

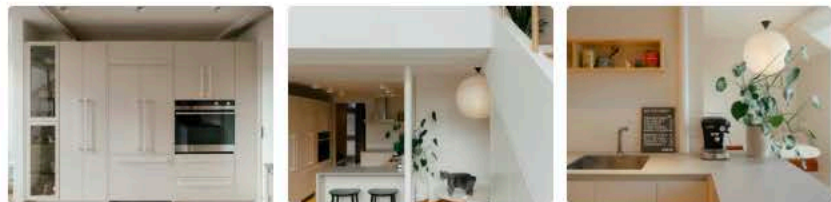
Dwell+ Exclusive

Budget Breakdown: A Work-From-Home Couple Reenvision a Loft for \$291K. The Office Steals the Show

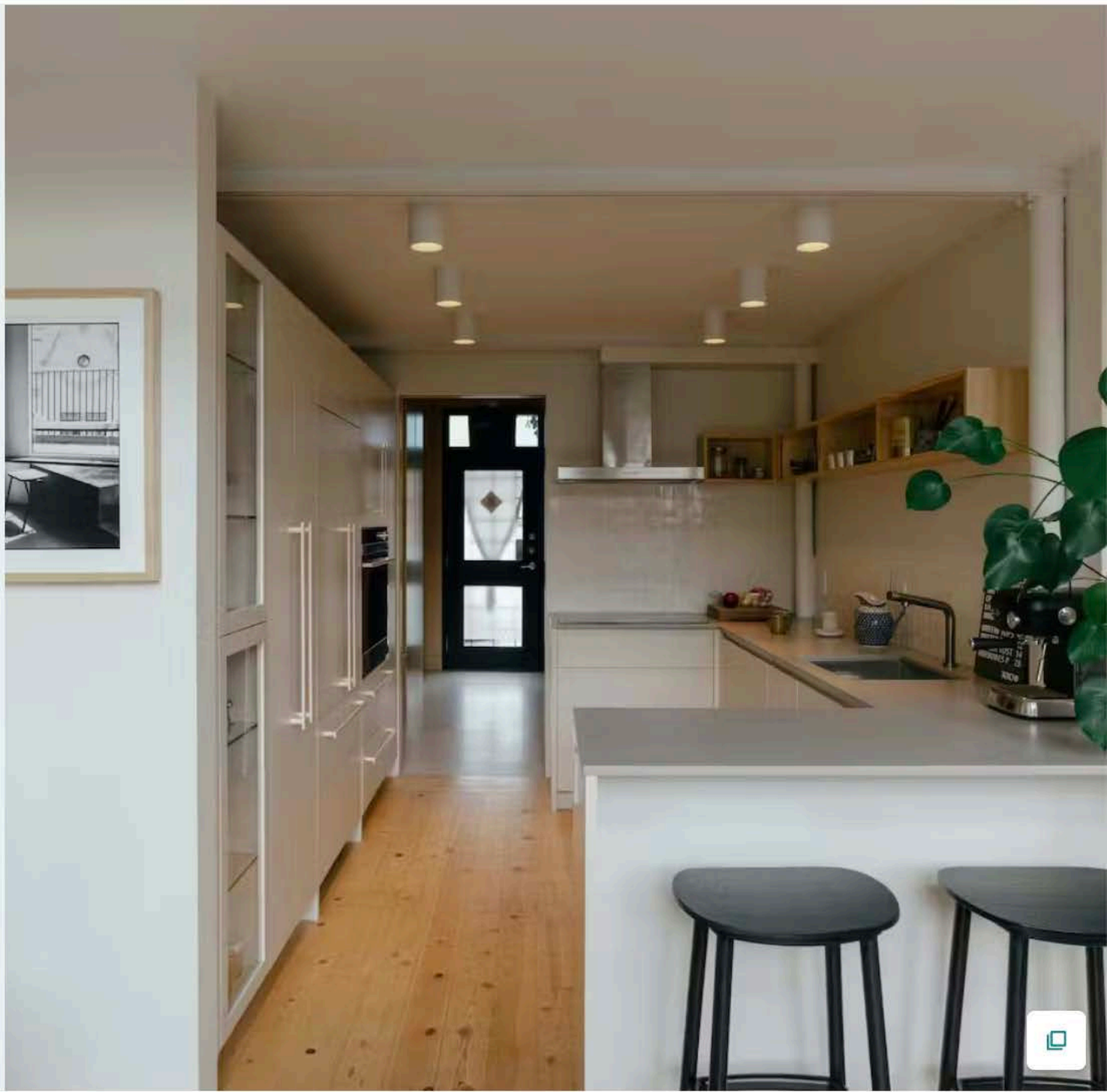
Amy and Tomasz run their photography business from a maple plywood workspace hung with Japanese noren curtains in their sub-1,000-square-foot flat.

