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INSTRUCTIONS FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

Your New Home

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STAY COOL

Outfit Your House
Against the Heat

A VEGAN VICTORY

5 Reasons to Eat
More Plants

Curve Appeal

A family heads west to add some funk to the frontier of architecture.

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One chilly February three years ago, Edgar Papazian and Michelle Lenzi stepped through slushy suburban New York streets, stuffed their car as full of belongings as would fit, then drove away. They spent a month crossing the country before settling in Portland, Oregon, to get a new lease on life—and to buy their first home.

Tired of tiny apartments, sky-high rents, and the relentless grind of their jobs, the couple decided to pack it all in and try someplace new. And Papazian, an architect, was itching to design his own house but couldn't afford to in New York. Drawn to Portland by the architectural innovation and the urbanism they saw on three previous trips, the couple simply picked up and moved west.

"New York is built; it's all there already," Papazian says. Portland, however, still has a sense of the frontier, with wide-open spaces, underdeveloped land, and affordable real estate. After arriving in March, the pair

immediately started house hunting, walking up uneven stairs, looking at cracked foundations, and poking around the oddly renovated rooms of more than 50 potential homes. They had no particular style in mind: "We just wanted to do something really fun on a budget," Papazian recalls. Every time they saw a place, he would sketch how he'd redo it, taking down a carport here, adding a second floor there.

Then that June, the couple spotted a modest 1940s home in the Mount Tabor neighborhood. The topography around the house and the large backyard—set on the slopes of an extinct volcano in the middle of the city—appealed to the couple. The house itself was in great structural shape but was otherwise bland in every way—which proved a selling factor for the couple. "You don't want to put a funky addition on a beautiful bungalow," says Lenzi, a genetics researcher. "You could, but you'd end up making enemies, and we wanted our neighbors to like us." A simple

gabled dwelling with basic moldings, a cramped kitchen, and few windows, the home's only renovation over the past 50 years was the addition of shag carpeting in the '70s. "It was begging for something," Papazian remembers.

The first night after seeing their soon-to-be home, Papazian drew up the swooping curves of two dormers with big overhangs in front and back that he envisioned enclosing the house. But in terms of specifics, like which rooms go where, the couple first moved into the house and spent a year figuring out what they did and didn't like before they ever picked up a sledgehammer.

Though they prefer to live small and were happy with the overall 1,323 square feet (not including an unfinished basement), they knew they wanted an extra bedroom and to make the upstairs suitable for living, since it was basically a narrow tube of space under the eaves. They decided to shift the floor plan (and knock down walls), extending the kitchen through what was originally

1. The front of the home draws you in with its curved roof line.

2. What was once a back bedroom and cramped galley kitchen is now a large open space where the family congregates to eat, cook, and visit. A giant butcher-block countertop from IKEA mimics the natural elements outside the house, and counter stools from CB2 make an easy place to perch.



one of the two downstairs bedrooms and putting a dining room in the other bedroom. Instead of entering right into the living room, they created an entrance hallway with a closet for shoes and coats so people didn't track in mud, a problem in the perennially wet climate. On one side of the entrance is a bedroom cum office; on the other side, the living room. A renovated bathroom completes the floor plan downstairs.

The second floor was perhaps the most ambitious part of the project. The couple was determined to fit two bedrooms and a full bath in the limited space. Papazian reoriented the house so that the main axis went from front to back, instead of side to side, by putting in the two large arched dormers that were in his original sketch. Doing so would also create an overhang in the back and a porch overlooking the backyard. But how to affordably build the massive dormers? "I remembered seeing these Quonset huts around town," says Papazian. "It's a comforting, simple system where the skin is the structure." He was able to order Quonset-style prefab galvanized steel arches, which cost a total of around \$7,000, bent to his exact specifications.

They hired a contractor and started demolition in June 2009. The couple

moved into what they called their "New York studio apartment" in the unfinished basement, a 12x14 space walled in by plastic sheets and fitted with only necessities like a bed, a fridge, a hot plate, and a couch. The back wall of the house came down, and the roof was chopped to the rafters. Spiders crawled over them as they slept, and neighborhood cats wandered in as the house was stripped to its studs, leaving the whole thing open to the outdoors. When their home was finally finished the following spring, Lenzi was seven months pregnant and Papazian was running around with a paintbrush to get everything done.

The result, though, was worth it, and the home perfectly suits the family, which now includes 1-year-old Giovanna. Outside, the massive steel arches frame the second level of the house like eyebrows. Inside, these arches are echoed in soft edges and round spaces everywhere, from the bookshelves that encase the central stairway to the coved tops of the walls to the bending lines of their furniture. "I'm a curvy guy in a rectilinear world," says Papazian, with a laugh. He elaborates, "It's a completely different feeling to be in a curved space than in a rectilinear space." The curves also open the space up, since your eye

3. IKEA kitchen cabinets are backed with clear glass to let in the light, but have frosted glass front panels to maintain privacy. The curved range hood is from Franke.

