

JOHN & JULI BAKER

A single flight of stairs separates John and Juli Baker's business from their home environment. The founders of gallery and retail space Mjölkk live with their young children, Elodie and Howell, in the bustling Junction neighborhood of Toronto, Canada. After purchasing a three-story Victorian building located on a busy thoroughfare, the couple enlisted the help of architects Peter Tan and Christine Ho Ping Kong of Studio Junction to consolidate the top two floors into a single-family home and transform the ground floor into a retail space. "We viewed them as collaborators who could take our ideas, expand on them and make them materialize," John says. Having their boutique and living quarters in the same building has made it surprisingly easy to balance work and family: John and Juli can switch between keeping an eye on the shop and carrying out various household duties, and Elodie loves popping downstairs to interact with customers. Locally sourced materials dominate the home's landscape, including Douglas fir floors, white oak cabinets and Quebec soapstone countertops in the kitchen. The cabinetry was made with wood instead of veneer and much of the stonework was left untreated so that the materials would improve with age. "The countertops show the most interesting patina effect because you can see where we tend to work: There are dark areas where our hands rest and where we cook. We think this adds life to the home," John says. "We're not striving for perfection, as that's impossible. We simply hope these natural

materials show their value as they get more beautiful with age." Although their home was designed to be highly functional and accommodate their family's natural movements, John and Juli added a couple of "emotional elements" for enjoyment instead of efficiency, including a hinoki cedar bathtub they love to relax in after putting in long days at work. "Being able to soak in a wood tub after a hard day is a great stress reliever and will add some years to our lives," John says. "When we think of home, we don't just think in terms of functional interior design: The moments we have in that space with our family help to shape our ideas." An area that combines practicality with pleasure is their expansive third-floor courtyard that opens out to the sky and is separated from the house by glass windows. It's a nice substitute for a suburban backyard and gives the kids a safe space in which to run around and play. "Living in a city where we're constantly stimulated by noise and energy can feel overwhelming at times," John says. "Our home is a sanctuary away from the bustle of the city—a place to disconnect from the outside world and be safe to engage in the things that make us happy." By blending clean and efficient design with relaxing spaces, John and Juli have created an abode that will positively shape their work-life balance for years to come.

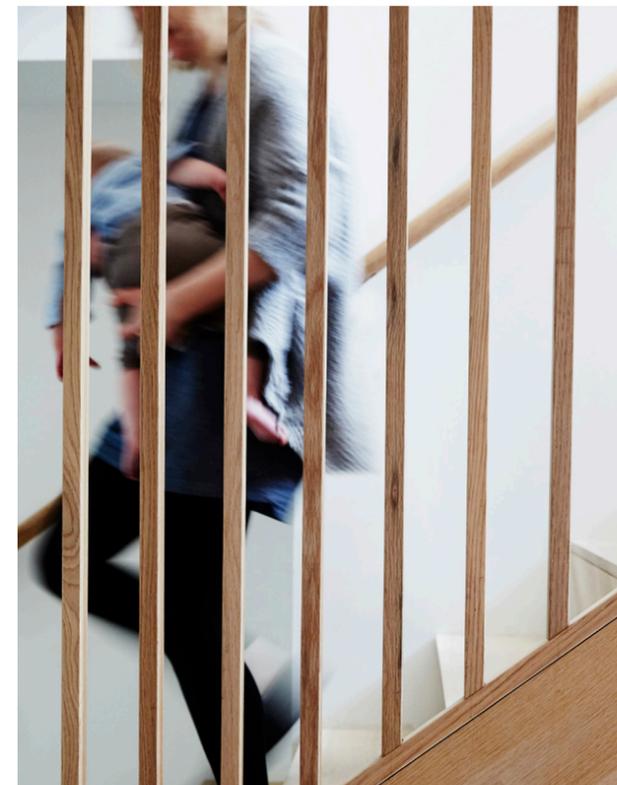
In the following essay on page 28, we consider the best ways to disconnect at the end of the day when your workplace and home are one and the same.