Text by

Rachel Gallaher

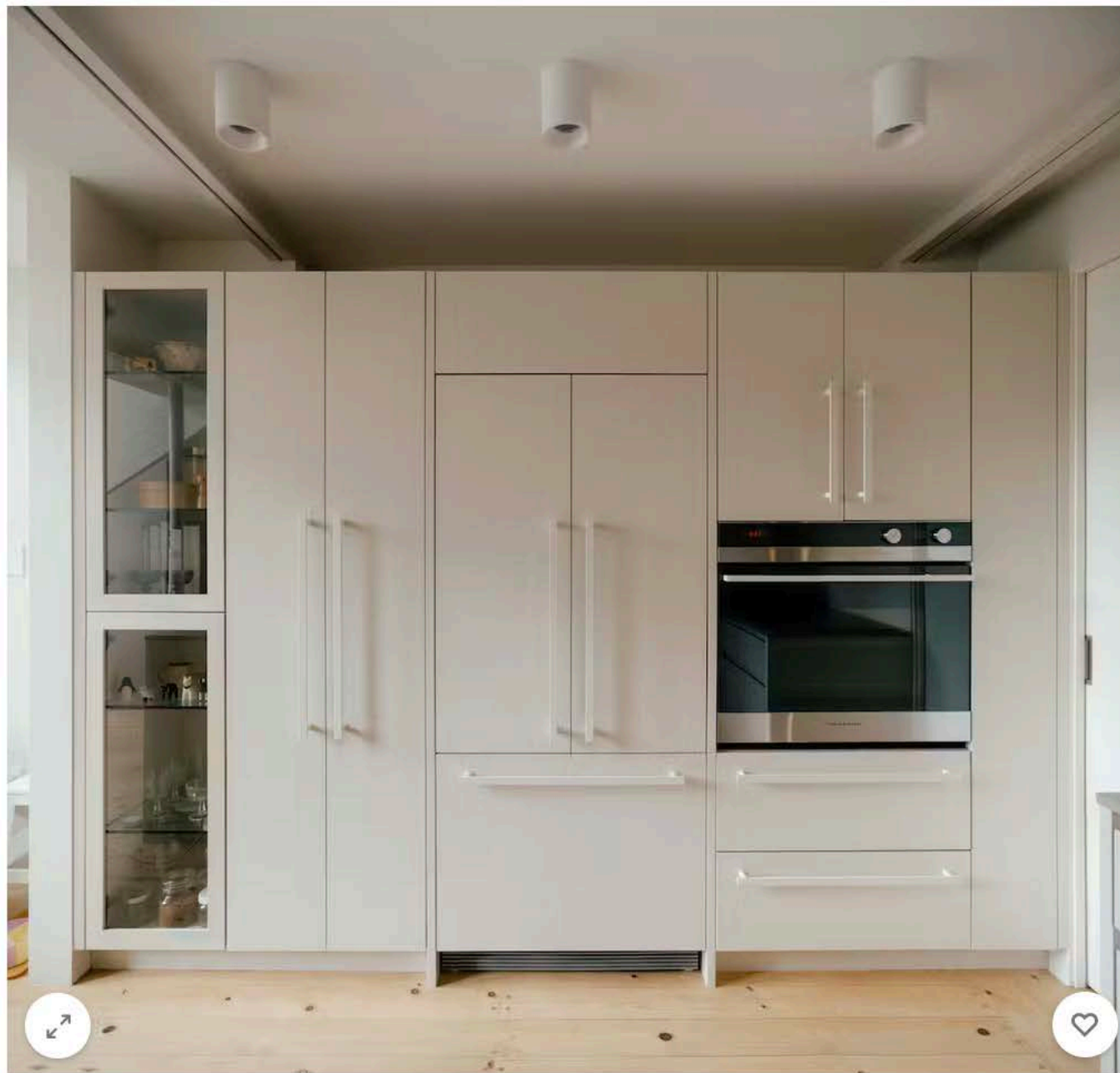


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Tomasz Wagner and Amy Tran first saw their current home from the window of the apartment complex next door. Partners in life and work—the couple run a lifestyle and wedding photography company in Vancouver, B.C.—they were residing in a live/work space in the False Creek neighborhood and noticed a loft was going up for sale, a space dated to 1996 that had previously been used by a woodworker.

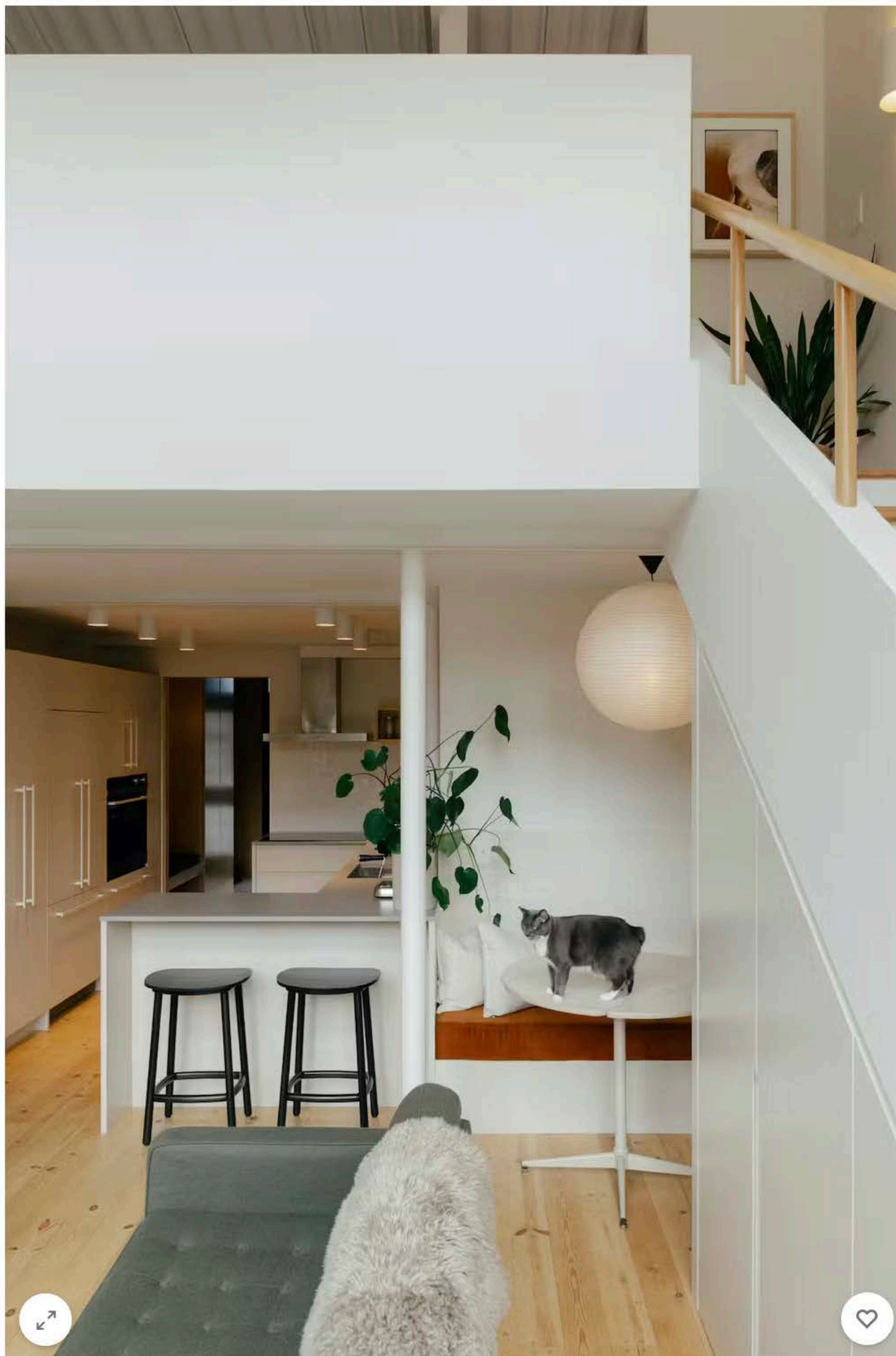
The layout wasn't optimal—the kitchen sat just inside the front door, the laundry area was inexplicably large, and a mezzanine, presumably the future bedroom, had no bathroom. Still, Amy and Tomasz shared a vision of a compact home with a creative studio. "We were drawn to the double-height ceilings and all the natural light," Tomasz says. "It's located on the top floor and opens up to a common area with a garden. We wanted a patio or outdoor space, and this allowed us to have that without tripling our budget to get a house."



