

TOP SHELF TURNAROUND

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A homeowner's love of books sparks a renovation with a very happy ending.

"WHAT STARTED THE RENOVATION WAS MY NEED FOR A BOOKSHELF,"

says Toronto homeowner and serious bibliophile Keri West. "It evolved from there." Having grown tired of keeping her collection of 700 books boxed up in the garage, she and her husband, actor and television host Noah Cappe, finally committed to proper shelves. "And then there was a debate about where to put them...and then we decided to renovate the entire house!" It may seem like it was a snap decision, but it had been a long time coming. Within 10 years, Keri and Noah had bought and sold five separate homes, working their way up the Toronto real estate ladder—from a small condo to a rowhouse to detached homes—until buying this gem. "This house was being flipped on the market when we saw it," says Noah. "Everything was brand new, in the heart of the city facing a school, and it felt like you were looking out into this big open space. We just fell in love with it." That was six years ago, and after living here for four years the couple still thought the place was perfect for them so they decided to invest in making it their forever home.

OPPOSITE Giving the couple a space where they could "snuggle up with a good blanket on a cozy, deep sofa" was a big priority in the renovation, says Brenda. The new 17-foot-by-17-foot family room, part of the house's back extension, met this criteria and more. The space features a wall of folding glass doors to offer indoor/outdoor living. "You can open the family room completely to the backyard," says Brenda.

CEILING & WALL PANELLING, Stone Tile; **SOFA, SIDE TABLE, LAMP**, Elte; **COFFEE TABLE, EQ3**; **SCULPTURE**, Urban Barn; **ARMCHAIRS**, Shelter Furniture; **PILLOWS**, Union Lighting; **FLOOR LAMPS**, Flos from Lightform; **FIREPLACE**, Toronto Home Comfort; **FIREPLACE BASE & CLADDING**, Stone Tile; **DRAPERY**, Model Space; **PHOTOGRAPH**, Slim Aarons Estate via Undercurrent Projects.

RIGHT The family room's three-sided gas fireplace complements the space's modern look with its Nero Marquina marble

base and porcelain-tiled TV niche. The wood panelling on the wall and ceiling lends warmth and visually connects the room with the outside. "Since you could open the family room completely to the backyard, we wanted there to be a flow in terms of materials," says Brenda. "That's why there's so much wood. It really feels like you're in an indoor/outdoor space that continues into the backyard."





ABOVE Letting in more natural light was a big priority in the renovation. “It’s obviously a very long and thin house,” says Noah, “so we wanted to do everything we could to try to bring in as much light as possible. We blew out the front wall and opened up the window, put in a window

above the sink in the kitchen, and added that massive NanaWall at the back. We installed an open staircase. Just anything and everything we could do to bring more light into the open concept and let it dance through the space a bit.”

CABINETRY, ArtCraft Kitchens; **COUNTERTOPS**, Caesarstone; **BACK-SPLASH**, Stone Tile; **HARDWARE**, Richelieu; **STOOLS**, CB2 **SCULPTURE**, Elte; **KETTLE**, Smeg.

With the help of Brenda Izen of Izen Architecture, they spent a year turning it into a chic 2,650-square-foot space with undeniable cool factor. “They are a very cool couple,” says Brenda. “So part of the renovation was to make this home livable for them and conducive to their lifestyle.” For this busy couple—Keri is working on her PhD in social work and Noah travels extensively as the host of the Food Network and Cooking Channel’s *Carnival Eats*—lounging around the house with their two beloved black cats, Mr. Gary Wu and Dr. Peter Venkman, is just as important as the industry events they attend or the legendary parties they throw. “We’re either in our sweatpants like everybody else,” says Noah. “Or dressed up as the Golden Girls with 30 of our friends!” adds Keri, finishing the sentence. The other consideration for the renovation was preparing the house for a growing family (the couple has started the process of adopting a child).

THE COUNTER-TO-CEILING MARBLE BACKSPLASH ADDS INSTANT ELEGANCE



ABOVE The kitchen’s counter-to-ceiling marble backsplash adds a wow factor in the kitchen along with the white quartz countertops. “I don’t know if it’s the Food Network part of me, or just being on set too many times, but when we were choosing countertops it was like I wanted that stark white beautiful clean countertop that just makes chopping a pepper look like a photo shoot,” says Noah.

