

# Downtown Revival



There's excitement brewing in the downtown real estate market. With new lofts and condos going up everyday, we decided to take a look into two of the city's best.

Minimalism is the overriding design choice in this downtown loft.

The Race Street building houses Aronoff Gallery on the first floor and a loft above.



It may be hard to tell from street level, but there are a lot of exquisite living spaces downtown. Above stores and tucked away in converted warehouses, you'll find lofts and apartments where the interior design rivals the best homes in Greater Cincinnati. These are spaces with stunning architecture and as many styles as there are owners. While some downtown residences have a distinctly urban feel, you'll also find more classic design choices and interiors that defy any label. Here's a look inside two of our favorites.

## Modern Retreat

There's a very calm feeling inside the downtown loft of Leslie Aronoff and Condy Beavers. It's a large 2,700 square foot space that's stark and modern. You'll find yourself perusing the artwork and enjoying the brightness provided by the oversized windows, skylights and perfectly placed lighting. With the minimalist approach Leslie has taken for the interior design, it's hard to imagine the chaotic state of disrepair the space was in just over a year ago. ►



An inexpensive Ikea lamp is the perfect touch for the first-floor entryway.



There's plenty of open space within the 2,700 square foot floor plan.

Today the Race Street building where the couple lives houses their art gallery (see Gallery Hopping, page 37) on the first floor and living space on the second. It's a setup Leslie and Condy have been after for years, scouting for the perfect piece of downtown property. "Every time we drove by this building we loved it, but it never occurred to us that we'd buy it," Leslie says. Then fate stepped in, and the historic structure went up for sale. The couple knew they had to act fast, so they bought the building despite the need for a complete overhaul.

The sale was finalized in January 2003, and the couple moved in just over six months later.



Oversized windows provide city views and ample natural light.



Dimitri has his own pet door into "his room," which doubles as Leslie Aronoff's 10x12 foot closet.

It was a fast turnaround that Leslie attributes to Condy's role as an "expert rehabber" who has tackled other downtown buildings. At the time of purchase, the building's first floor was occupied by a dentist office while the second was without plumbing, electricity and walls. Now gorgeous windows and skylights were bricked up and boarded over—miraculously only two panes of glass were broken in the unearthing process. "We just had the vision of what we wanted to do with it," Condy says. "And that it would take the building beyond what we bought."

Now the clean white space features gorgeous hardwood floors, original tin

"We just had the vision of what we wanted to do with it."

ceilings and ample storage space. Leslie's closet alone measures 10x12 feet—the size of a room in some small homes. The space doubles as a bedroom for a beloved cat named Dimitri who has his own pet door into the closet that's complete with molding. Another clever element is the raised stainless steel bowl that serves as the bathroom sink. Instead of paying hundreds of dollars for the fixture, the couple had a plumber drill a drain into the bottom of a \$10 mixing bowl.

"I still thank Condy," Leslie says about the space. "He had always told me he was going to build me the loft of my dreams and he did." ▶



A \$10 mixing bowl was transformed into a designer sink.

### Gallery Hopping

A new addition to the downtown art scene, the Aronoff Gallery carries everything from Old Master paintings to early Modern abstractions. You won't find work by local artists, but there is a great deal else to choose from. "It's an eclectic mix of national, international and regional works," says co-owner Leslie Aronoff. "A lot of ethnic pieces." The gallery is located at 807 Race Street and open from noon to 5 p.m., Wednesday through Saturday or by appointment. For more information, call (513) 621-7400 or e-mail aronoffgallery@fuse.net.



The kitchen is bright and airy thanks to a large skylight overhead.