Tomasz Wagner and Amy Tran renovated a 938-square-foot loft in the False Creek neighborhood of Vancouver, British Columbia, into a live/work space. The kitchen, as with the rest of the flat, features customized MDF cabinetry.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

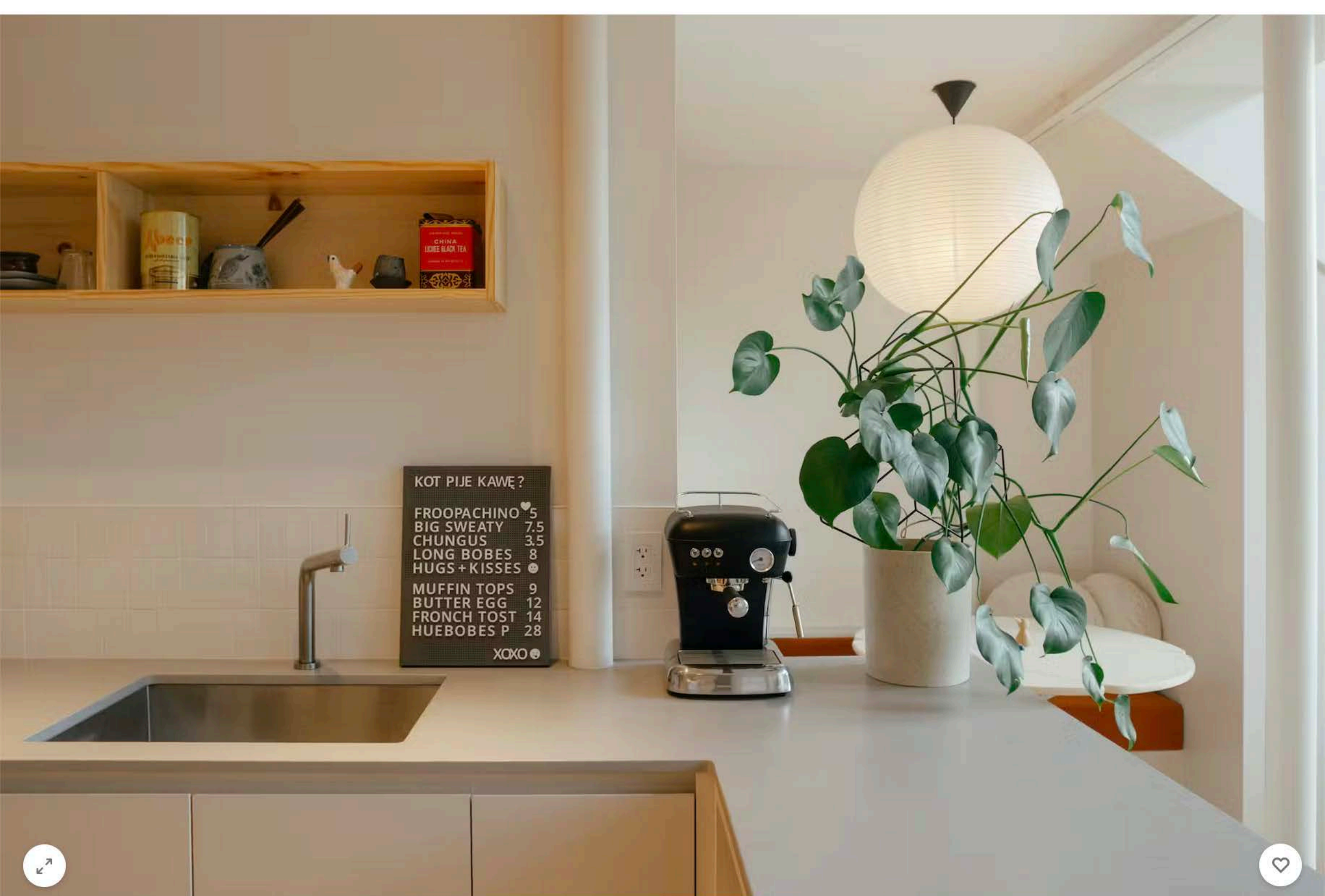
Photo Categories: [kitchen](#), [ceiling lighting](#), [refrigerator](#), [light hardwood floors](#), [wall oven](#)



The couple's cat, Gustavo, or Gus, hangs out in the dining nook. "They weren't super concerned about having a huge dining table," says Emma Sims, who runs design studio &Daughters with Darcy Hanna. "But we wanted to give them some dedicated space for dining." It is now one of Amy's favorite places in the home, she says.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

Photo Categories: [living room](#), [stools](#), [table](#), [bench](#), [pendant lighting](#), [sofa](#), [ceiling lighting](#), [light hardwood floors](#)



Hanna and Sims chose Caesarstone counters for its durability. Open shelving provides a place for Amy and Tomasz to display pieces picked up around the world.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

Photo Categories: kitchen, wood cabinets, ceiling lighting, drop in sinks, beverage center, open cabinets, ceramic tile backsplashes

He and Amy moved in in October 2018, living there for three years before embarking on a renovation. With an initial budget of \$185,000 *[All expenses have been converted from Canadian dollars to USD]*, they wanted to maintain the 938-square-foot home’s live/work elements but rearrange the zones to better fit their lifestyle, which includes two cats, Baloo and Gus. Working with Darcy Hanna and Emma Sims of Vancouver design studio &Daughters (Tomasz photographed Hanna’s wedding in 2016), the couple transformed the front section of the unit from a kitchen to a studio, moved the kitchen to the living zone, and added a bathroom to the mezzanine for a complete primary suite.

