

SEPT/OCT 2011

# LUXURY HOME

*quarterly*



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# fcSTUDIO inc

*Duo of architects focuses on building clients' trust before taking pencil to paper*

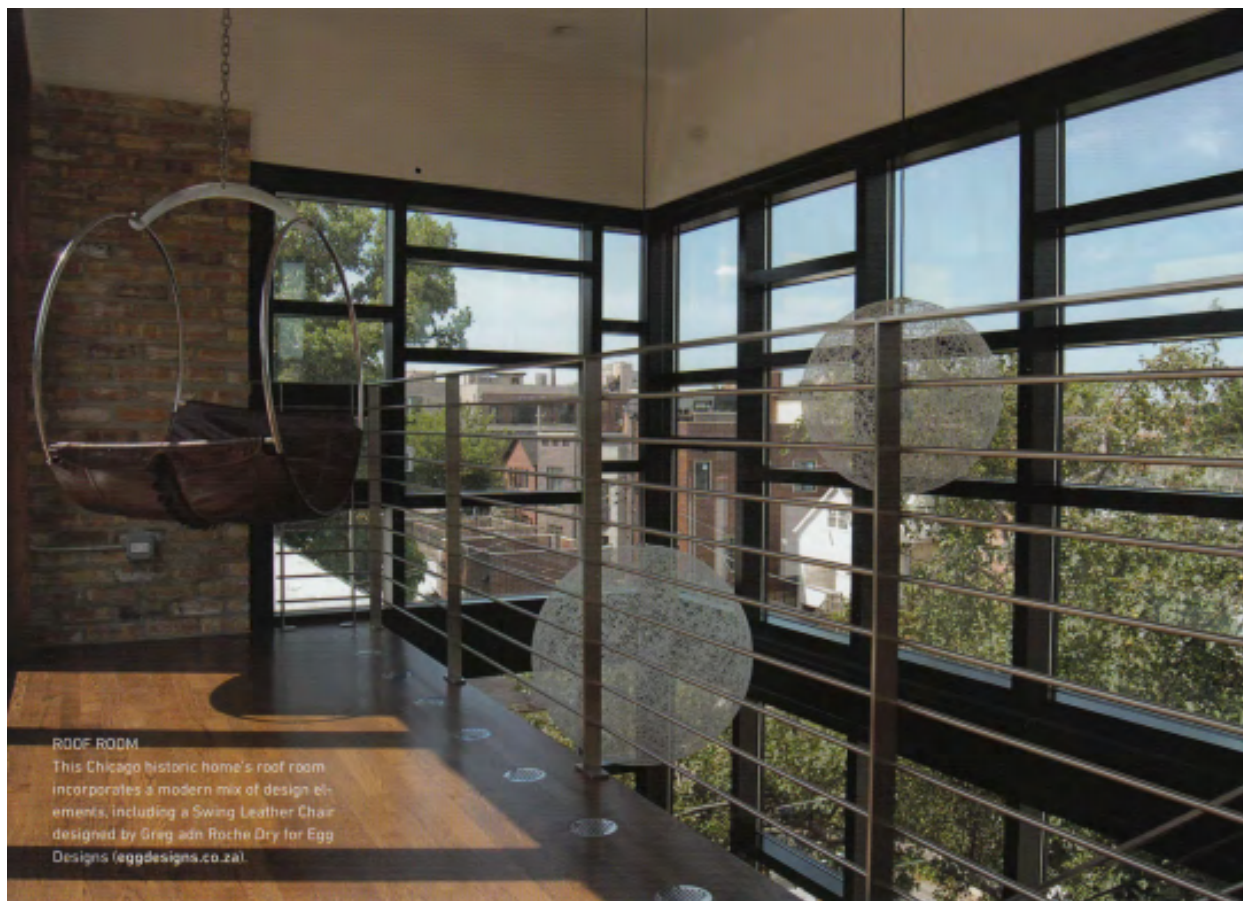
BY MEGY KARYDES



PHOTO: CAMILLA SALTRENGEN

#### NATURAL AMENITIES

A green roof atop an fcSTUDIO-designed residence in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood, this space was designed by Intrinsic Landscaping, and the entrance features a NanaWall system ([nanawall.com](http://nanawall.com)).



#### ROOF ROOM

This Chicago historic home's roof room incorporates a modern mix of design elements, including a Swing Leather Chair designed by Greg and Roche Dry for Egg Designs ([eggdesigns.co.za](http://eggdesigns.co.za)).

**J**ulie Fisher and Rachel Crowl are motivated to create homes and commercial spaces that are not only functional but livable. As architects and partners of **fcSTUDIO inc.**, a Chicago-based architecture firm celebrating 11 years in business, Fisher and Crowl are committed to creating the best work for their clients. The firm specializes in high-end, custom residential and commercial projects in the Chicagoland area; but unlike some architecture firms that focus just on the building aspect of a project, **fcSTUDIO** also takes care of the interiors.