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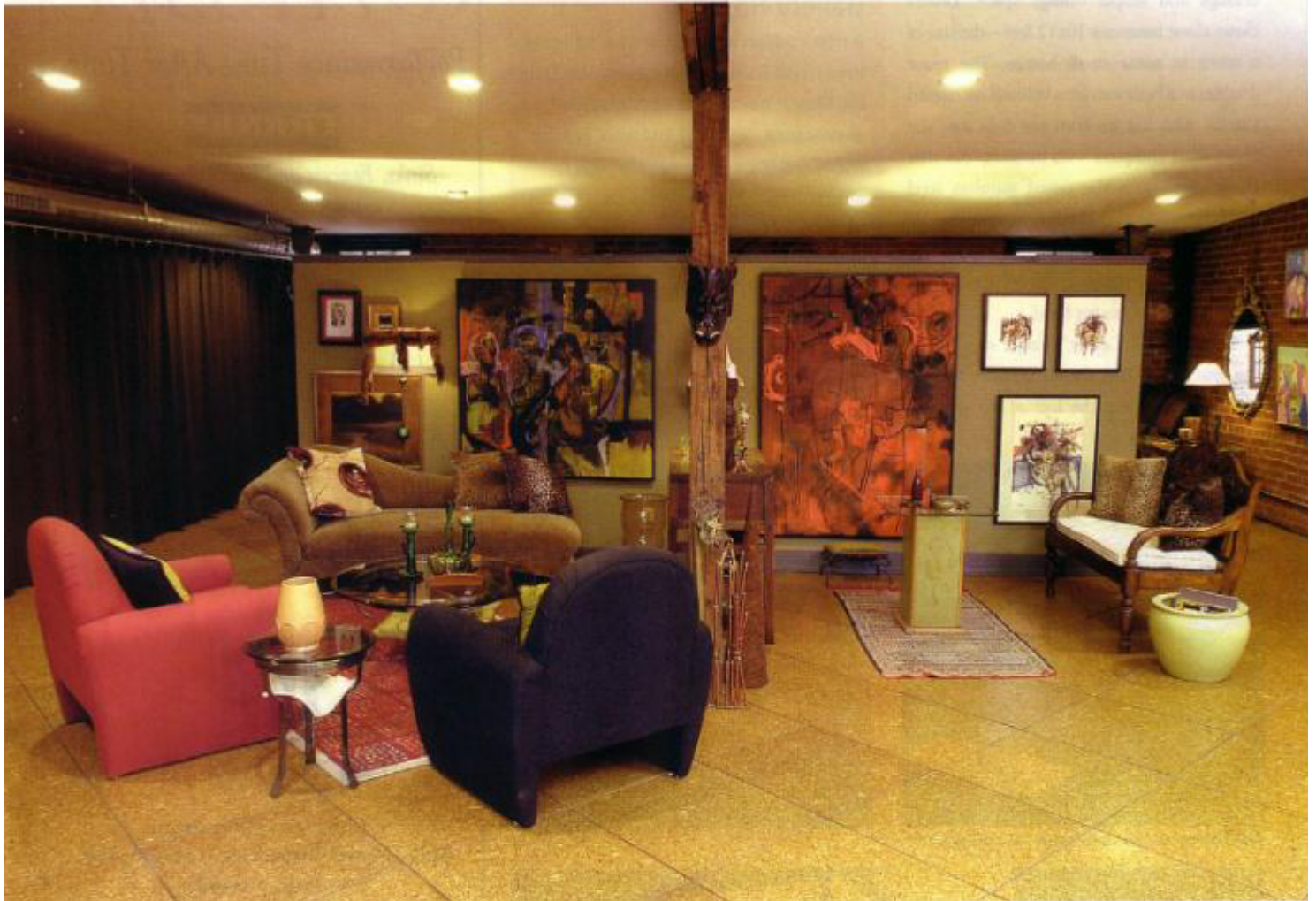


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"We just had the vision of what we wanted to do with it."



The living room effortlessly mixes antique and contemporary furniture with a wide variety of artwork.

## Individual Style

In many ways, Keith Mueller's home is exactly what you'd expect from a downtown loft. There are exposed brick walls, wooden beams and metal ductwork. The floor plan is open and two skylights provide natural light. It's the interior design choices that really surprise. Keith has effortlessly mixed together seemingly disparate elements: antique and contemporary furniture, a flamingo collection with fine pottery and glassware, and bold paint colors with even bolder artwork.

Once you step inside, however, it's clear that somehow it all works together. The feel is warm, inviting and eclectic. As owner of Flowers & Beyond, Keith's talent as a flower designer seems to have served him well here. "A friend of mine and her husband had this space, and I've always liked it," he says. "The minute they moved out, I moved in." He replaced the white paint with bolder choices



These flamingos are just a few of the 400 in Keith Mueller's collection.



says. "You really don't hear the sounds of the city. The first night I spent up here I almost couldn't sleep because it was so quiet." **Design**

### Sources:

Leslie Aronoff and Condy Beavers: Andy's Mirror and Glass (office partition), (513) 242-9250. / Aronoff Gallery (artwork), (513) 621-7400. / Contemporary Galleries (furniture), (513) 621-3113. / Graham's Glass (mirrored wall), (859) 525-1221. / Wichman Gunther Architects, Mark Gunther, (513) 241-9933. / Recker & Boerger (appliances) (513) 942-4411. / West Elm (furniture and accessories), [www.westelm.com](http://www.westelm.com).

Keith Mueller: Burlington Flea Market, Tony Pham, (513) 922-6847. / Crate and Barrel, [www.crateandbarrel.com](http://www.crateandbarrel.com). / Mainly Art, (513) 751-2181. / Pottery Barn, (513) 793-1131. / Z Gallerie, (513) 631-7900.



like deep orange and green. It only took him a few days to arrange the furniture and artwork to his liking.

A driving force in the space is definitely Keith's collections. Most prominent are his 400 flamingos—everything from paintings to lampshades to figurines—only about half of which are on display in the loft. Keith got his first pair of flamingos from his grandmother and says he's drawn to the birds' color and graceful stance. He also collects colorful Blinko glassware and has a set of green Russel Wright dishes.

Paintings are grouped and displayed in vignettes, which help define rooms within the open floor plan. "I didn't want the art to run down the wall like a gallery," Keith says. The majority of the work is from three artists—Spanish painter Eduardo Monteaquedo, local painter Tom Towhey and local photographer Robert Giesler. Keith has gotten to know a number of artists through his store's participation in Final Friday, as well as an annual art exhibit the store holds.

Other highlights of the space include the pressboard floors, which bear a strong resemblance to cork. There are also two can't-miss photos in the bathroom of Keith on *The Uncle Al Show* when he was a toddler, complete with autographs. But perhaps the most important element of the space is its function as a relaxing retreat. "It's really quiet up here," Keith

Top Left: Keith Mueller's kitchen features an island and skylight.

Top Right: A set of old school lockers serves as the kitchen pantry.

Right: Collections rule the space. The green dishes shown here are Russel Wright.

Below: A cozy seating area just off the kitchen.

Below Right: Keith Mueller in his eclectic downtown living space.

