



RIGHT The Turkish rug and contemporary print over the fireplace inspired the rich red, gold, and gray palette in the family room. Deep wells add abundant natural light.

a family affair

A lower-level metamorphosis creates the heart of a Lowry Hill home

BY KRISTIE L. GREVE PHOTOGRAPHS BY KAREN MELVIN



When Paul and Mary Reyelts decided to tackle the last major renovation project in their classic 1920s home in the Lowry Hill neighborhood of Minneapolis, they wanted to convert the basement into recreational space that the entire family could enjoy.

"Our children were just about to enter their early teen years," Mary Reyelt says. "We wanted rooms where both parents and kids could be comfortable entertaining their friends. And, most of all, we wanted a special place where our family could spend time together."

The basement, the Reyelts decided, would be both sophisticated and practical. It would reflect the same architectural character and attention to detail as the upper floors, with an added kick-off-your-shoes friendliness that would appeal to young and old alike.

The Reyelts chose Bryan Carpenter of YA Architecture and Pete Welch of Welch Forsman, both in Minneapolis, to design and build the space. Carol Belz of Carol Belz and Associates, in Minneapolis, provided interior design expertise. Together, they transformed the basement into a warm and welcoming space that has become one of the most popular parts of the home.

One of the challenges, Carpenter says, was to make the basement look ... well, *not* like a basement. Large light wells were placed in key areas to create the

feeling of spacious windows and bring sunlight into main rooms.

Doors and entry ways were enlarged to create a more seamless flow from room to room. The ceilings were reshaped and soffits added to cleverly disguise the mechanical systems overhead.

"We created shapes that seemed purposeful and looked like they belonged, in keeping with the timeless character of the home," Carpenter says.

There are two ways to enter the basement. Visitors walk down a circular staircase into a gathering space that forms a natural transition to other rooms. The family prefers the back stairway with its easy access to the first-floor kitchen. In-floor heating warms the limestone floors.

Simple changes delivered big results. Carpenter rearranged doors and reconfigured spaces to transform an underutilized storage area into a space with three distinctly different sections. A reception area is in the center, an ideal location for a cloakroom when the Reyelts host a large party. On one side is a large walk-in closet. On the other side is a private powder room.

Red silk fabric covers the walls, and the woodwork is painted a matching pomegranate red. The ceiling is covered with Chinese tea paper in a gold-leaf color.

"The ceiling has a lovely, golden glow," says Belz. "It keeps the space lighter and adds a sparkle against the dark, rich color in the bathroom."

The most striking feature in the reception area is a hemp-rope table by designer Christian Astuguevieille. Hemp is his signature material, giving this Louis 15th-style table a whimsical charm.

In the powder room, gilt and crystal sconces add more shimmering textures. An 18th century Venetian mirror hangs over the white pedestal sink.

The heart of the basement is a generously sized family room. Beams of Douglas fir line the ceiling, giving the room a rustic appeal. YA Architects' Carpenter enlarged the rough-textured limestone fireplace on one wall.

Large, built-in cupboards hide the family's entertainment system. One focal point of the room is a reversible, flat-

LEFT In the lower level, accessed by a circular staircase, gray metal sconces illuminate the spacious hallway and the transitional spaces. Artwork, paired with a hemp rope table by Parisian designer Christian Astuguevieille, anchors the hallway.

RIGHT A small powder room is made boldly dramatic by a gold ceiling and red silk walls.





New cabinetry was built to suit the home's 1920s style. The two-tiered bar and leather Christian Liaigre stools add a modern counterpart.