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**MOVE WITH IT**  
Front-top table separates tables, which are pushed together for dinner parties, help with circulation in the dining room; a cozy seating area in front of the basement's large-scale porcelain tile fireplace.

## The Mod Squad

A Wilmette family updates their midcentury abode.

| By Amalie Drury | Photography by Eric Hausman |

On a leafy Wilmette street where stately Tudors and Colonials are the norm, an all-white, squared-off house may look at first glance like it doesn't belong. But the architects of the midcentury structure were the famous Keck brothers—they designed hundreds of modern, livable homes for North Shore clients between the 1930s and '70s—which makes the house more of a Chicago classic than many of its neighbors.

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The house has an iconic curved glass-block wall that wraps around the main staircase and directs natural light to the lower level.

**...CONTINUED** Twelve years ago, the house was purchased by a couple with two baby daughters. They hired Terri Crittenden, an architect and interior designer with Susan Fredman Design Group, to make it more suitable for family living, and the most notable change was the construction of a striking glass-box addition to the second floor that the girls used as a playroom. It became a land of crafts, dress-up and make believe among the changing colors of the trees.

Still in love with their Keck & Keck house a decade later, but in need of updates to match their evolving lifestyle, the family recently turned to Crittenden again. "The girls are in high school now," says Crittenden. "The basement was completely unfinished, and they wanted it to be a place where friends could come over, hang out and watch TV."

But making the basement feel like an extension of the rest of the house posed a few challenges. "The Keck brothers built in 13-by-13 steel squares," Crittenden explains. "We were limited in the floor-plan changes we could make, and the space was a little chopped up."

The homeowners didn't want the basement to feel like a dungeon, and luckily for them, the house has an iconic, curved glass-block wall that wraps around the main staircase and directs natural light toward the lower level. **CONTINUED...**

**SWEEPING VIEWS**  
From below left: The dining room doubles as a gallery showcasing the family's contemporary art collection; a glass-block enclosure on the first floor directs natural light into the basement.







...CONTINUED level. Crittenden worked to create inviting seating areas throughout the long, narrow basement, using custom-designed furniture like a large, curved leather sofa that encourages circulation and doesn't turn its back on any part of the space.

The upper levels of the house were also due for a face-lift. Crittenden changed paint colors and light fixtures throughout, often with the goal of highlighting the owners' contemporary art collection. "It brings so much life to the house," Crittenden says. Particularly in the dramatic gallery-slash-dining-room, "The terrazzo floor is a deep gray, and we used a light yellow color on the walls—the artwork just sings against that backdrop."

Upstairs in the tree house, a more grown-up aesthetic has prevailed. The little-girl toys and colors have been replaced by comfortable lounge seating in calm, organic hues that echo the view outside the windows—though there's still a ballet barre complete with a mirrored wall on one side of the room.

"They're really living here. They have such affection for the house," says Crittenden of the homeowners, with whom she's become friends. "They understand how meaningful good design is. And what I love about their style is that, while they honor the house's intent, they add color in a way that's very happy and fun-filled. It works." ■



**THE TREE HOUSE**  
Clockwise from top: A former playroom has been reimagined in light, organic colors that reflect the scene outside its windows; the sunroom has been updated with heat and a new floor for year-round use; curved shapes encourage flow in the basement.