\$590 Site Work	\$314 Foundation	\$4,430 Structural
\$26,478 Wall Finishes	\$7,974 Flooring	\$2,510 Roofing
\$1,477 Hardware	\$23,035 Electrical	\$14,397 Plumbing
\$350 HVAC	\$4,060 Kitchen & Bath Fixtures	\$8,195 Countertops
\$3,278 Windows & Glazing	\$88,963 Millwork	\$9,745 Tilework
\$58,324 Labor	\$26,430 General Contractor Fee	\$1,624 Demolition
\$4,134 Fire Suppression	\$4,208 Low Voltage	
Grand Total: \$290,516		

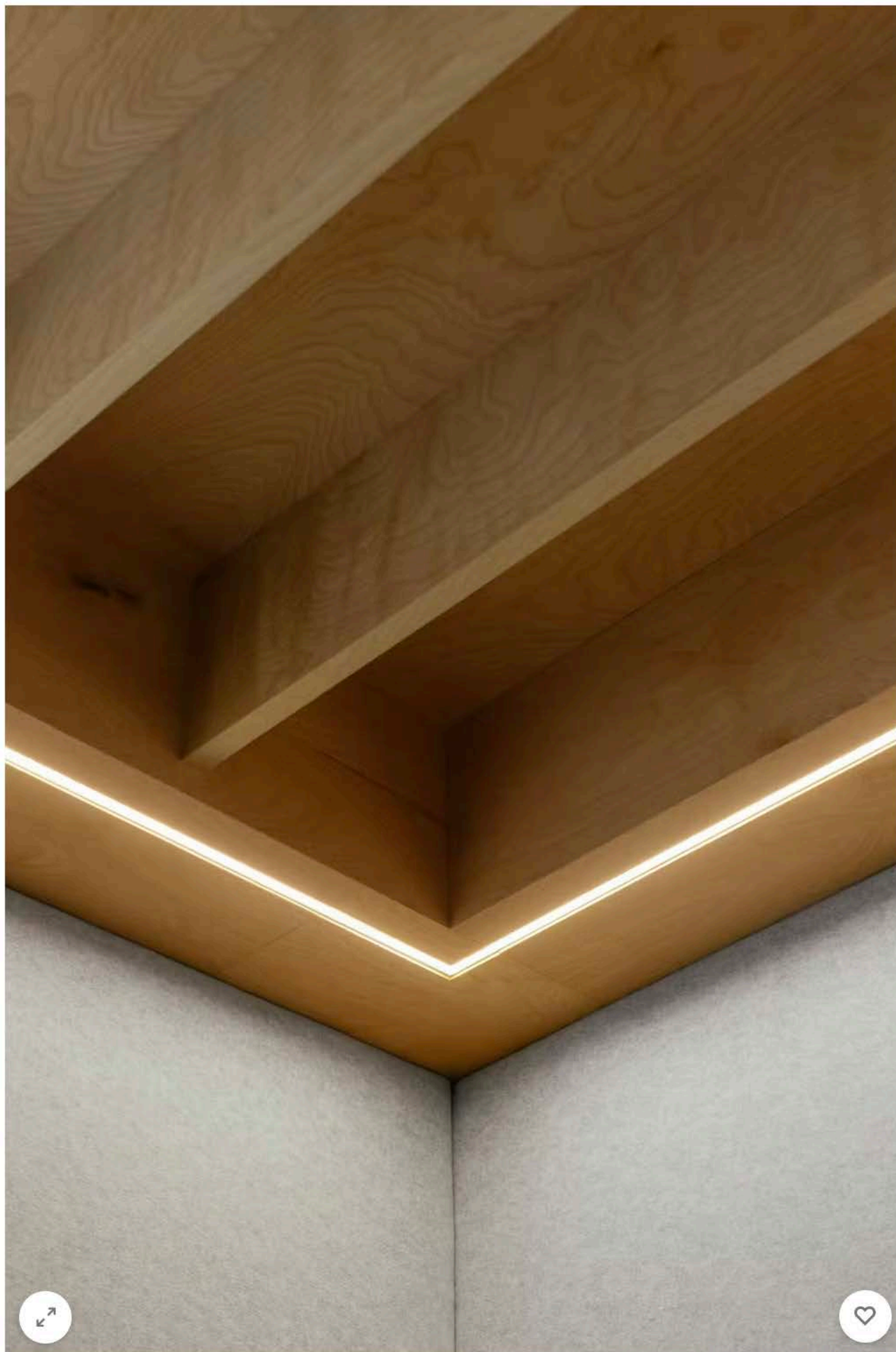
"Amy and Tomasz wanted to position their studio at the front of their home," Hanna says. "They didn't want it to feel like people were entering directly into their private domain, but still wanted a connected workspace. They used words like 'calm' and 'nestlike' to describe what they envisioned." The room is clad in maple plywood stained in a rich honey tone that creates a sense of coziness. Amy and Tomasz's desks are tucked away on a rounded platform enclosed by Japanese noren curtains, which provides a semi-private area to meet clients or host industry-related events. "The office was a splurge," says Amy. "I knew I would be spending a lot of time there, and I wanted our work environment to be cozy. I'm happiest when curled up in a blanket." The bathroom off the new office area, previously little more than a spartan shower, toilet, and sink, is now a powder room with green tile and white cabinetry.



When it came to the studio, Amy had a vision of a small cabin inside a larger space. Working that into a reality, &Daughters designed a raised, built-in structure for Amy and Tomasz's workspace. The plywood rectangle with the cutout conceals a litter box.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

