

# Calm, Cool, and Collected

Beth and Keith Keim turned their Plaza Midwood bungalow into their dream oasis

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The black subway tile in the Keims' kitchen is more striking without any upper cabinets.

**B**eth Keim was ready to downsize. Even though her two children still live at home, she was tired of the yard, tired of the landscaping, tired of the work that comes with caring for a 1921 bungalow in Plaza Midwood. When she found a three-story townhouse in Myers Park that was designed and lived in by an architect, she and her husband, Keith, made an offer and were about to sign a contract when someone bought it out from under them.

"I pouted for about a week, and then I said, 'You know what? We don't need to move. I like the neighborhood. I like my neighbors. Let's just renovate,'" Beth says. A woman of action, she pulled her bungalow off the market and started doing demolition work the next day.

As the owner of Lucy and Company, an interior design firm in Dilworth, Beth thrives on redesigns. In the 13 years her family has lived in their bungalow, Beth has changed everything in it aesthetically three times—from top to bottom. "That's what I do," she says while walking through her latest creation with her bulldog, Linus, at her feet.

(Opposite) Artist Josh Utsey created this custom ash wood dining room table, as well as the light fixture above it. The contemporary chandelier is called "Disc Light." To allow for a kitchen free of upper cabinets, Keim designed floor-to-ceiling cabinets to flank the dining room window, and had them made by Jason's Custom Woodworks.



Dark gray barn doors hide a pipe-system pantry.





(Left to right) Beth, Kate, Lucy, and Keith Keim in the dining room, with dogs Izzy, Finley, and Linus.



The Herman Miller Eames chair in the back of the house is a piece Beth always wanted. The West Elm coffee table is the only piece that remained in the room after its renovation.

First there was the folk art look with bold reds, grays, and golds—even the exterior of the house was painted gold. Then, there was the cream-on-cream interior color scheme with an off-white exterior punctuated with black shutters. After that came a Boho-chic look with lots of color.

“I was over all the saturated color, which is odd because I’m kind of known for that,” says Beth, adding that she wanted a clean and calm palette starring black and white. “The main thing I wanted to do was a renovation. The time had come.”

Aside from adding on to the back of the first floor and building an upstairs den when they first moved in, the Keims had done nothing structurally to their home. This time, Beth wanted to go beyond aesthetics.

“We changed everything. For me, it had to go from the outside all the way through,” she says. “It was the first time in the 13 years we’ve lived here that we could afford to redo all of the floors, from the front door to the back.”

So the floors are where the renovation began this past June while Beth and Keith took their daughter, Lucy, 16, to London for two weeks. Their other daughter Kate, 11, was at Camp Rockbrook in Brevard. David Reese of DBR Home Improvements stripped the floors down to

the original hardwoods and stained them a pale gray. He also blew out the wall between the kitchen and dining room to open up the space. Previously, the wall contained a swinging door between the rooms, making the area feel closed off. To make the space feel even more open, the walls were painted in Benjamin Moore’s Decorator White. The exterior of the house was also painted white—all while the family was overseas.

“It pays to have good assistants who handle the entire thing while you’re gone,” Beth says. She’s complimenting Bree Daberko and Maggie Yackel, who work with her at Lucy and Company.

Next came the gutting of the kitchen and a reconfiguration of storage space. Beth didn’t want upper cabinets in the kitchen, so she designed two floor-to-ceiling cabinets in the dining room to house kitchen items. Jason Angeldorf of Jason’s Custom Woodworks built them for her.

“I decided to make the dining room part of the kitchen,” explains Beth. “I wanted to use my dining room. We never used it,” she says. “Now we eat here every night.”

Artist Josh Utsey’s custom-made ash wood dining room table and contemporary chandelier continue the crisp feeling of the stark white walls. Featuring three discs suspended together at different angles, the chandelier is

simply titled Disc Light. Beth found her dining room chairs at Slate Interiors and had Terry Stikeleather re-cover them in saddle leather. She also reworked the height of the seats to work with the table.

“They’re in the neighborhood,” Beth says of Slate, “so I go by there every Friday and say, ‘What have ya got?’”