4. The stairway is tucked inside the curves of a double-sided bookcase, designed to hold the couple's beloved architecture and art tomes.

How to Make a Small House Feel Bigger

For many people these days, there's an allure to living small. From the practical (decreased energy and heating bills) to the emotional (less need for stuff) to simply being green (a reduced footprint on the land), there are many benefits to tighter quarters. Here are some ways to make every square foot count.

Let in Light

Light spaces feel bigger, so wherever possible, put in windows and glass. Frosted glass inside pocket doors will ensure privacy while letting light through. Large windows allow views to the outside, so that a deck and yard seem like an extension of the house. Papazian even recommends putting windows behind glass cabinets, as they did in the kitchen. Then finish everything off with light-color paint.

Take Down Walls

Older houses tend to have lots of little rooms—making small spaces feel claustrophobic. Remove extraneous walls, adding parallel strand lumber beams for structural support, and you'll have wide-open spaces that will make you feel like you've gained extra living area.

Think Curves, Not Straight Lines

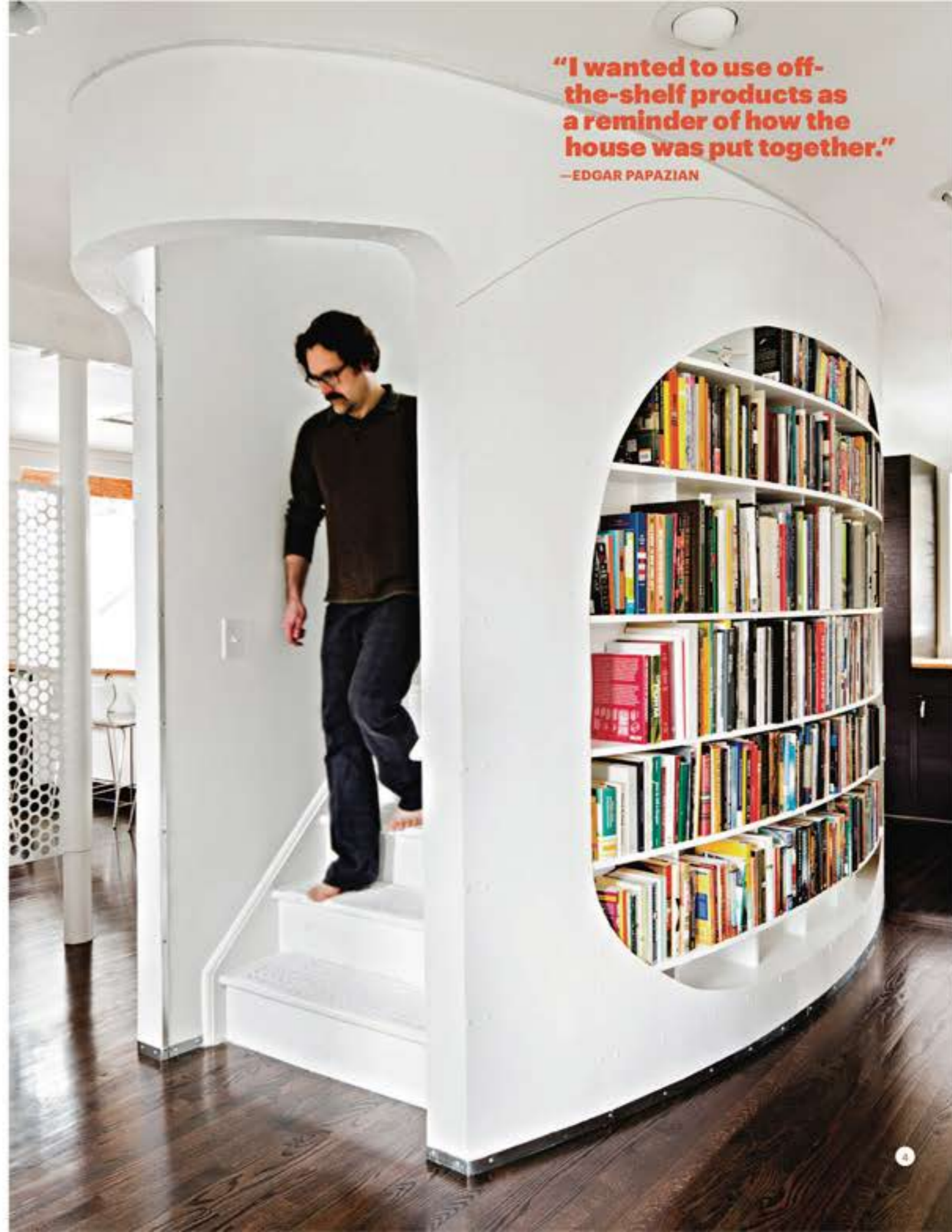
Papazian recommends putting in coves so that walls and ceilings slide into each other seamlessly without strong linear demarcation. This creates a more expansive feeling and adds visual interest throughout. Curved lines on furniture also allow for a more fluid flow of movement around a home.

