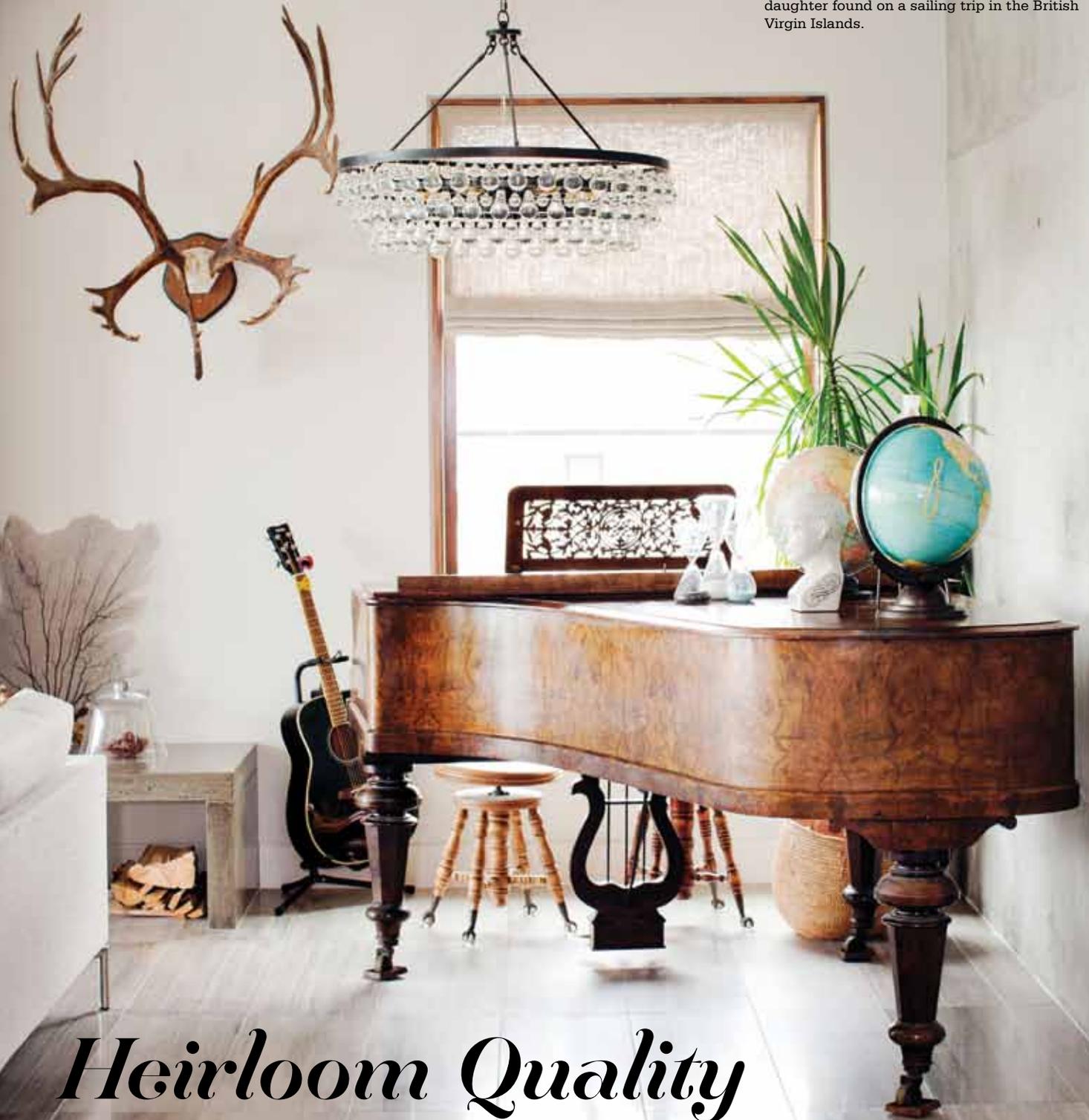


**OPPOSITE:** The exaggerated cedar soffits on this West Vancouver house were inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House in Chicago. In the entryway, a dramatic chandelier greets guests. **THIS PAGE:** Under the massive set of caribou antlers—a gift from Karen's brother, along with a load of caribou pepperoni—is a giant piece of fan coral that the couple's daughter found on a sailing trip in the British Virgin Islands.



# *Heirloom Quality*

TAKING THEIR CUES FROM FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT AND THEIR OWN ABUNDANT COLLECTION OF KEEPSAKES, A FAMILY OF FIVE CONSTRUCTS A MODERN HOME THAT CAN HANDLE THEIR ACTIVE LIFESTYLE.