Above: The blue and white painting is by Junpei Ori. John and Juli are both fond of her work, which is inspired by Scandinavian culture and design.

Following Pages: Some of their favorite books to read to their young daughter, Elodie, are *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak, *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch and Michael Martchenko and *There's No Such Thing as a Dragon* by Jack Kent.







Above: John has been studying the craft of Japanese tea ceremonies for some time. He uses a cast-iron kettle, an electric brazier, a *mizusashi* (clear water jar), a *kensui* (water container), a *chawan* (tea bowl) and a bamboo ladle to prepare the tea.

Right: Some of the couple's favorite culinary items include kitchenware designed by Oji Masanori and a copper and brass coffee dripper by Japanese company Hario.

BUILDING A BALANCE

Switching off from work after hours is difficult when your office is also your living room. Reserving a time and space for other pursuits can help you focus on making the most of both work and play.

For those who work from home, maintaining a separation between the two ways of thinking can seem near impossible. Still, this hasn't stopped many from trying: Virginia Woolf kept a writing lodge at the bottom of her garden, Mark Twain wrote in a study so isolated from the rest of his house that his family had to summon him using a horn, and Norman Mailer went so far as to construct a "crow's nest" for writing in his Brooklyn town house—it was separated from the rest of the family residence by a three-story drop and accessible only via a gangplank.

This wasn't due to a lack of physical space: In all three cases, there was no shortage of rooms inside the houses where the authors could've chosen to write. Instead, it seems to hint at the desire for psychological space, a means of drawing a line—or, for Mailer, a vertigo-inducing chasm—between the professional and domestic spheres.

Because it's so tempting to view the lives of artists, writers, musicians, inventors, scientists or any of the greats exclusively through the lens of their work, we often forget that they also cultivated interests outside of their careers. Even those—or perhaps *especially* those—who are consumed by their craft need respite from it. Nowhere does this become more apparent than in the home.

For example, Woolf wasn't only a gifted novelist but also a nature lover with a keen eye for color. This was expressed in her writing through vivid descriptions of the natural world and also in the elaborate garden she tended with her husband at their Sussex home. She described their plot—complete with orchards and several greenhouses—as "the pride of their hearts." In 1920, she wrote that weeding produced "a queer sort of enthusiasm which made her say *this is happiness*."

On the other hand, Mailer was a sports fanatic eager to develop his own athleticism whenever he had the chance. His love of sailing was so

great that he had his New York apartment remodeled in the image of a ship's cabin, complete with a hammock and rope ladders.

Meanwhile, Twain became legendary for his marathon billiards sessions, apparently dedicating up to nine hours a day to the game along with a significant amount of floor space in his Hartford home. He reportedly told a friend, "I walk not less than 10 miles every day with the cue in my hand." Having designed the house from scratch, he thought of the place less as a structure and more as another member of the family, writing, "To us, our house was not insentient matter—it had a heart, and a soul, and eyes to see us with."

While these writers' homes served in part as places to work, they also became places to retreat from it—spaces to nurture and practice the many other aspects of their lives.

Of course, we can't all afford to turn our homes into shrines to our interests: Budding sommeliers often have to forgo an underground cellar in favor of an IKEA closet full of wine crates, and would-be Julia Child protégés struggle with the logistics of serving a three-course meal on a one-square-foot coffee table. But the idea of creating an oasis in our homes—a place to escape from the daily grind—is one we can all strive for (even if our orchard is just a small window box, or our ship's cabin is a toy boat on the edge of the bathtub).

Ultimately, when we're able to switch off and leave our jobs at the door, we allow ourselves to put on our other hats—of friend, roommate, parent, partner, cook or gardener. These roles may not pay their share of the rent, and their audience may be smaller, but they're no less essential to who we are. When our house not only protects us from the elements but also fosters the many facets of our identity, that's when we know we're really, truly, home.