Install Radiant Heating

Radiant floor heat is modestly genius: All the engineering happens below the floorboards, so that your house is kept comfortably toasty without seeing any heating pipes or grids or having dusty warm air blowing around. Not only is this an energy-efficient way to go (you might be more comfortable with your thermostat set at a lower temperature, which can save some serious cash), but it also leaves more room for furniture since you don't have to maneuver around space-hogging vents or radiators.

Put in Pocket Doors

Unlike traditional doors, which require adjacent clear space for the door swing, pocket doors quietly slide inside their recessed openings. This makes rooms feel more streamlined.



"I wanted to use off-the-shelf products as a reminder of how the house was put together."

—EDGAR PAPAIZIAN

Make Off-the-Shelf Commercial Products Look Good at Home

If you like things to look a little rough-around-the-edges, or just want a touch of industrial finesse, consider using commercial products in your home. Simple to do and easy on the wallet, these basic tips will get you started.

Use Products in Unique Ways

Take a commercial product and rethink its typical use. In the Portland house, Papazian took galvanized steel arches—used primarily for Quonset huts—and tweaked them to create multiple-step radii (in other words, really long arches). As long as your house is structurally sound (check with a structural engineer or an architect to make sure), go wild with trying out nontraditional materials in interesting ways.

Unity of Finishes

To provide a level of polish, keep all your materials consistent in their finishes. If you go with steel, for example, use it everywhere instead of mixing it with other materials. This means your door handles and plumbing fixtures should be the same finish as your metal arches, as well as floor trim and lighting. For extra credit: Match your metal inside with the roofing and exterior trim outside, as Papazian did.

Selectively Customize

Downplay the commercial aspects of some of your products for a more residential look. Papazian painted the perforated metal screen in the dining room to match the walls, and covered the structural arch bases on the second floor with carpeting to soften their hard edges. Plywood is easily painted, and you can add wallpaper or patterns to other surfaces like concrete.

Accentuate Other Aspects

In other places, however, highlight that your fittings are prefab. Exposed fasteners and bolts have that industrial-chic look and can be painted in contrasting colors or simply the same shade as their background and left visible by virtue of their shape. Leave markings on products or surfaces that tell where they're from and how they're made to let your materials speak for themselves.

Do It Well

As Papazian astutely notes, "Execution is everything. If well-assembled and fastidiously pre-detailed, even the most humble materials look intentional."



5. A solid wall was transformed into a wall of glass. A bright Egg feeder providesavian entertainment outside.

6. Inside, more curves are found in the vintage Arne Jacobsen diving chairs and the Noguchi light.

7. Lenzi and daughter Giovanna sit on FLOR carpet tiles under the Steelmaster galvanized metal beams that give the house its distinctive shape.

"It's a completely different feeling to be in a curved space than a rectilinear space."

—EDGAR PAPAZIAN

slides over surfaces instead of stopping at angles and sharp edges.

Lest the house become an architectural Hallmark card, however, there's an industrial aspect to it all. "I wanted to use off-the-shelf products as a reminder of how the house was put together," Papazian says. Metal columns anchor the house, there are exposed bolts and fasteners on the walls and arches, and inset fluorescent lighting (found more often in offices and schools than in an architect's home) illuminates the living room. If you look in the corners upstairs, there are still factory inspection stickers on the corrugated metal arches. Honest to his materials and forms, "it is what it is," Papazian says proudly. "It's a little on the rough side, and the process determined the product, in a sense."

As Giovanna gazes up at the sunlight bouncing off the metal ridges that make up the ceiling of her bedroom,

Lenzi prepares lunch downstairs, a balmy afternoon breeze blowing in through the massive sliding glass door overlooking the cedar and Douglas fir trees in the backyard. Papazian smiles at his daughter adoringly, then looks around at their house. "Doing something like this is part of what drew us to Portland," he says. "If we did this in New York or New Jersey, we would have been thrown out on our asses; it's much more closed-minded there. Here, people have a chance to think about the quality of their space and create something that's specific to them."

Finally, it seems, the family has found a place to truly call home. ♦

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