RIGHT The kitchen features ebonized oak cabinetry with brass details and marble elements. “The backsplash is marble, and there is a part over the hood that looks like a suspended piece of marble, which is stunning,” says Brenda. A sheep sculpture (along with the pig sculpture in the family room) represents the couple’s love of animals. “Apparently the City of Toronto frowns upon you keeping a real sheep so that was the next best thing,” says Keri. “The sweaters aren’t as comfortable,” adds Noah.

ALL APPLIANCES, Best Brand Appliance.



Contemplating bookshelves turned into a massive project that included building a rear extension, which added 875 square feet to the house and allowed for a new family room (with a wall of folding glass doors) and an upstairs master bedroom (with a box bay window that cantilevers over the backyard). “Then it was like a classic domino effect,” says Noah. They were told if they dug two feet down they could turn the basement into a usable space for a home theatre. “Yup!” says Noah, referring to his affirmative response. And after finishing the design of the new rooms, it became apparent the rest of the house needed to follow suit. “It went from replacing dark floors with light oak to really having to do everything to bring it all into this current aesthetic,” says Keri.



ABOVE Collected over time, the limited edition prints of the couple’s favourite recording artists caught in candid moments serve as conversation pieces in the dining room. “Each picture is cool because there’s all these amazing backstories,” says Noah. “Whether it’s Bowie transforming into Ziggy Stardust or Neil Young having breakfast right before he finds out later on that day that his ranch is burned down, there are these quirky cool little glimpses.”

Limited edition **PRINTS** (dining room), **NEIL YOUNG PHOTOGRAPH**, by Henry Diltz, Morrison Hotel Gallery (in New York); **RUN DMC PHOTOGRAPH**, from Estate of Ken Regan, Morrison Hotel Gallery; **LOUIS ARMSTRONG PHOTOGRAPH**, from Estate of Ken Regan, Morrison Hotel Gallery; **JONI MITCHELL PHOTOGRAPH**, by Henry Diltz, Morrison Hotel Gallery; **CAT STEVENS PHOTOGRAPH**, by Barry Wentzell, Analogue Gallery; **THE DOORS PHOTOGRAPH**, by Henry Diltz, Morrison Hotel Gallery; **DAVID BOWIE PHOTOGRAPH**, by Mick Rock, Morrison Hotel Gallery; **ELLA FITZGERALD PHOTOGRAPH**, by Herman Leonard, Morrison Hotel Gallery.



“THE WHOLE VIBE FELT LIKE WE HAD AIRBNB-ED SOME L.A. PRODUCER’S HOLLYWOOD HILLS HOUSE”



ABOVE For the couple who doesn’t drink hard liquor, the bar cart’s stock is mostly for guests and even serves as a decoration. “They look like collector pieces because half of them haven’t been opened in 20 years!” says Noah.

CENTER A tulip table, sleek wood and leather chairs and a minimalist brass chandelier sets a modern, casual tone in the dining room, which is at the front of the house. “We actually used to have a big wood table. One of those massive put-in-the-middle-piece-and-extend-it-for-10 type things, and when we were changing things around we really realized we don’t need that amount of space allocated to that,” says Noah. “So we downsized and made it feel a little bit more comfortable.”

DINING TABLE, Shelter Furniture; **DINING CHAIRS**, Shelter Furniture; **CONSOLE TABLE**, Elte; **CANDLE HOLDER**, Morba; **CHANDELIER**, Decorum Decorative Finds; **FLOORING** (throughout), Stone Tile; **BAR CART**, West Elm; **WALL PAINT**, (throughout), Benjamin Moore.

RIGHT With a predominantly white palette, a layering of textural and natural elements like the vaulted ceiling, the faux brick fireplace, the wood framing the window seat and the birch-bark-like wallpaper gives the master bedroom an inviting, cosy ambiance. “It was all about being perched up in the clouds in this amazing vaulted space and having all these different textures,” says Brenda. “It’s about adding warmth with texture instead of colour or something traditional.”