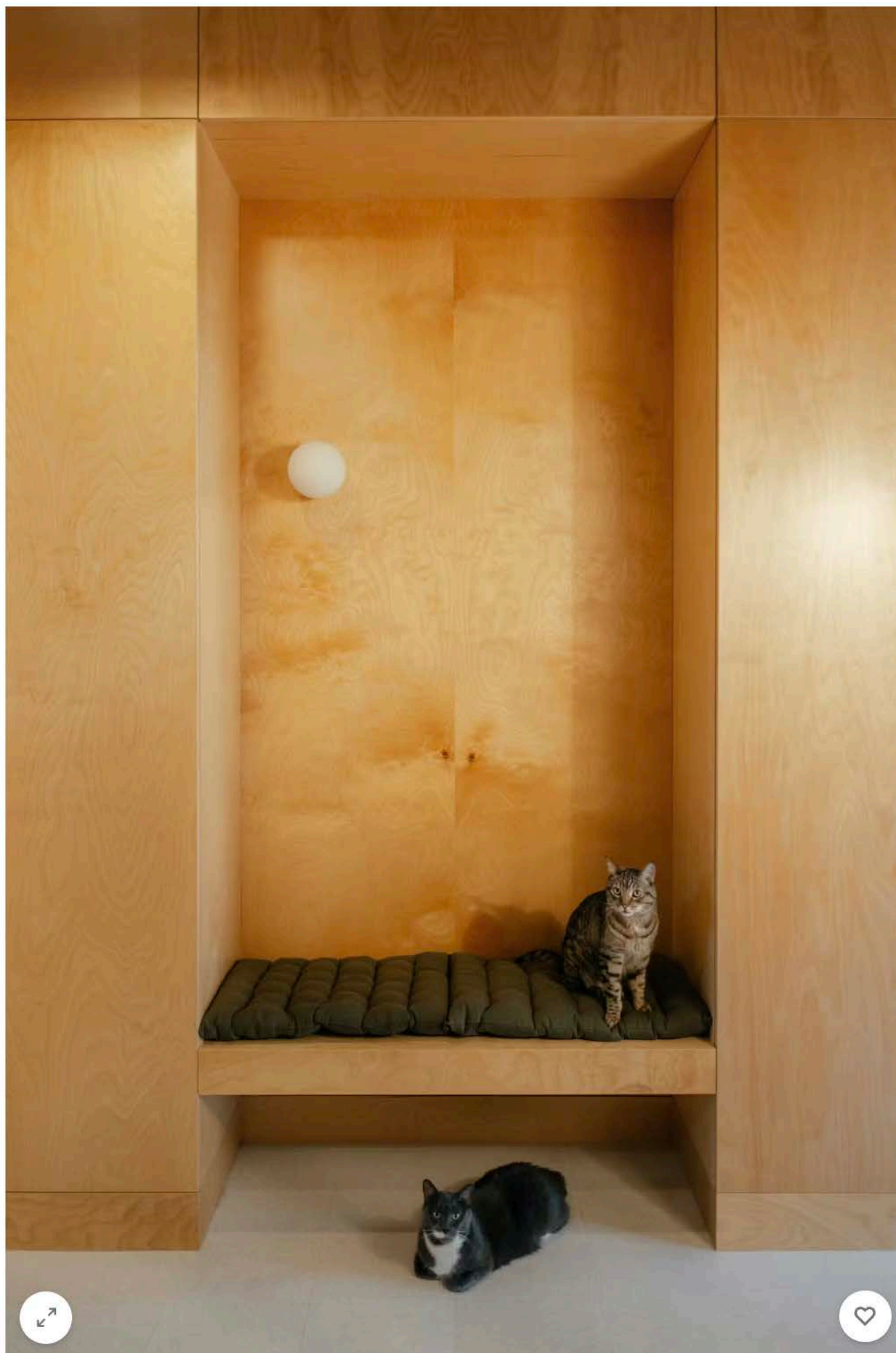
Photo Categories: office, light hardwood floors, storage, study room type, desk



The office features recessed strip lighting.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

Photo Categories: [office](#), [study room type](#)



The built-in bench in the studio is one of Baloo and Gus's favorite spots to hang out, says Amy.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

Photo Categories: office, concrete floors, study room type



The original bathroom was spartan and industrial, with little more than a cheap shower, sink, and toilet. Hanna and Sims updated it for a clean, modern look.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

Photo Categories: bath room, pedestal sinks, glass tile walls

Millwork, including custom cabinetry in the kitchen, was the highest ticket item in the project, coming in at roughly \$89,000. Limited square footage made storage a high priority. In addition to ample floor-to-ceiling cabinets in the studio, Sims and Hanna utilized under-stair space for more cabinetry and a hidden niche for cat litter boxes with a cutout for Gus and Baloo to come and go. Upstairs, a custom floor-to-ceiling wardrobe in pine spans half the bedroom wall.

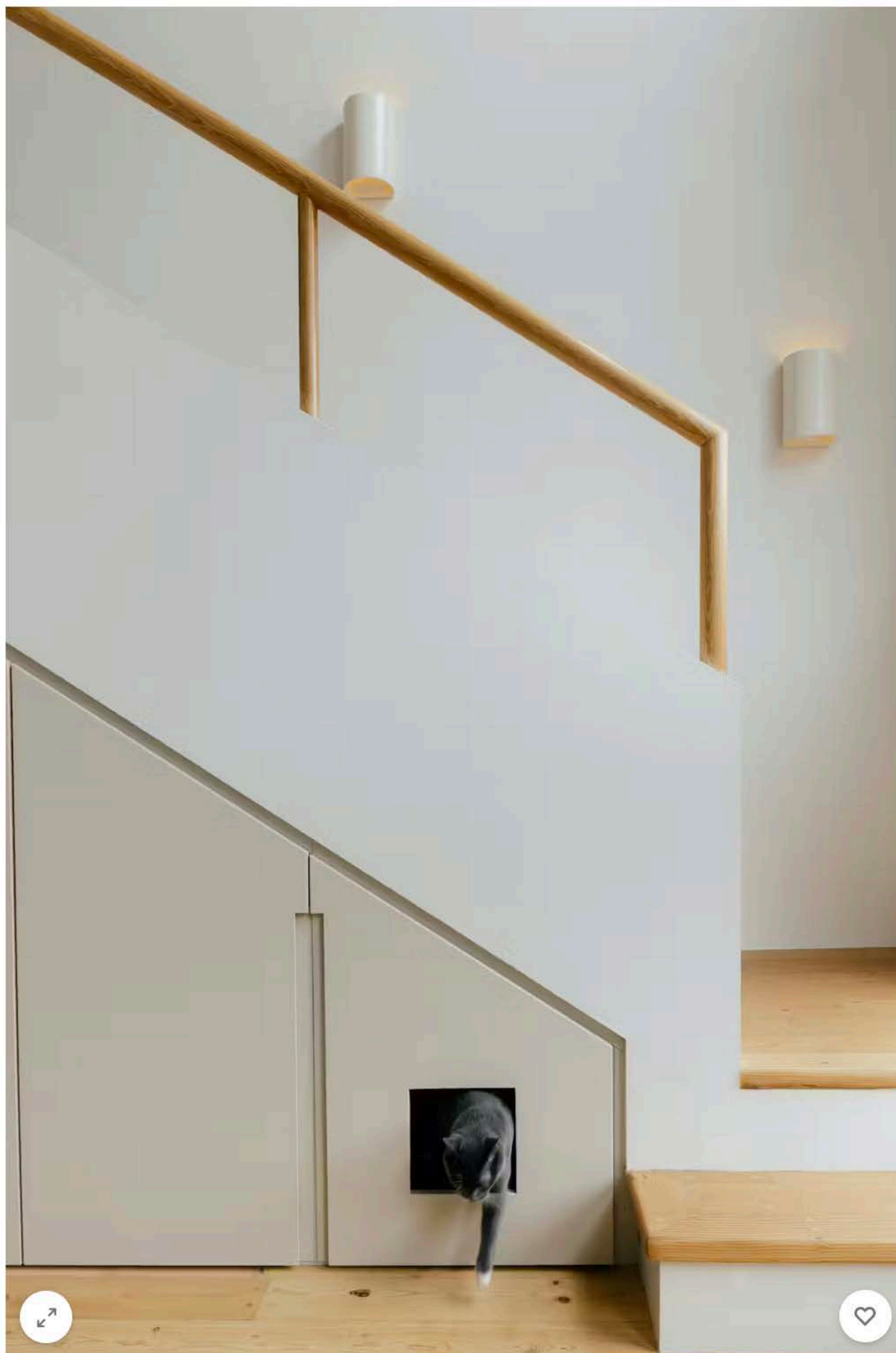
A pocket door separates the studio from the living zone, which includes the kitchen, a sitting area, and a small dining nook tucked under the stairs. "I spend more time than I expected working in that nook," Amy says. The kitchen's Caesarstone counters are shaped in a horseshoe (these and the bathroom vanities came to around \$8,200), with one end serving as a bar. "We were able to add a lot of under-counter storage, which helps keep the space as open and light as possible," Hanna says.



