

METROPOLIS

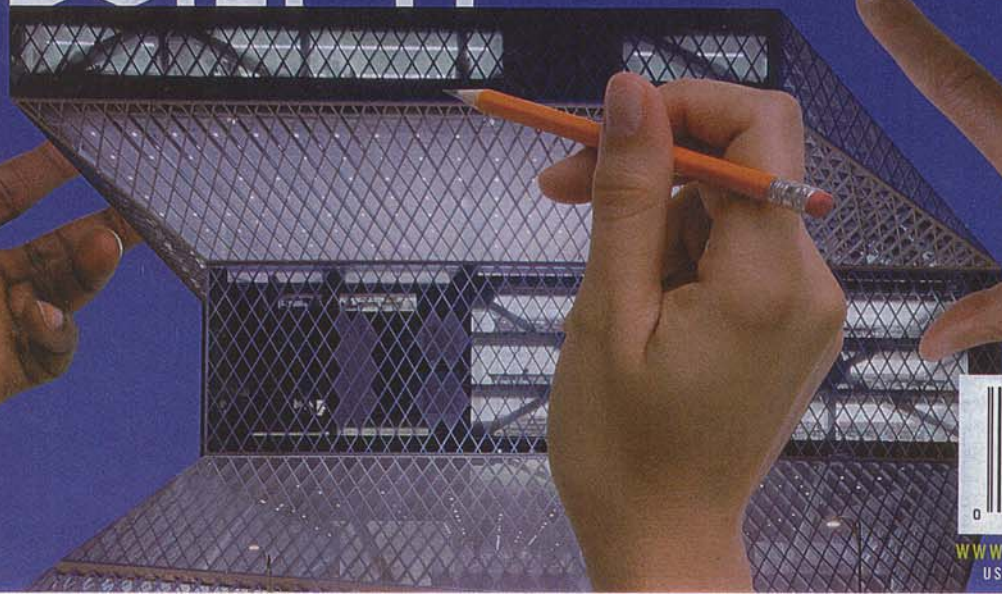
ARCHITECTURE < CULTURE > DESIGN

October 2004

The Seattle Public Library's
Amazing Team of Collaborators
Tell the REAL Story...

WE

BUILT IT



WWW.METROPOLISMAG.COM
USA \$5.95 | CANADA \$7.95

The Metropolis Observed

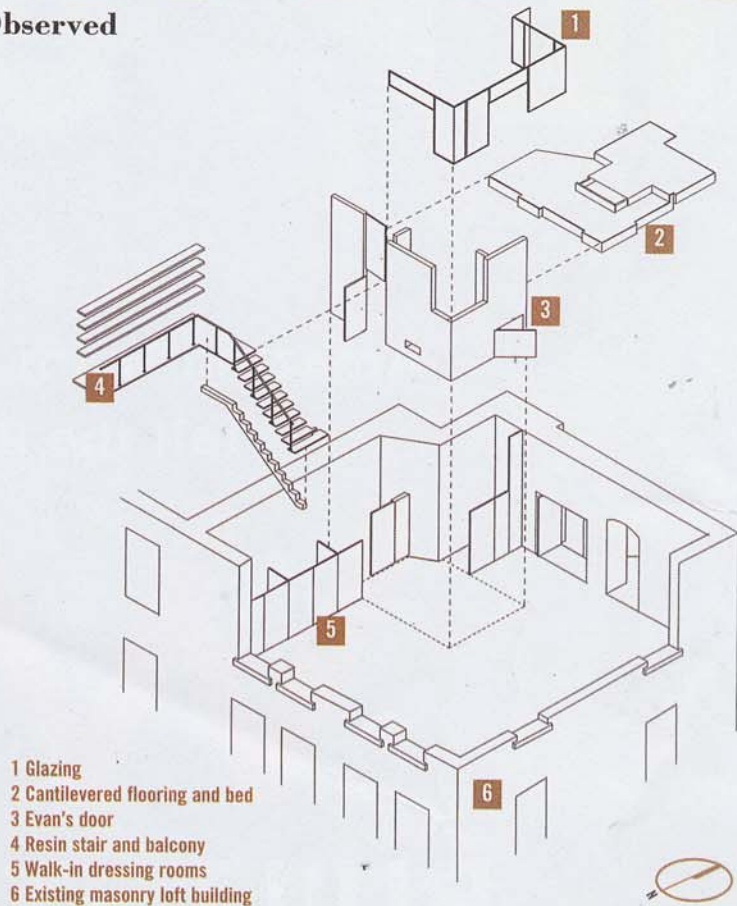
Upstairs, interiors Downstairs

Architect Matthew Baird stacks bedrooms in a loft apartment, creating custom-size spaces.

"In New York we're always fleeing claustrophobia," observes Mark Healy, the music editor of *GQ* magazine. So when he and his wife, Susan Kaplow, decided to insert two bedrooms into the 30-by-30-foot space of their studio apartment, the last thing they wanted was to sacrifice its expansive pleasures (enhanced by a 13-foot-plus ceiling height and six tall windows overlooking the narrow, historically evocative streets of Lower Manhattan). The challenge was to preserve the apartment's spaciousness while stopping short of exposure, and create privacy that wasn't claustrophobic.

Architect Matthew Baird achieved this delicate balance with what he describes as "a little pavilion": a floor-to-ceiling structure incorporating a master bedroom above and a child's room below. Upstairs Baird opted for openness, surrounding partial walls with extensive glazing, which, he explains, "prevents the architecture from imposing itself too strongly on the space." From within, Kaplow says, "you feel like you're floating above the city"—an airborne effect enhanced by the serendipitous discovery, during construction, of vaults that add 18 inches to the 6-foot-5-inch ceiling height.

Baird took the opposite approach downstairs, fully enclosing the room so that Evan, the Healys' young daughter, could sleep undisturbed (a floor-to-ceiling ventilating fin draws in fresh air). Here the architect's thoughtful gestures elevated what might otherwise read as a gloomy box into a child's cozy fantasia. In a delightful bit of inspiration, Baird installed, in addition to the grown-ups' entrance, a 3-by-4-foot child's door that gives Evan unique ownership of her space and a matchless play opportunity: "She opens up both doors and runs circles through them," Kaplow says. And to allow unimpeded sunlight to reach a slotlike window—set, Baird says, "at crawling height"—



An exploded diagram of the apartment's interior (above) details the components of the renovation. Underneath a partially enclosed loft bedroom (left) is a special children's room for Mark Healy and Susan Kaplow's daughter, Evan (pictured below), who can enter the room by way of her own three-by-four foot door.



beneath the stairs, the architect cast the treads in a translucent blue-green resin. "With the air bubbles in it, it has the effect of water," Baird observes. Lit from below at night, the soothing glow reminds Kaplow of a swimming pool. "It almost feels like you're in Los Angeles," she says.

While the couple gives Baird points for accurately intuiting how they'd use the space, the 6-foot-1-inch Healy, entering a child's room with a ceiling set just above his head, discovered something everyone had overlooked. "When you have a baby, your impulse is to pick her up and raise her up in a joyous lift," Healy says. "That has not always worked out so well. There have been some bumps," he adds, "but nothing tear-producing."

—Marc Kristal