

carleton

GENERATING IDEAS AND CONNECTIONS

The cream of the crop for urban infill. Architecture firm superkül maximizes work-life balance in its home-office space in Toronto.



FINDING THE RIGHT SPOT FOR WORK AND PLAY
CELEBRATING INSPIRED DESIGN THROUGH FIVE "SPACE CASES"

CASE STUDY: COMBINED SPACE

ANDRE D'ELIA AND MEG GRAHAM DITCH THE COMMUTE WITH A CLEVER RENOVATION THAT HAS GIVEN THEM A SPACIOUS HOME ABOVE THEIR OFFICE

Andre D'Elia, BArch/93, and Meg Graham are the principals behind the Toronto-based superkül architecture firm. They're also a husband-and-wife team with two small children. Perhaps it only makes sense, then, that they work and play in the same building. When the couple bought a rundown two-storey storefront building on Dundas Street West in 2005, they did so with the plan to renovate it completely, turning the basement and ground floor into office space for their busy design practice and the upper level into home space. They added a third floor to the two-storey building, creating a spacious house on the upper two floors—room to sprawl a bit once they had children.

The couple chose the busy thoroughfare of Dundas West for the practical reason that buildings along the strip are zoned for mixed commercial and residential use, but they now love it equally for the neighbourhood. "It's a remarkably active spot, busy and interesting," says D'Elia, who jokes that their four-year-old daughter regards the living room window, which faces Dundas, as her personal television set. Graham says they also appreciate the simplicity of having office and home in one spot. "We're in the unique position that when one of us has to work late, the other can just walk upstairs to look after the kids and cook dinner."

The husband-and-wife team behind the superkül architecture firm took a rundown two-storey house and turned it into a three-storey building that houses their business in the basement and ground floor and their home on the upper two levels.



Photo: Ben Rahn / A-Frame Inc.



The Toronto-based architecture firm is led by associate Anya Moryoussef, left, and principals Andre d'Elia, centre, and Meg Graham.



Photo: Ben Rahm / A-Frame Inc.

Over the past seven years, the couple has undertaken a number of further renovations and additions, including expanding into the backyard area, as their firm (which now numbers 14) and their family (which now numbers four) has grown. "When we bought this building, we anticipated each phase of expansion," D'Elia explains, "so we've been able to renovate each time with minimal impact at the office or at home."

On the neighbourhood ...

Meg: We're at Dundas and Roncesvalles. It's an area full of coffee shops, independent grocers, small businesses—and there are lots of young kids. It's a thriving neighbourhood in the midst of change—great for the business and our family.

Andre: It's also a 10-minute walk from High Park and a 25-minute walk from the lake, with three transit lines and the subway within walking distance.

On living and working in one location ...

Meg: For a young firm, it's an ideal arrangement. We have two children [a four-year-old and a four-month-old], and in these early years of the practice and our family, I can't imagine anything better.

On having their daughter pop into the office ...

Meg: It's wonderful to get to see our daughter when she comes home from school. She can tell us about her day before she goes upstairs to the babysitter.

Andre: It's amazing watching her interact with the staff. It's a little break each day—she's so happy to see everybody, to look at what they're doing, to chat.

On their favourite aspects of the combined space ...

Meg: The integration of our home and office allows for more efficiencies as a family—there's an ease to organizing our days.

Andre: Living and working in one spot definitely takes out a lot of the stress. And although we live above the shop, the two spaces are quite separate, so work and home are distinct.

Both the public and private spaces in superkül's combined office/home are designed with the clean lines for which the firm is known. Below: The basement level accommodates superkül's well-lit boardroom and reference library, as well as a staff kitchen and bathroom. Above: In the home, the second-storey kitchen opens out to the dining room and a small family room that overlooks the busy streetscape.



Photo: Ben Rahm / A-Frame Inc.