The defining feature of the kitchen is its black subway tile paired with quartz countertops in Cemento and custom cabinets, also painted in Decorator White. Blowing out the back wall of the kitchen afforded room for an island, which houses a small microwave for movie popcorn. Saddle leather stools warm up the island area, while a pipe-system pantry with dark gray barn doors helps make up for the lack of upper cabinets.

The island looks out onto one of the home’s three living room spaces, complete with a saddle leather couch from one of Beth’s interiors vendors, Four Hands Furniture, and a mixed media piece by Lori Love titled Her Majesty. Love shares a studio space with Keith, who is also an artist. Beth says this piece, featuring a faded British flag and three silhouettes of Queen Elizabeth II, inspired her transformation of the house.

“I like the overall feel—a little worn and a whole lot of

classic,” she says. “I wanted the pieces in the house to have a timeless feel in look and in color. The palette is simple and clean, yet striking and interesting. ... It’s also sentimental in the fact that we were in London when all of this was happening.”

The classic feeling Beth was going for permeates the first floor, with black window trim set against white walls and surprising touches of saddle leather here and there. Beth designed the front living room fireplace, redone in black marble with brass detailing, and it makes an elegant and modern statement. The fireplace was inspired by two of her favorite interior designers: Stephen Alesch and Robin Standefer, of Manhattan-based Roman and Williams.

Located off of the back of the front living room is the music room, where the family listens to albums. Formerly a screened porch, the room now touts faux wood header beams and pipe shelving combined with reclaimed barn wood, also designed by Josh Utsey. The result is a casually rustic vibe that’s perfect for listening to The Clash on vinyl.

The foyer encompasses a more bold presence, because Beth wanted something dramatic in the entrance. Wallpaper, a material she uses in almost all of her design endeavors, did the





(Left and opposite) Black-and-white touches help continue the home's clean feel. Beth found the two greyhound figurines surrounding the living room fireplace at a flea market years ago. Works by Mel Rea hang across from the custom fireplace, which Beth designed.

(Below) The black-and-white palette is accented with gold and brass details, such as this antique phone in the hallway.



(This photo and right) Beth Keim in the music room, where the family listens to vinyl records. The room now touts faux wood header beams, made by Keith, and pipe shelving with reclaimed barn wood, designed by Josh Utsey.





A mixed-media portrait of Stevie Nicks by Lori Love brings a cool, casual vibe to the upstairs living room space.



trick. She selected a black and gray graphic from Zoffany, a European vendor she frequently uses. The texture has a slight metallic sheen, while the design looks as if it were painted by hand. “It reminds me of [famous designer] Kelly Wearstler’s hand painted foyer,” Beth says with a tinge of giddiness.

The wallpaper leads up the stairway to the second floor, where a third living room can be found. With a marquee peace sign, a gold Chesterfield sofa, and a hanging chair made from volcanic ash, this gathering space offers the greatest amount of whimsy per square foot in the house. Keith and his father, Richard, built the room when the

Keims moved in. The vaulted ceiling features stained pine to make the space feel cozier.

Beth wasn’t sure if she wanted hardwoods in this room, so she ripped up the engineered flooring and painted the sub-floor white in the hopes that it would begin looking distressed. The result is a weathered floor, peppered with just the right amount of scuff marks. To add to the fun, she commissioned Lori Love to do a 35-inch-by-40-inch mixed media piece of Stevie Nicks for the room.

“Lori has been doing a series of rock icons,” Beth says, adding that they had all been male. “I said, ‘What’s with all the boys? Where’s Stevie Nicks?’ ”

Now Gypsy, a portrait of the legendary Fleetwood Mac singer, hangs above the sofa.

Looking back, Beth is relieved that the Myers Park townhome didn’t work out. She can’t imagine living anywhere but their bungalow. “We just wanted something more casual and updated and calm because we have such chaotic lives,” she says of the renovation. “I come home now, and I breathe a big sigh when I walk in the door.”

Asked if another aesthetic makeover might surface in a couple of years, she replies, “Not for a long time. I’m good.”



(Above) Now a brilliant white, the master bedroom was once full of grays, teals, and yellows. A painting by Craig Ritchie (left) hangs above the dresser.

(Below) Beth redecorated her daughters’ rooms as a surprise—and in 24 hours.

