” notes Bricault, “so part of the challenge was how to make the space intimate yet unconfined at the same time.”

The main salona area is double height, with the walls of the second-floor bedrooms open to the space below. The kids can zip around the main level’s rubber and cork floors on their scooters, says the homeowner, so the huge indoor space has in effect assumed the roles of backyard and landscape as well. That might have seemed strange in this prairie city a decade ago, but times are changing. “Regina is getting over the yard thing,” she says.

Still, for all its avant-garde credentials, the space inside speaks of home with such features as a wood-burning fireplace. And in a gesture you might call prairie retro-chic, the dining-room wallpaper boasts an emphatic lace motif that climbs the wall and folds into the ceiling—becoming a screen to the master bath upstairs and providing an *Alice in Wonderland* counterpoint to the hard, clean colours and materials everywhere else. “It’s almost like the tablecloth is on the ceiling,” says Bricault.

In keeping with another prairie motif, the space uses salvaged materials, like a partially rusted steel beam culled from the junkyard and installed in the living room as an overhead track for a video projector system. The century-old warehouse itself, of course, is the ultimate salvage job. While at the start Bricault had little more than the interior shell with which to work, the space did boast a few of the original posts and beams—which are, says the client, “like big old trees to me.” They’re a comforting reminder that even in the most harshly ungreen zone of the city, family life can prevail. **wl**

SEE SOURCES