Written by RACHEL GALLAHER • Photographed by JANIS NICOLAY

DESIGN TEAM

*architecture:* Poskitt Design

*interiors:* Pure by Ami McKay

*construction:* J. Bannister Homes

*pool installation:* Aloha Pools



**I**n 2003, Karen and Julian, an adventurous couple with a penchant for international travel, bought a parcel of land in West Vancouver that boasted magnificent views of the Strait of Georgia, Stanley Park, and the skyline of downtown Vancouver. It also boasted a small 1950s house that wasn't sustainable for a family that would eventually grow to include three children, five pets, and a decade's worth of family heirlooms and souvenirs picked up everywhere from Egypt to Papua New Guinea.

Karen and Julian lived in the original house for eight years but moved elsewhere after their three children arrived (the

youngest one slept in the master bedroom closet for a time). Yet the couple held on to the property, always with the goal of creating their dream house here in the future. When they were ready to build, Julian launched the planning, given his years of experience in the custom-home industry. "My original exterior was based on Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House, specifically the long lines of its roofs and exterior materials," he says. "And inside, we wanted it to be an inviting family home filled with memories."

After demolishing the existing structure, the couple worked with Vancouver architect David Poskitt to design a contemporary 7,000-square-foot house. Since it is on the uphill side of a road, Julian paid close attention to the roof »



*“I think of our home as sort of a cabinet of curiosities that displays our inherited antiques, travel pieces, and natural history collection.”* —KAREN, HOMEOWNER

and other surfaces visible on the ascent from the street and driveway. “I went with a low-pitched roof but exaggerated its soffits from the typical 2 feet to between 4 and 8 feet,” he says. “The large soffits soften the size of the house and protect it from the elements.”

Inside, clean interior finishes show off family collectibles, and travertine stone floors throughout the main level are durable elements in a house full of kids and pets (a dog, a rabbit, a lovebird, a hedgehog, and a fish, to be exact). “We knew stone flooring would work for us because it worked in ancient Rome and is still around today,” Karen says. As for

the décor, “initially we were drawn to very modern looks, but I realized they wouldn’t work because we couldn’t give up our treasured objects.” Yet with the help of interior designer Ami McKay, she artfully worked their favorite pieces into the spare-lined space, planning the living room to accommodate a 165-year-old burled-walnut grand piano that has been in the family for four generations and a Danish modern chair inherited from Julian’s parents.

Valuable antiques plus children seems like a risky equation, but according to McKay, Karen isn’t concerned about keeping tiny hands away from vintage items. “It was a fun »



**ABOVE:** Vintage ephemera and meaningful keepsakes, such as feathers gathered at the family’s cottage on Gambier Island and bone-inlaid boxes that Karen and Julian purchased on their honeymoon in Egypt, are peppered throughout the home. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** The kitchen features a table from Restoration Hardware and lighting from Niche Modern. The swimming pool, designed by Julian and built by Aloha Pools, stretches out from the main living space. The kitchen island was made from a massive beam salvaged from an old home down the street. The stools and pendant lights are vintage, sourced from a factory in Detroit.



**THIS PAGE, FROM LEFT:** One of two back-to-back bathrooms on the main level, this powder room is meant for guests. The sink and faucet are from Blu Bathworks, the mirror is Restoration Hardware, and the lights are from Peridot. One of the boys' rooms is playful and eclectic, with a light fixture and tent from Restoration Hardware. The bedside table is Ikea, and throw cushions are from West Elm and Pendleton.



**OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** The upstairs master suite was kept minimal, with neutral décor and cold-rolled steel panels. A lamp from Arteriors sits on a bedside table from Liberty Furniture. The master bath's maple cabinetry and travertine floors match those on the main level. The pendant lights are from Robinson Lighting and Bath. The couple's daughter sleeps in a pine Canadiana children's bed that Karen owned as a child.

challenge to work in a modern space with so many antiques," says McKay. "Our design became all about balance: contemporary can be cold, but this house has many layers of texture and color to warm and soften it."

The kitchen table, from Restoration Hardware, is covered in scratches and marks from kids' art and construction projects, but Karen doesn't sweat it. "At the end of each summer, we tell our kids that the person with the most scrapes and bruises is the one who's had the most fun," she says. "And this table has had lots of fun."

Upstairs, with the help of McKay, Karen and Julian created a tranquil master suite that is surprisingly sparse. "We had three kids in less than three years, so we had

many sleepless nights," Karen explains. "We really want our bedroom to be a sanctuary where we can relax." The room's standout feature is the cold-rolled steel wall behind the bed, designed and installed by Julian.

Throughout the house, dynamic décor is balanced with clever space planning. Karen readily offers that one of their smartest design decisions was to build two back-to-back bathrooms on the main floor. "Getting three kids to school and two adults off to work in the morning is crazy, and this makes a huge difference," she says. With its specimen-lined shelves and surfaces, the house may be a cabinet of curiosities—but when it comes to daily life, design practicality may be the greatest wonder of them all. ✨

