

Chicago Tribune Magazine  
OCTOBER 19, 2008

# Trib

## At Home

Hooked  
on keychains

Housing a  
foreign  
correspondent



# LIVING PROOF

7 Chicagoans  
in their comfort zones

Zohra Zoh, husband Peter Plummer and their son, N



## THE OPEN SOLAR PLAN

### ZOKA ZOLA

Architect  
Zoka Zola Architecture + Urban Design

>> **What's new:** Zola's sublime exercise in energy efficiency, her East Village home/office, is now counted among 45 modernist icons in Kenneth Frampton's just-released "American Masterworks: Houses of the Twentieth & Twenty-first Centuries" (Rizzoli).

>> **Home:** A 3,000-square-foot red-brick stack of light and glass and stairs and terraces, designed according to "passive solar" principles of shaping and positioning to maximize winter sunlight and summer shade. Not a solar panel in sight.

>> Stepping inside the 21st Century town-house that decidedly does not stick out among its vintage Chicago neighbors—two-flats, three-flats, some with turn-of-the-20th-Century turrets—is to be wrapped in a womb of light and space that lifts the soul as you climb its many stairs.

Sky is everywhere. Pocked with clouds. Pierced by nearby industrial water tanks and steel-trussed railroad bridges. Sky as far as you can see. You are at home, at one with the cityscape, and so immersed in sky you could reach out any window, any skylight, off the kitchen balcony or the terrace off the living room, and grab yourself some wisp of cloud or chunk of twinkling star. Zoka Zola, Croatia-born, Zagreb- and London-educated, designed it just that way. "Home," she says, "is a place where I'm not locked in . . . making me forget about the rest of the world. The kind of problems most of us have, the daily life . . . If home could keep those doors open, that's the best it could do for you, to keep you . . . alive." Zola herself grew up with a bedroom window in Rijeka, Croatia, that looked out on nothing but the Adriatic Sea. It sealed her sense that she was, foremost, a citizen of the world, with an endless horizon. And she must never turn her back on that world. When Zola moved to Chicago in 1997, with husband Peter Pfanner, who came to head up Motorola's cell-phone design studio, she found a city lot where she could build a five-story house for her family (they have a son, Yara, now 10) that embraced her long-held belief. And another one as well, born of the same sense of world citizenship: to consume as little as possible of the global energy supply.

—Barbara Mahany, [bmahany@tribune.com](mailto:bmahany@tribune.com)