"We're very full service when it comes to our projects," Crowl says. "We're drawing schematics and pulling permits while designing kitchen cabinets and doing space planning at the same time." Doing both architecture and design may present challenges to some, but for this team, it motivates them to do great work. Fisher notes that part of **fcSTUDIO's** appeal is that it can take a client's thoughts and ideas—even when they present challenges—and create unique, livable spaces.

Fisher and Crowl met while working at another firm, and they clicked. Each brings unique skill sets to the table but respect for each other is paramount—and it shows in their designs and how they talk about one another. "Rachel was a jewelry designer and sculptor, so she brings very tactile sensibilities to a project," Fisher says. "I prefer a more stark and modernist look. But, together, we create spaces that are modern but infused with tactile qualities. Aside from that, having a partner allows us each to bounce off ideas and challenge each other. Our clients benefit from that exchange."

#### Wicker Park Residence

By keeping homeowners' needs and interests in mind, **fcSTUDIO** creates modern and unique spaces. Here are six components used to transform a Chicago home into a haven:

- A NanaWall door-and-window system extends the living space to the outdoors by simply folding the wall panels to the side. [nanawall.com](http://nanawall.com)
- A green rooftop garden by Intrinsic Landscaping is both eco-friendly and attractive in design. [intrinsiclandscaping.com](http://intrinsiclandscaping.com)
- A custom-designed stainless-steel stairway by MILKdesign balances the warmth of the wood floors and exposed brick. [milkdesign.net](http://milkdesign.net)
- The hanging chair by Greg and Roche Dry, created for Egg Designs, offers a modern, unique aesthetic. [eggdesigns.co.za](http://eggdesigns.co.za)
- Random Light Chandeliers by Moooi from Design Within Reach are functional and dramatic. [dwr.com](http://dwr.com)



PHOTOS: CAMILLA SATTORETTI

**CUSTOM COOKWARE**  
fcSTUDIO incorporated a pizza oven into the kitchen design in this Chicago residence.



**SUNROOM**  
This Chicago home's sunroom, designed by f-STUDIO, lets in abundant natural lighting through its window-paned walls and roof.

In fact, clients have left other architecture firms to work with f-STUDIO because the duo is so easy to work with and makes them feel more comfortable with the process. "We have an unbelievable level of trust and respect when it comes to working with our clients," Fisher says. "They find us not only accessible and responsive, but we're able to translate their thoughts and vision into spaces that exceed their expectations."

The firm doesn't just create the architectural renderings and walk away, though. Fisher and Crowl will work with the contractors during the build-out, all the while choosing tile or specifying furniture. "We do all the nitty-gritty stuff," Fisher adds. "We're architects to the core, but our projects come to life because we know how to work with all the details."

In the past decade, f-STUDIO has enjoyed steady growth, primarily through word of mouth. "More than likely, someone has seen our work from a family member or friend, and inquires," Crowl says. "Almost 100 percent of our business has come from referrals, and that is very gratifying because it means our clients have enjoyed working with us and that they are comfortable referring us."

A perfect satisfied-client example comes with one of f-STUDIO's current projects—a historic cottage located on the property of a client whose primary home was designed by f-STUDIO. The client enjoyed the firm's work in her home so much, she retained its services for her cottage. "This particular client was a dream client," Fisher says. "She wasn't afraid of what we were recommending, and she trusted our ability to create something magical for her. Those are our



**OUTDOOR LIVING**

The firm also designs exterior spaces, as seen here in the backyard of a Chicago landmarked home.



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LAKE SHORE DRIVE APARTMENT  
An fcSTUDIO project, this Lake Shore Drive apartment features Crowl and Fisher's knack for modern design in an artistic setting.





**DIVERSE PORTFOLIO**  
fcSTUDIO's modern designs even stretch to contemporary-looking garages, as seen at the firm's Ravenswood home project (here) and its landmarked-home project (below right).

dream clients—the ones who not only present us with a challenge, but also trust us with their project.”

As with this latest project, Fisher and Crowl keep in mind how a space will be used during the design phase. Although not every home they work on has children as part of the mix, as parents themselves—and each having had work done in their respective homes—they fully understand how stressful it can be when doing a build-out. They are sensitive to real-life necessities, such as storage needs, or designing spaces with young children in mind.

But while the partners enjoy working with their residential clients, they also enjoy the challenges of working on larger projects. The firm is currently working on a green, multiunit housing development in California. “Most of our work is based in the Chicagoland area since we’re based here, but we enjoy working on projects in other parts of the country,” Fisher says. In the meantime, fcSTUDIO continues to be sought out for its fresh and different designs, as well as its unique ways of incorporating lighting, materials, and color. ☐

