

# “We all wanted to keep the spirit of the house.”

A classic Glebe redbrick gets a dramatic makeover

BY HATTIE KLOTZ PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTIAN LALONDE



**L**ike so many of the houses on this tree-lined avenue in the Glebe, the red-brick corner house has a certain stately air when viewed from the outside. Surrounded by tidy flowerbeds, with elegant wide flagstone steps to the front door, it has a timeless feel.

However, appearances can be deceiving. The home of Emily and David Segal and their three young children is anything but traditional. Rather, it's an inspired renovation to create a modern home that will stand the test of time.



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## glebe house

Where previously the century-old house had been all dark beams and wood panelling anchored by a heavy wooden staircase, now it's bright, light, and contemporary. Painted from top to bottom in a silvery-white tone, there are moody touches: a sophisticated dark blue-grey found in David's office wallpaper by Hygge and West, for example, and the panelled walls in the dining room.

When the Segals bought the house, Emily admits, it was in great shape — it just wasn't the house they really wanted. "It felt rather like something from the set of *Downton Abbey*," she recalls, "and was a mix of styles and smaller rooms tied together by history." So they started with small changes but eventually undertook a very large renovation.

**W**hen Dylan O'Keefe and Haley Fiorenza of O'Keefe Fiorenza Design came on board in July 2017, the house was nothing but four walls open to the rafters. While "there was little left to salvage," says Fiorenza, "we all wanted to keep the spirit of the house but bring it into 2018."

Maintaining that spirit meant salvaging leaded windows and doors where possible and incorporating them in unique ways — one pair, from a hutch previously in the kitchen, now fronts a bookcase in David's office. Bright custom panels have replaced the dark, dated panelling. And the attention to finishes and detail hearkens back to the days of lumber barons, when fine millwork was a hallmark of quality. The new floor plan moved a staircase and reconfigured the space to create a home with an airy, open feel. But this is not an open-concept house; rooms remain distinct.

Continuity on the main floor was achieved by raising the floor between the sunroom and living room; white oak wide plank flooring, set in a picture-frame pattern across the whole space, ties the rooms together. Only the central hall is not herringbone, but rather laid in a grand square.

"David's interest was always the layout," recalls Emily, "because he's an ambulator. It was important to give him a place to do his ambulating." Her husband, founder and former owner of David's Tea, is now busy with Mad Radish, which has three locations in Ottawa and is about to launch in Toronto. He likes to walk while he thinks. To this end, his office needed an in and an out, so the designers hid a secret door in the wall panelling in the kitchen. With the addition of this door, the house makes one large linked circuit.

Once walls, floors, and stairs were in place, it came time to turn to finishes and decor. Emily created a Pinterest mood board for O'Keefe Fiorenza to work with, "and after that, we





had such good synergy that choosing the elements was very iterative and a quick process,” says Fiorenza.

“Emily was so great to work with because she made such quick decisions,” recalls O’Keefe. “If we hadn’t heard from her an hour after an email, we’d call and ask, ‘Are you okay?’ ”

Speed aside, Emily admits to a love of gold and navy, which is reflected in the dark, moody tones and brushed-gold fixtures and fittings. The palette is limited to just five colours on the ground floor — the dark and moody grey-blue, white found in marble accents and tiling in the powder room, black, gold, and the natural tone of white oak. All combine to create a calmly classic contemporary feel.

Typically, lighting is one of the biggest challenges when designing a home. But here, the process was smooth and light fixtures in this house make a bold statement. Several give a nod to Ottawa’s glowing globe street lamps that line many a residential neighbourhood, at once rooting the house in its Ottawa context and bringing the outside in. “I feel like the lights are the jewellery for the house,” says Emily.

The Segals brought just one piece of furniture from their previous home: David’s perfect-for-reading leather chair that now sits in his office beside a log fireplace. Elsewhere, the couple invested in the largest dining table they could find — a round from Poliform that seats eight — and a stunning white oak sideboard with gold feet made by local craftsman Sven Pavay.

Children’s bedrooms on the second floor are light and airy in tones of soft blush for the two girls, grey and silver for the boy. The master bedroom boasts a large sun deck, which has

been creatively shielded from neighbours’ eyes by a laser-cut, powder-coated steel screen. It was made in Toronto by Emily’s father, who delivered and installed it himself.

The couple opened the third floor to the rafters, gaining valuable volume. The extra space allowed them to create a guest suite, a desk nook for Emily to work at, and a light-flooded window seat, as well as a dedicated play space for adults. The stunning black walnut table-tennis table takes centre stage. The first furniture purchase for the house, it was made in California by Woolsey and came with a rigid perforated metal net. It’s as much a work of art as a games table, but Emily’s dad does not approve. The former vice-president of the Ontario Table Tennis Association is on the cusp of induction to the Portuguese Regional Table Tennis Hall of Fame. When he comes to visit, he brings his own net and paddles.

The Segals turned to the Ottawa Art Gallery for advice with artwork. Their collection now includes works by Adrienne Herron, Joyce Westrop, and Karen Whyte. They have also commissioned a piece by local photographer Whitney Lewis-Smith.

In a house finished to a high standard of detail, it might be a challenge to pick a favourite part, but for Emily, it is the sparsely furnished sunroom. This room, which is home to a shiny black grand piano, saw the addition of brick-veneered walls, which were then whitewashed. “It is peaceful and has beautiful views of the whole neighbourhood,” she says, “but the house continues to reveal itself in little delights the longer we live here.”





## MOOD BOARD SEGAL HOUSE

When it came to designing the dining room, Emily Segal wanted a dramatic, moody ambience. That direction meant painting the walls a deep shade of grey (Sherwin-Williams "Cyberspace") and covering the windows with heavy custom drapes by C&M Textiles. A brushed-brass curtain rod adds to the drama and complements the gold-coloured hardware found throughout the house.

The circular marble-top dining table works well in the large room; the Lazy Suzan adds whimsy and contrast and helps with the logistics of gathering with a family of five. The table and the suede chairs are from Poliform.

The white-oak flooring set the tone for all the wood choices. "We specified to the hardwood installers to do only a light sanding on the floors before applying the clear coat to preserve the V-groove between each plank, which accentuates the chevron pattern," says Haley Fiorenza of O'Keefe Fiorenza Design. A custom cabinet of oak veneer picks up the warm wood tones of the floor, and its diamond pattern references the original leaded windows. Those gold knobs came from Emtek Hardware, while the unique legs were brought in from U.K.-based Pretty Pegs.

The lights, as Emily says, are like the jewellery of this house. The main fixture here is a Kate Spade mobile chandelier, its globular shape mirroring that of the table



### RESOURCES

#### DESIGN

O'Keefe Fiorenza Design

**DINING ROOM,  
KITCHEN, FOYER,  
MUDROOM, OFFICE,  
AND MASTER  
BATHROOM CABINETRY**  
Sven Pavey

#### FLOORING

Wood from Supreme  
Flooring

Installed by LRT Hardwood  
Flooring

#### MOULDINGS

House of Fine Carpentry

#### LIVING ROOM COUCH

Roche Bobois

**DINING TABLE  
AND CHAIRS**  
Poliform

**WALLPAPER**  
Hygge and West

Spoonflower