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Brickyard

A new Chicago residence designed by dSPACE Studio nestles harmoniously into its neighborhood, balancing private family living and urban dwelling

VOLUME 7 | ISSUE 3 | \$10.00
GREATLAKESBYDESIGN.COM

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Text: R. Collins

In a manicured, lakefront-bordered neighborhood on Chicago's north side, sits a new-build residence and legacy home that doubles as a study in the undeniable impact of smart residential design on city living. From the street, the nested, rectangular masses of the home nestle into the surrounding trees and exist harmoniously with the traditional homes in the historic neighborhood.

From the street view, the home—known as Brickyard—projects a warm glow that is

fractured by the rippling texture of its most eye-catching exterior detail: a perforated brick screen wall that facilitates the exchange between privacy and visibility, and plays with natural light as the sun glazes across the sky. Though it voices an understated elegance, the home hosts a robust program of thoughtful design solutions for a lifetime of use by the family inside.

“The design of this private oasis comes from the idea of blurring the boundaries

between the built and natural environment, which is what we try to do in our projects, as well as promoting wellness in our architectural design,” said Kevin Toukoumidis, AIA, LEED, founding principal architect at dSPACE Studio, the design and architecture firm behind the Brickyard design.

The home is many things. It is a dwelling and oasis for current and future generations. It is a collective vision of the homeowners' love for design—inspired by plentiful brick buildings in





New York's SoHo neighborhood and historic brick homes along the canals in Amsterdam. It is also an ode to the classic materiality of Chicago architecture and a sandbox for more surprising visual elements in its living spaces. Nods to Chicago's mark on modern architecture—specifically the invention of the steel skyscraper—appear in the exposed steel woven throughout the façade, along the perimeter of the screen wall, over the entryway, and in forms that creep into interior spaces. The brick and glass façade

speaks the region's material dialect but adds to the typology a savvy thermal envelope that is a foundational service for dSPACE Studio, a Chicago-based design firm.

dSPACE Studio is an award-winning architecture and design firm crafting contemporary homes, modern landscapes and interiors, and commercial and cultural spaces in the United States and internationally. The firm works primarily in new construction, focusing on vacation homes, urban dwellings, and unique busi-

ness spaces. Each project type is anchored in a highly individualistic approach that positions clients as partners and which places integral aspects like budget, personal inspiration, the needs of the landscape, and environmentally sustainable design at the forefront of any design program.

It is this flexible, personal approach that allows the firm to design award-winning living spaces across diverse environments, whether it be a raw Chicago penthouse from which the team carved a contemporary retreat maximizing the city's skyline, or a weather-bearing, rustic modern home tucked into 20 acres of rolling grassland in Saugatuck, Michigan, near the shore of Lake Michigan.

For dSPACE, architecture and design act in service to wellness, and in terms of the Brickyard project, this theme is seen in the unique ways the team intermingled privacy, surroundings, and wonder-provoking spaces for living, playing, and relaxing.

"The goal of design is not just to awe and inspire you with beauty, but to make your life better. To make your life healthier, more efficient, and easier," Toukoumidis said. "This client wanted to design a home they'll raise their young children in and hope to have their kids take over later in life. It will stay in the family."

To begin, the dSPACE team considered design cues like natural light and heat concepts to orient the structure, which is L-shaped to define the inner courtyard—including a yard, pergola-covered lounge, outdoor dining area, and patio. Low-emittance glass windows are located around the home for an efficient thermal envelope and to welcome light into the home while also preventing solar heat gain in summer. The home also makes use of a Tesla Powerwall, a green roof, and state-of-the-art solar panels.

Employing a restrained material palette of glass, steel, and brick, dSPACE explored the idea of using a perforated brick screen wall to exchange privacy, light, and sightlines out onto the surroundings. Initially a design challenge, the resulting lattice structure secluding the clients' living spaces proved to be one of the most rewarding aspects of the project for the architects who strive to innovate in all their designs.

"The client wanted privacy but also openness—inherently contradictory objectives. But that's where the creativity came from: how do we solve this problem?" said Tom Hagerty, AIA, principal at dSPACE Studio.

"Incorporating brick into the design solution seemed like a natural direction to be consistent in the material palette. We came up with the idea of staggering the brick to create texture and shadow play across the façade, but in doing so we learned it was very difficult for a mason to install it properly," Hagerty added.