A glass-enclosed module at the end of the bank of kitchen cabinets gives Tomasz and Amy space to display souvenirs.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

Photo Categories: storage room, cabinet storage type, shelves storage type



In a small space with two cats, litter box solutions were top of mind. Hanna and Sims created unobtrusive solutions, like this under-stair cabinet with a cutout.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

Photo Categories: staircase, wood railing, wood tread

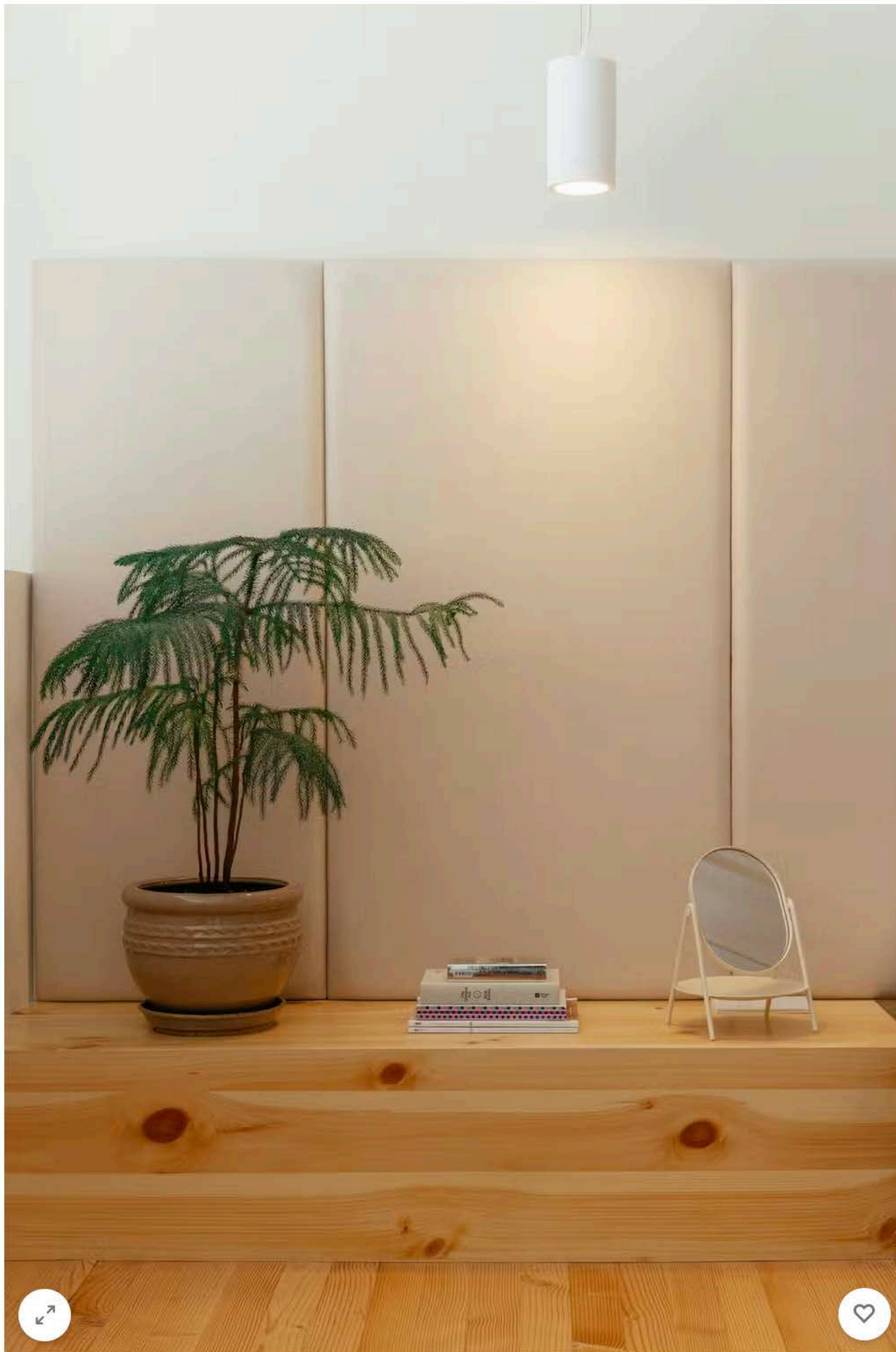


The loft gets lots of natural daylight through three rows of windows. The stairway to the mezzanine originally had open treads, but Sims and Hanna closed them off to utilize the area underneath for storage. A new wooden dowel handrail complements the original pine floors.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

Photo Categories: living room, accent lighting, wall lighting, light hardwood floors, storage, sofa

