

WEST PHILLY WONDER

DESIGNER STELLA LUDWIG
HELPS TURN A VICTORIAN
ROW HOUSE INTO A
CONTEMPORARY HOME.

By Sarah Jordan



Smart people know when they're outmatched. Although the West Philadelphia couple had lived in their 19th-century row house for almost two years, it still looked like a crash pad for furniture-phobic, style-leery Penn undergrads. Clearly, they needed help.

The couple (she's a computer science professor at University of Pennsylvania; he's a biomedical researcher) dreamt of an inviting domicile to greet them after a long day of work, but due to their busy schedules, the pair hadn't made their West Philly space a priority—and it showed. "They had no idea where to begin or how to execute the process, but they wanted it done properly," says Stella Ludwig (stellaludwig.com), the Colombian-born, Rittenhouse Square-based designer who came to the rescue.

"What I like to do when I start a project is be left alone in the space and let it talk to me," she continues. "The ideas just start to flow." For example, the homeowners initially had no interest in using wallpaper, but to get her juices flowing, Ludwig selected Harlequin's gray-brown foliage print with gold metallic details for the dining room walls. Her gamble paid off: The wife, who yearned for a serene reading place, responded to its nature-themed design, while the husband, who craved color, appreciated its unexpected palette. This power duo loves to entertain, so Ludwig next introduced a dining room table by Caracole that was narrow enough for the row house's dimensions, but long enough to seat 12 people.

The living room, painted in Sherwin-Williams' Mindful Gray to pick up the dining room wallcovering, centers on a gently curved sofa, also by Caracole. It faces two Robert Allen club chairs upholstered in chartreuse velvet, creating a neatly proportioned gathering spot for friends. Two barrel-shaped Bernhardt faux-fur



ottomans can be moved easily around for friends needing a seat to join a conversation—or for the household's two young children to clamber over. An array of marble-topped link bunching tables from Global View offers the enterprising hosts flexibility in arranging surfaces for guests to lay down their cocktails. Throughout the first floor, lighting sources—from sconces to chandeliers to recessed fixtures—provide an assist to the sun's rays, which have a hard time stretching into the middle of the home.

To honor her clients' heritage, Ludwig suggested they bring back something after their next trip to their native Bulgaria. "They were so excited," she says, "and they came back with a load of artwork!" At the project's completion, Ludwig gifted the couple with one more piece of Bulgarian art: a large pillow made from rug fragments that now sits on the leather bench stationed just beyond the vestibule. For the couple, it serves as a reminder of home, both old and new. ■



From top: Harlequin's gold-flecked wallpaper, a mirror by Barbara Barry for Baker and a chandelier from Arteriors add sparkle to the dinner party-friendly Caracole table; an entry vignette spotlights a handcrafted pillow from the couple's native Bulgaria. Opposite page: A comfortable seating group features a matching pair of Robert Allen chairs and faux-furred ottomans from Bernhardt.