To resolve the issue, the team designed a custom-tapered brick that created the same shadow effect but was easier to install. The lat-



tice gently shields the front of the home from the street, preserving privacy in the glass-walled spaces of the foyer, library, and office. The screen wall also serves a stylistic function, expanding traditional notions of brick residences in the city and throughout the Midwest.

"At dSPACE we're fortunate to work with clients looking for innovative designs. The novel design of Brickyard prompts you to think, 'how do brick houses usually look, and how can it be transformed into something sculptural and new?'" Toukoumidis said. "That was the beauty of using a custom brick shape: the result is an unexpected velvety texture on the surface of the screen wall that

contrasts with the hardness of a traditional brick house."

The steel expanses anchoring these glass and brick textures pay homage to Chicago's industrial heritage. Steel also integrates into the interior architecture, which provided a fresh canvas for Chicago interior design firm, Studio Gild, to create a program that employs a similarly restrained material palette while using an eclectic mix of finish textures and unique furnishings to create consistent visual intrigue. Their approach results in striking design vignettes that serve to delight and surprise viewers.

"The clients and the architecture were both strong and gave a great springboard for

our selections," said Jennie Bishop, co-founder and principal designer at Studio Gild. "The clients are design aficionados and had so many great ideas to parse through and express. We were then able to build on initial dreams of theirs to complement the modern, richly materialistic architecture."

Studio Gild is a Chicago- and Los Angeles-based interior design firm that creates provocative and timeless spaces using a meticulous artisan and client relationship-based design process. The team at Studio Gild shares an appreciation for clean and beautifully subtle architecture, and the interior spaces they created for the Brickyard project tell the cli-



ents' story in lockstep with the surrounding architecture by dSPACE.

On the first floor, the foyer divvies into the indoor dining area and a coat and powder room that serve as the first glance for one of the clients' thoughtful and surprising design vignettes. Here, textural shou sugi ban wood in an obsidian hue clads the hallway to the powder room, which becomes visible with a peak of shimmering gold from brass petal wallcoverings that evoke serpent-like gold scales rippling down the wall.

"It's one of those opportunities to make a moment of dramatic gesture from a design standpoint," Hagerty said. "It's for guests—a place to put their belongings—so it was a thoughtful vignette off the foyer."

From the entry, white oak covers the floors, and the same material is stained to match on the first-floor kitchen cabinetry, as well as the custom wood joinery on the kitchen island. In the kitchen, marbled pewter quartzite countertops and backsplash were carefully selected and durable materials that reflect the fresh white hue of the surrounding ceilings and dark brick walls.

Next to the kitchen, the pantry and dining room are partitioned by an expanse of fluted, fogged glass intended to conceal these private spaces while welcoming light. The dining area highlights a custom oxidized split-top maple table with burnished brass legs, over which a chandelier shaped in gold metal and matching fluted glass draws eyes upward.

Deeper into the home are the living area and breakfast nook, the cocooned outdoor spaces, home offices, and a bike room. The second floor holds bedrooms, flex space, the laundry room, and a garage roof deck with panoramic city views. The home culminates on the third level with breezy lounge and entertainment spaces, encased under a house-long skylight that breaks on each side of the A-frame roof. On this level, the guest penthouse and sauna, billiards room and lounge, kitchenette, fireplace, and balcony are equally inspired by the clients' desire for unique, natural materials that infuse each space with comfortable textures and visual interest.

"They love genuine, honest materials: stone, wood, interesting brick, leather, shou-sugi-ban-planked walls, concrete embossed tiles, brass

wall tiles, and wallpaper with personality. It was a lesson in restraint and finding the right places for everything but not letting any particular material overwhelm the house," Bishop said.

A delicate balance of uniformity—in the dark metals, brick, and fogged glass—and bursts of inspiration through momentary displays, such as in the powder rooms where key accents like brass scales or Moooi Menagerie of Extinct Animals wallpaper offer colorful, wonder-provoking experiences, and they mimic the legacy home's overall ability to interface opposing concepts: urban privacy and transparency, the natural and built environment, the classic and the experimental, and restraint and thoughtful indulgence. The servicing of both opposing aspects is a testament to the care and patience played by the design parties behind Brickyard. In the end, both design teams echo the first step for achieving the balance.

"We have passion for the design process," Toukoumidis said. "Building your dream home is a rare opportunity and a great privilege, though it can be daunting to our clients; we make it fun."