DRESSER, Zachary Tonge; **LAMPS**, West Elm; **MIRROR**, Restoration Hardware; **TOASTER**, Smeg; **CHAIR**, Visitor Parking; **DRAPERY**, Model Space; **PILLOWS ON CHAIR, BED AND WINDOW SEAT**, Union Lighting; **WINDOW SEAT CUSHION**, Model Space Designs; **TATE BED**, Crate and Barrel; **BEDDING**, Beddingtons; **WALLPAPER**, Philip Jeffries; **FAUX BRICK (ON FIREPLACE)**, Texture Limited; **SCONCES**, Rejuvenation Cypress; **NIGHT TABLES**, Crate and Barrel; **WALLS AND CEILING PAINT**, Benjamin Moore; **PENDANT LIGHT**, Union Lighting; **MOOSE HEAD**, Style Garage; **PHOTOGRAPH**, The Curries.

OPPOSITE, FAR RIGHT Textural wallpaper in the master bedroom evokes the look of birch bark. “That along with the fireplace, the carved wood moose head, the wood-framed window seat, the buffalo check blanket and all those little touches gives the bedroom a rustic-y but not cabin-in-the-woods feel,” says Noah. “It’s like modern Canadiana.”



ABOVE A yellow rotary phone, a gift from Noah to Keri as a graduation present after she finished an internship at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), pays homage to a bygone era before cell phones took over. “They still had these old phones for the interns at SickKids and I loved their weight,” says Keri. “We don’t have landlines anymore and we don’t get the experience of holding a receiver anymore.”



LEFT The idea of incorporating texture and contrast instead of colour continued into the black and white ensuite bathroom, where 8-inch hexagonal porcelain tiles cover the walls and subtly striped porcelain tiles cover the floors. The shower enclosure is an industrial hit and serves as a feature in the room, and a cove with an LED strip in the shower lends interest. “It looks like sunlight is coming through and it creates this really nice soft light,” says Noah. “And if you want to change the colour to red on Valentine’s Day, you can.”

VANITY, Vanico Dou through Roman Bath; **GENESIS SINK FAUCET**, Rubinet through Roman Bath; **GENESIS SHOWER SET**, Rubinet through Roman Bath; **CUSTOM-BUILT SHOWER DOOR**, Whitaker Construction; **MIRROR**, Lumidesign through Roman Bath; **PORCELAIN WALL TILES**, Saltillo Tile; **PORCELAIN FLOOR TILES**, Olympia Tile; **TOILET**, Caravelle through Roman Bath





The result is an inviting, bright and modern space that's underscored with a zest for life. A mix of natural materials like wood, marble, and hits of brass inject luxury, depth and warmth; a neutral palette keeps things sophisticated and classic; and not only do the storied artwork, collections and curios inject colour and personality, but they also indicate the couple's wide range of interests. The family room – where a Slim Aaron photograph called "Poolside Glamour" sets the tone – exemplifies the house's overall swankiness. "I remember the first couple of weeks after the renovation," says Noah. "We would be sitting in the family room and the whole vibe felt like we had Airbnb-ed some L.A. producer's Hollywood Hills house. It was hard to believe it was ours!" As for the bookshelves? "The craziest thing is they got put into the guestroom," he says. "They're beautiful and it works well, but Keri's books were the reason we started the whole thing and they were one of the last things we ended up arranging!"



THE AIRY OFFICE WILL EASILY BE CONVERTED INTO A DREAMY NURSERY

LEFT Keri's home office, which was formerly the master bedroom, will eventually be turned into the nursery. "We imagined a child growing up in this room and having lots of floor space and tons of natural light flowing in," says Keri. "Also the room looks over the school across the street's field. So we wanted a really special place for a little person to grow up." Elements like the green pendant, green chair, geometrical mirror and dresser (which will be converted into a change table) were chosen to work in the space when it eventually becomes a nursery.

DESK, CB2; **DESK CHAIR**, West Elm; **GREEN CHAIR**, Shelter Furniture; **DRESSER**, West Elm; **PENDANT LIGHT**, Lightform; **MIRROR**, Elte.

ABOVE The beautiful antique cameras displayed in the home office are actually only a small part of an extraordinary collection that Keri inherited from her father. (The rest of the collection takes pride of place in a lighted glass display case in the basement's home theatre.) "There are dozens and dozens of cameras. It's a huge collection," says Keri. "Dad was very particular about what he added to his collection and was so knowledgeable about them. They obviously have a sentimental value, but they're also incredibly beautiful and we wanted to do the collection justice and really display them in a way that would have made him proud."

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