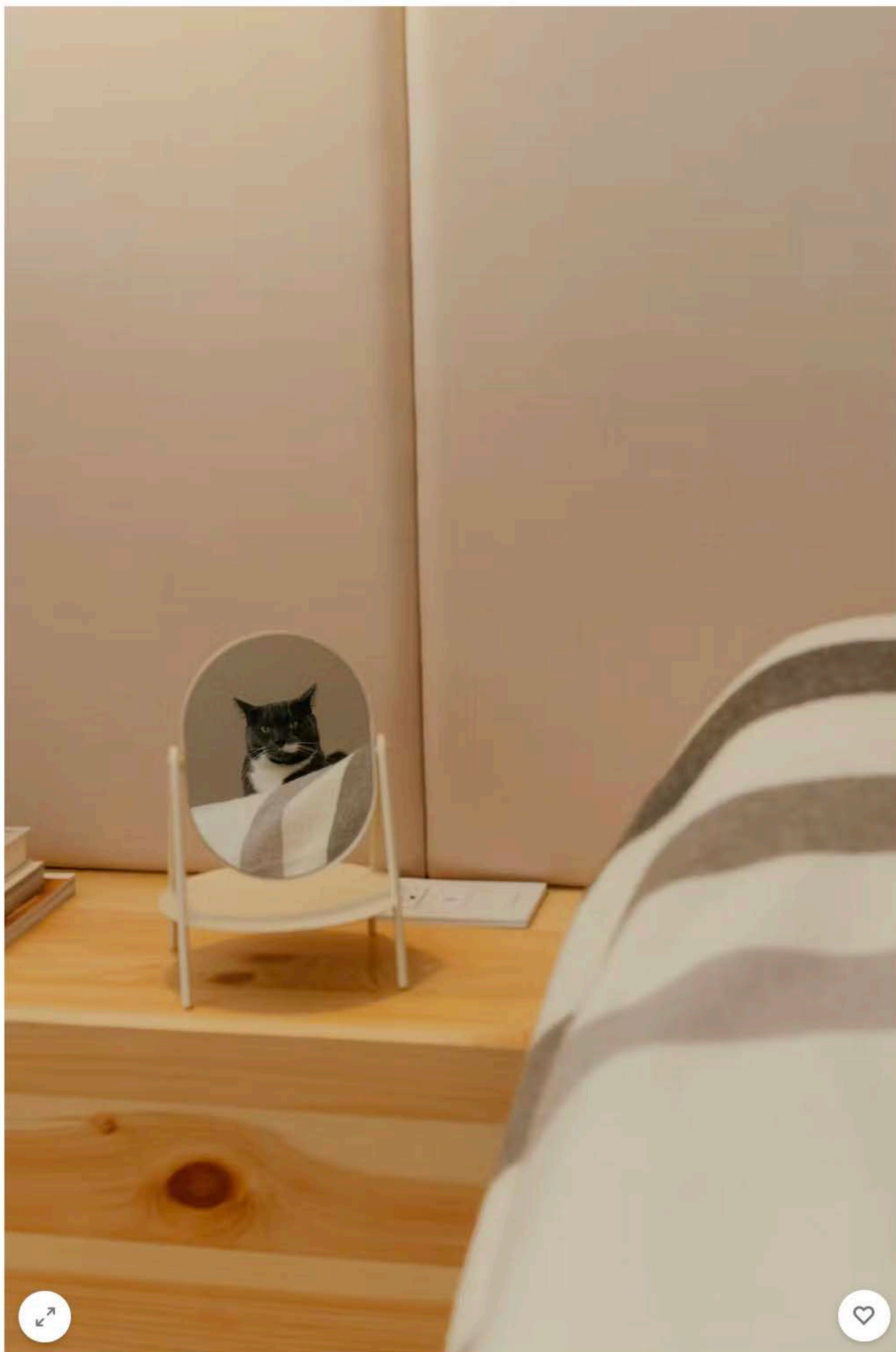
Upstairs, she and Sims closed off the north side of the mezzanine and added a new bathroom to create a full primary suite. "That side of the loft used to look down to the studio," Sims says, "but now there's a pocket door they can slide shut when they want to feel disconnected from the world." The new bathroom contrasts the home with dark and moody finishes, like silver soapstone and dark glass tile in the open shower. Ceramic floor tile and plastered walls round out the room. Tomasz and Amy liked the existing pine floors for their warmth, so Hanna and Sims found savings by refinishing them for \$10,800.



In the primary bedroom, pink upholstered wall panels dampen sounds and soften the space visually.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

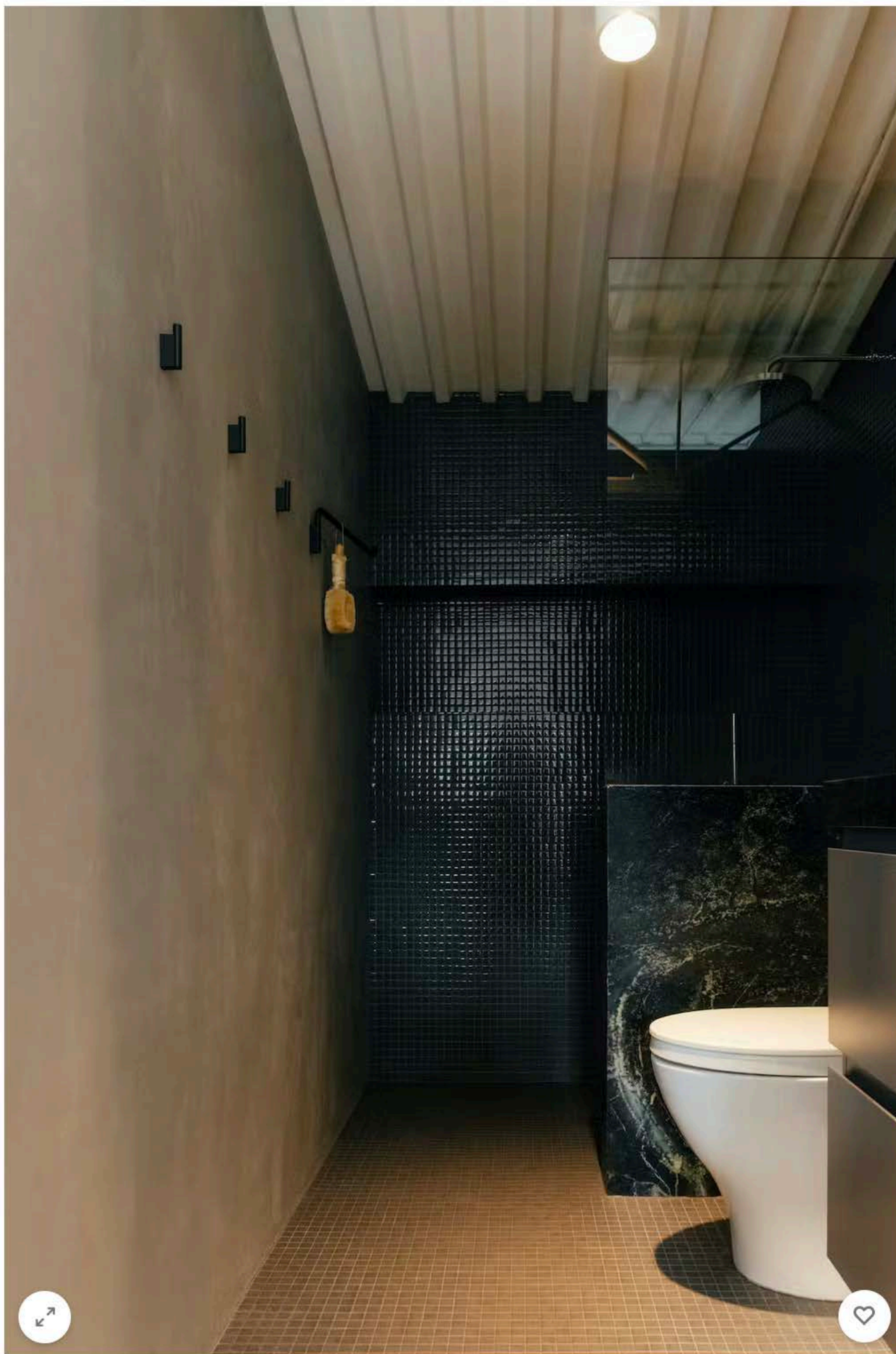
Photo Categories: bedroom, ceiling lighting, pendant lighting, bench, light hardwood floors



