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At Home in the Modern World

Design Icons

Isamu Noguchi and
Michele De Lucchi

Hope Floats

Amphibious Housing
as Emerging Concept

Make an Impact

Architecture for Tomorrow



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A charred-wood home
in Coldstream, British
Columbia, hovers over
its rocky, sloped site.

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Child's Play

Can a home that encourages creativity, exploration, and fun still look grown-up?

Brian Littleton isn't a dad, but he may be the world's coolest uncle. His brother's kids come over to play in the indoor tree house, take his model trains for a spin, or just curl up on the Fatboy beanbag chairs.

When Brian Littleton set out to combine two apartments into a 3,000-square-foot triplex in Chicago's Wicker Park in 2014, he had some unusual ideas—an indoor tree house, a “rocket room,” and an electric model train track suspended from the

ceiling, to name a few. At the time, he was both a young-at-heart bachelor and an enthusiastic uncle with a niece and nephew, now five and six, who live about a mile away. “I thought, why don't we build some fun stuff to convince them to >



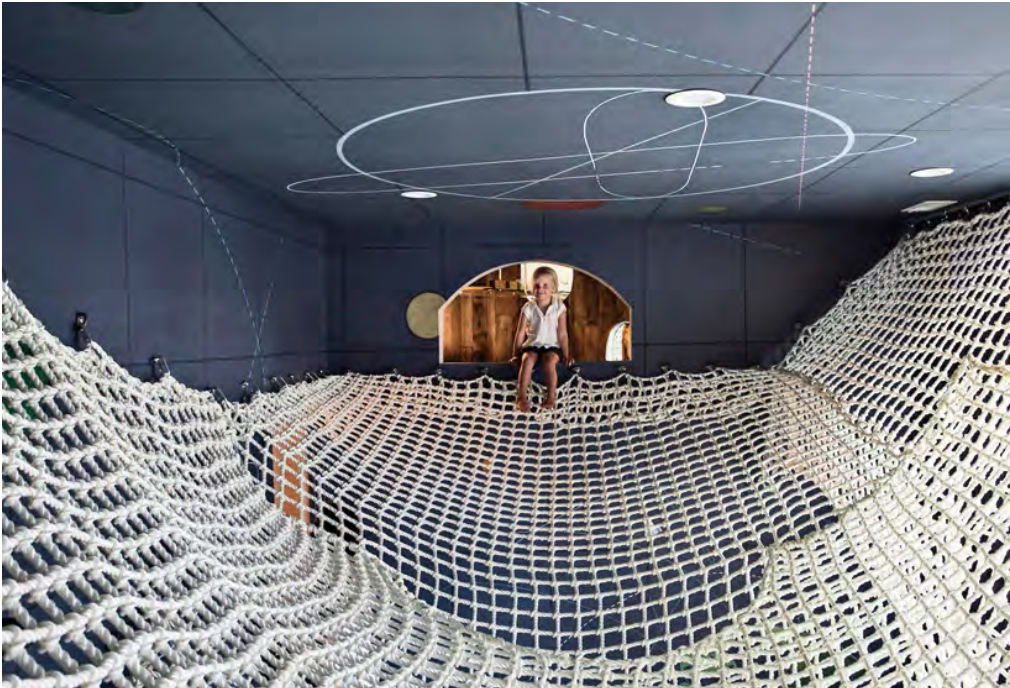
come over more,” says Brian, who owns a digital marketing company.

But he didn’t want the interior to feel like a funhouse. So he tasked Studio Gild and Perimeter Architects with creating brilliant play spaces while also making the home elegant enough for grown-ups. “Brian is about ten years old inside even though he’s technically forty-two,” says

Studio Gild’s Jennie Bishop. “We were excited to be playful, but our goal was to keep it sophisticated so it didn’t come off as a joke.”

To create the tree house, Studio Gild, working with Bigane Construction, designed a curvaceous loft clad in reclaimed cedar, elevated on metal legs. Inside, the flooring is synthetic turf >

In the cockpit of their imaginary rocket ship (above), the kids tinker with a dashboard of dials, levers, and knobs assembled by artist Christophe Gauspohl. John Issa of Perimeter Architects oversaw the creation of the rope room (right). “It posed tons of challenges,” he recalls. “Designing with a material that has slack is more math than I care to tackle.”



●

Division Street Triplex

N ➞

ARCHITECT

Perimeter Architects

DESIGNER

Studio Gild

LOCATION

Chicago, Illinois

Rooftop

Second Floor

First Floor

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

O

A Rooftop Theater/ Miniature Golf Course

B Elevator

C Entrance

D Kitchen

E Dining Area

F Terrace

G Living Area

H Master Bedroom

I Closet

J Master Bathroom

K Bathroom

L Theater/Lounge

M Indoor Tree House

N Rocket Room

O Bedroom

big idea

An electric train set from Chicagoland Hobby travels an elevated track designed by Studio Gild. The 35-foot loop passes through the indoor tree house and around the theater room. A Serge Mouille Two-Arm sconce is surrounded by graphic Mylar wallpaper.

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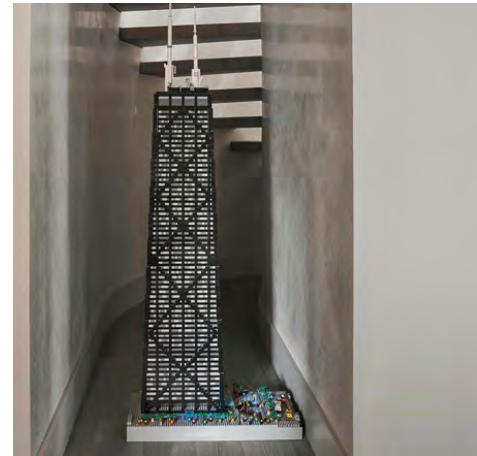
JENNIE BISHOP, DESIGNER

big idea

and the walls are coated in chalkboard paint for scribbling. Behind it is the rocket room, with climbing nets to simulate zero gravity and a control center loaded with retro buttons and dials. This play area can be accessed by a small children's door installed within a larger grown-up door.

To finish things off, Studio Gild chose upscale materials that are simple to maintain. "A bachelor and a kid are kind of the same," jokes Bishop. "You want to make it all durable." Their choices included a custom sofa and ottomans upholstered in easy-to-clean felted wool, washable Mylar wallpaper, and, for the new spiraling stairwell, a mottled Venetian plaster that hides scuffs and fingerprints. The floor is wire-brushed oak with a matte oil finish. "People can traipse in with shoes, roller skates, or Tonka trucks, and it just gets better with age," says Bishop.

The result is far from a typical bachelor pad, which now appears prophetic—Brian got married last September, after construction was completed earlier in the year. His wife, Breanne, has four-year-old triplet nieces who also love the indoor tree house. "It works out well," says Brian. "The adults can plant themselves and watch a movie, and the kids can run around like crazy." ■



"The design subverts a very standard condominium layout and balances utilitarian and fun moments." BILL BIGANE, BUILDER



In certain places, the scale of the home is adjusted for children. A standard door, covered in chalkboard paint, has a 48-inch-tall door set inside it (above left). The space under the staircase houses a Lego version of the John Hancock Center by New York artist Sean Kenney (above right). In addition to the triplex's first-floor movie room (left), there is a rooftop theater with a miniature golf course. A custom sofa and ottomans are upholstered in felted wool by Maharam.