





READING RAINBOW
A geometric pendant chandelier from Visual Comfort illuminates a library paneled in white oak, which is adjacent to Welsh's office.



Character PIECES

Randall Architects designs a charmingly eclectic house for *Trainspotting* novelist Irvine Welsh and his wife, Elizabeth.

By Tate Gunnerson
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Portrait by Cynthia Lynn

"Irvine Welsh and his wife are a little funky, and this house really reflects their personalities," explains Randall Architects co-founder Greg Randall of the couple's home in Lakeview. The famed Scottish author of *Trainspotting* the novel (on which the film is based) and wife Elizabeth Quinn, an equestrian, hired Greg and his wife, Abby, to convert their two-flat into a single-family home without sacrificing the 100-year-old building's original details. This included the original moldings, built-in cabinets and leaded glass windows. "The home is fairly characteristic of the time it was built, but it's also a unique and obviously hand-built space," Quinn says. "The original features in this building were of high enough quality to start with, and were maintained well enough, that renovation



HOME ON THE RANGE
To support the heavy cast iron range from Louisiana, the architects incorporated a steel beam in the basement underneath the kitchen. "It's worth it to me to spend more money on things that will last a long time, and this stove will still be working in 50 years," homeowner Elizabeth Quinn explains. Portrait, above right: Architects Abby and Greg Randall of Randall Architects pose in their client's Lakeview home.

made sense. We'd already done a full rehab of our house in Dublin, and we weren't really looking to go down that road again."

For the Randalls, the trick was to maintain the century-old charm while incorporating a large new kitchen, a master suite and offices for Welsh and Quinn. "It was a challenge to maintain what was already there while also creating a sense of variety," Abby says, pointing to the traditional hexagon floor tile in the entry that they saved and complemented with brand-new pressed tin tiles on the foyer walls. Like many two-unit buildings, the original foyer accessed both units. To make it feel more like a single-family home, the Randalls redesigned the foyer, closing off the doors leading to the first and second floor units and creating new doors that lead directly from the foyer into the living area and staircase. "Visitors at the front door can no longer look up and see people walking down the stairs in their pajamas," Greg says, noting that if they could, they'd see the large, autographed image of Iggy Pop that

the homeowners hung at the top of the stairs—just one of many unexpected personal touches that can be found throughout the home. The image pops out against a dark coat of semigloss gray paint that highlights the original plaster walls, which the owners wanted to retain. "We had them patch the cracks, but left the surface a little uneven," Quinn explains. "Instead of trying to hide that, I wanted to bring it out. This isn't drywall, and I don't want it to feel like drywall. It's part of the fabric of an old house. It's had 100 years of settling and shifting and being lived in. I love that."

In the back of the home, the Randalls created a larger kitchen by tearing out a second staircase that provided egress between the upstairs and downstairs unit and by expanding the opening between the dining room and kitchen. A bank of new windows and a glass door flood the space with sunlight. "It was a very dark space before, with a bay window looking out over the alley," Greg says.

Although the kitchen is essentially a totally redesigned space, the architects selected cabinetry with a traditional



BOLD HUE MOVES
A decorative border in the white ceramic subway tile complements a vintage claw-foot tub in the downstairs powder room. New marble floors and a black vanity modernize the space.



CHECKERED PAST
 Clockwise from left: For additional privacy, the architects redesigned the entrance, closing off the front foyer from the stairway to the second floor; Welsh requested the black-and-white checkered floor in the master bathroom, which features a marble tub and a new double vanity surrounded by chocolate-brown glass subway tile; the light fixture is by Thomas O'Brien from Visual Comfort.



FEEDING FRENZY

The architects selected Pratt & Lambert Argent, a shade of robin's egg blue, for the kitchen cabinets. "It is a really interesting shade of blue," Quinn says. "It picks up so many colors that, in real life, it functions almost as a neutral."

profile, which they painted robin's egg blue. "We used color to make the traditional shapes and forms feel fresh and different," Greg explains. The cabinets complement a bright yellow range from Lacanche, which has brass and nickel accents. "The mix of materials creates the eclectic sensibility that you might find in an old place," Greg says, pointing to the brass sink faucet, nickel library-style light fixtures and the pressed tin backsplash that takes up the entire wall behind the range. "Elizabeth knew that she wanted pressed tin, so rather than use it in a traditional way on the ceiling, we used it as a backsplash to create a more contemporary look."

The unexpected color hues pop up in other rooms throughout the home. In the downstairs guest bathroom, the architects incorporated an antique claw-foot tub that Quinn bought on Craigslist, which they painted a dark shade of green. They repeated the shade in decorative ceramic tile work on the wall behind the tub. A bright yellow door adds an unexpected pop of color. "We both

love color and saturated tones," Quinn says. Indeed, Welsh selected a bright, Caribbean turquoise blue for his office, which is located on the second floor in what was formerly a living room. "It's a great place to watch the street and write," Welsh says. Adjacent to his desk alcove, the architects created a library and sitting area paneled in white oak. "I like to have a big room to work in, and a more secluded office area that I can shut off when I want to be away from any noise," Welsh explains. "It has both, plus a nice deck, so I can work outside when we get the weather."

According to Greg and Abby, the project is a rare example of a case where less is more. "You really don't get a sense that this was a two-unit building, but most people don't think that Irvine and Elizabeth made any big changes to the house," Greg explains. "There are areas that are kind of beat-up and areas that look very polished. Irvine and Elizabeth weren't worried about it being perfect. They wanted it to have character."

DESIGN DETAILS

TYPE

Single-Family Home

LOCATION

Lakeview

ARCHITECTURE

Randall Architects