Gus gets ready for his close-up in the bedroom. In addition to its acoustic-dampening properties, the upholstered wall panel doubles as a headboard.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

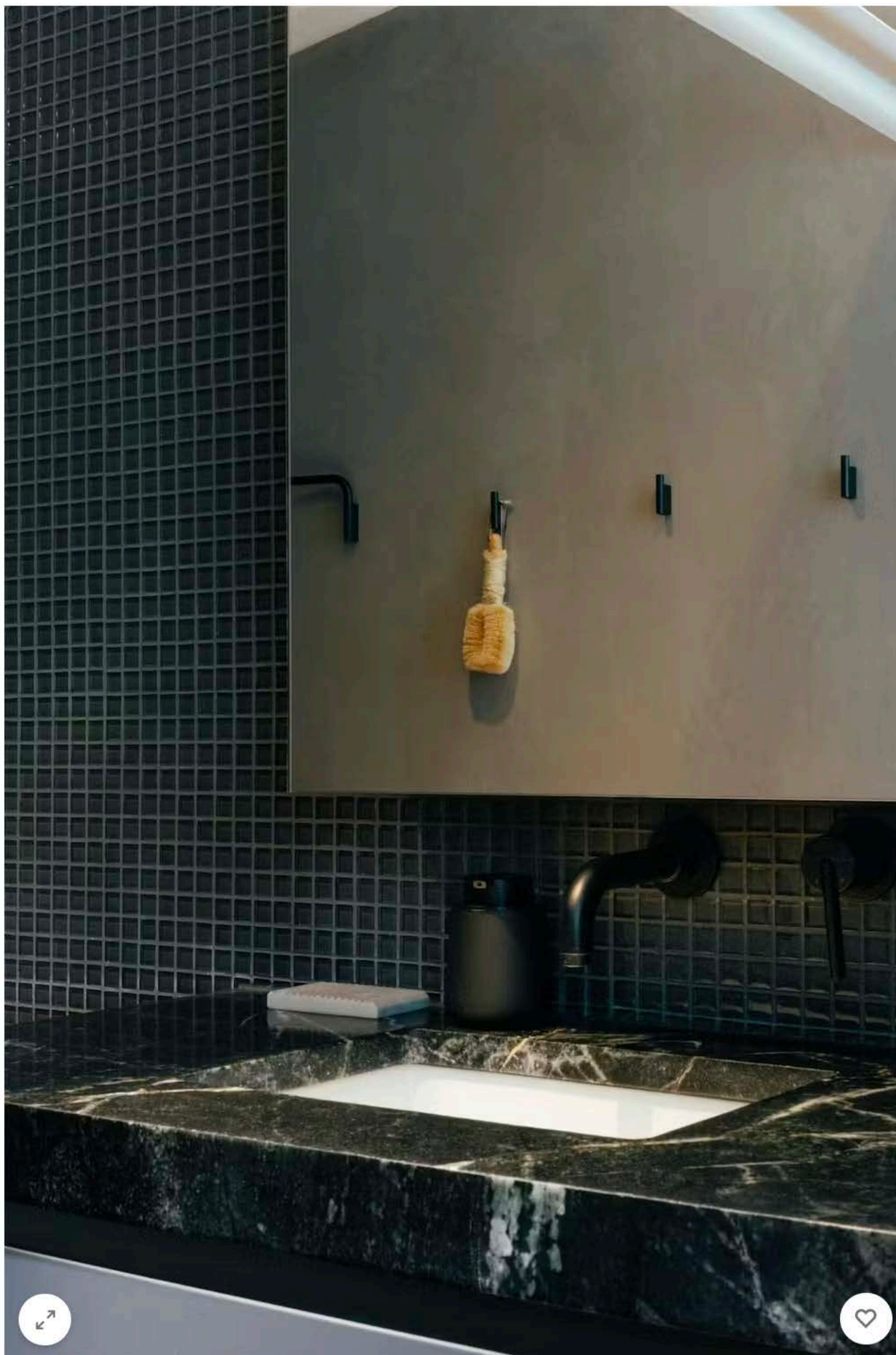
Photo Categories: bedroom, light hardwood floors, bed



A plaster wall and tan ceramic floor tile in the primary bathroom help lighten the space while adding texture. The designers kept the original corrugated metal ceiling, opting to paint it white.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

Photo Categories: bath room, glass tile walls, ceramic tile floors, ceiling lighting, open showers, marble counters, one piece toilets



The new primary bathroom includes dramatic silver soapstone countertops and a wall finished in dark glass tile.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

Photo Categories: bath room, ceramic tile walls, drop in sinks, glass tile walls, marble counters



The moody tiled shower in the primary bathroom is homeowner Tomasz Wagner's favorite spot in the home. "I have yelled to Amy, 'I love this shower!' while I'm in there," he admits.

Photo by Tomasz Wagner

Photo Categories: bath room, ceramic tile walls, open showers, glass tile walls

As with most construction during the pandemic, the cost of labor and materials rose as the project moved forward. Rather than cut corners or rethink the proposal, Amy and Tomasz (who had bumped their budget to \$220,000 after finalizing a contractor) insisted that the project continue as planned, even though the final costs totaled \$290,516. "We wanted to honor Emma and Darcy's vision," Amy says. "We felt so indebted to them it was important to make sure that what they put forward could come to life."

For the couple, having their office and home under one roof was worth the price. "We used to work in a space that was integrated with our living area, and that wasn't ideal for us," says Tomasz. "To be able to keep all of our equipment in the studio, close the door at the end of the day, and escape into our home helps us keep balanced."

False Creek Loft

ARCHITECT [&Daughters](#)
LOCATION [Vancouver, B.C.](#)



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Project Credits:

Designer: &Daughters / @and_daughters

Contractor: Marino General Contracting

Millwork: InGrain Custom Millwork

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