

Architectural Digest “Decor blurb style”

June marks the beginning of the East Hills neighborhood’s busy season. School has just let out for the hundreds of young families around Grand Rapids, and the nearby Cherry Park is full of residents, young and old, playing from dawn till dusk.

Tucked away behind Cherry Park sits 715 Kellogg Street, converted from its single-family origins in the early 80’s. Perched just in from the corner, the home offers stunning sunset views over the adjacent Lutheran Church, and is called home by Jessica and Paul Lamb, two Grand Rapids natives. The pair moved into the apartment in 2024, aiming to make its millennial-grey walls into a respite from the demands of the workday and a bastion for their relationship.

“Since there isn’t a lot we can change on the more permanent side of things, paint and design wise, we decided to focus entirely on the decor and feel of the apartment.” Paul said, gesturing to the large collection of -for lack of a better term- *things* around the house. The pair began furnishing the space in their eclectic style as soon as the lease was signed. Postcards, paintings, and pictures all created by friends or family adorn the walls, flanked by other prints and media that the pair have picked up (sometimes literally), throughout their almost 6 years of dating.

Highlights of the couples’ collection include a multitude of polaroid pictures, vintage National Geographic maps, including one of the red planet Mars itself, numerous animal figurines and plushes, and prints from local artists. There seems to be very little rhyme or reason, but to main designer Jessica, that’s the whole point.

“That’s what makes our house so special to us. It’s a collection of memories that all fit together without necessarily speaking the same language.” The pair don’t display anything that doesn’t have some sort of story behind it. The animal figurines were parting gifts from an old roommate, the dozens of unrelated prints and pictures are souvenirs from the couple’s travels, the pair even stole a friends’ restaurant nametag, just to enshrine their friendship forever on their walls.

In an age of home offices and unattainable starter homes, it can seem impossible for people to put down meaningful roots in their rented digs. Incorporating shared memories into the fabric of one’s design can turn an apartment from an uninspiring space defined by a landlord’s indifference into a place for rest, relaxation, and love.

Architectural Digest "Home Feature Style"

When touring apartments for their first time living together, young professionals Paul and Jessica Lamb found their diamond in the rough after an even rougher first tour.

"We had all but chosen a downtown apartment, until the touring agent took us through..." In classic leasing style, the listing agents had chosen to present pictures of a different apartment than the one on offer, landing the couple in a sticky situation. The location was perfect- near to their favorite restaurants and several school choices for Jessica, who was in her final year of teaching school. "The exterior of the building was amazing, and so were some of the more expensive apartments. But when it came to our price range, the spaces fell short. Way short."

It wasn't until the couple toured a lower-key fourplex in the heart of the East Hills neighborhood that their luck began to turn around. Nestled between the fashionable Fulton and Cherry streets, the one-bedroom, one-bath apartment jumped out immediately. It ticked many of the pair's boxes, including high ceilings, unique character, and walkable surroundings within minutes of their favorite haunts. "The house was built in 1875, but subdivided long after. It's got weird quirks thanks to that, but that's part of the reason why we liked it."

Walking up the rather steep set of stairs separating the downstairs and upstairs apartments, guests enter immediately into the home's shared living and dining space. Painted in a tasteful *Millennial Grey* by their landlord, space for the pair's extensive book collections are provided by IKEA and Ethan Allen bookshelves, and seating is anchored in the North and West corners of the room by two heirloom couches, and a prototype *Lovesac* bean bag. "We wanted to make sure we kept the room a little more playful with the bean bag." Jessica said. "It's been through several different houses between me and my sisters, and we love to soak in the afternoon sun on it after I get home from school."

For the couple, decorating the space was a practice in memory. Each item that adorns the many walls, shelves, and countertops around the house has some sort of story to tell about the past 5 years of their lives together. Keepsakes from favorite old roommates share space with thrifted or found objects that hold memories of trips from years past. "When Anni and I started dating, her bedroom at her parents house was lined with pictures of her, her friends, and her family. I remember looking for hours at those pictures and wondering about all the amazing stories they could tell. That's the same energy that we try to bring into everything we decorate with." Paul told *AD* in March.

Maneuvering through the tight hallway pinned in by coats and Paul's bike, the home's bathroom features a cast-iron tub and a single vanity. The room lacks any significant counter space, so the couple made up for it by introducing a rolling cart for all of their extra towels and toiletries. The mirrored cabinet above the sink shows signs of several previous landlord's handy work. "I'd really like to strip some of the hardware in the house." Paul told us, pointing at the original brass lock on the cabinet, "It's a shame most of the beautiful brass pieces have been covered up, they deserve to shine."

Further along the same hallway sits the pantry, which holds the couples' sundries and shopping bags, as well as a selection of cleaning supplies needed for the impressive space. Rounding the corner from the pantry we enter the final room in the house, the kitchen.

"When we came in, the kitchen was in major need of help. We had very little counter space, and what space we had is cut in half vertically by the sloping roof." The couple navigated

their architectural challenges by delegating the sloped sections to microwave duty, and taking an almost militaristic approach to kitchen clutter. They also brought in a stainless steel rolling cart, which became their coffee corner.

The couple are now approaching their second year at the house. What have they learned in the last two years? “Making space.” Paul says. “We have been so fortunate to squeeze our life into this home, and while making space to express ourselves, we have also made a space to come together.”