

BASEMENT MAKEOVER

Zone 1: Art-filled Lounge

Designer Nam Dang-Mitchell wanted her basement to feel like a hip studio — a lofty goal since the ceilings were barely seven feet high and there were only two windows. To add character, she wrapped the main wall in a three-quarter-inch brick veneer and installed a gallery wall. Ripple-fold drapes conceal a small window. “The curtains make you think there’s a wall of windows, but there’s not much back there,” says Nam. The television is opposite the comfy sectional — a perfect spot for movie nights. **Sofa fabrication**, Calgary Interiors; **coffee table**, 4living; **rug**, West Elm; **sconce**, Etsy.





Crown print, bathing figures print (in thick wood frame), allposters.ca; **dog photograph** by Nam Dang-Mitchell; **blue shape poster**, eBay; **skull print**, Brooklyn Flea; **smallest artwork** by Cathy Daley, Newzones Gallery of Contemporary Art; **far right artwork**, Paul Kuhn Gallery.

HOME BASE

NAM DANG-MITCHELL MORPHS HER CALGARY BASEMENT INTO THE ULTIMATE ALL-AGES REC ROOM.

Text by SAMANTHA EDWARDS | Photography by COLIN WAY

AS HER SON AND DAUGHTER were growing up, Nam Dang-Mitchell kept hearing the same advice from her friends with older children: if you want to see your kids when they're teenagers, create a space they'll want to hang out in. "That way, all their friends will come to your house and you can keep tabs on them," says Nam with a laugh. But before she could turn her dark, dated basement into a teen-approved rec room, the Calgary designer had to fix the basics.

When she moved into the century home in 2005, the lower level hadn't been renovated since the 1960s. "It had dark wood panelling everywhere, green and yellow vinyl floor tiles, and a makeshift bar," says Nam. "It was your typical '60s rumpus room." Without the budget to do a big reno but still needing a playroom for her young kids, Nam covered the vinyl floors with carpet tiles and painted the panelling white.

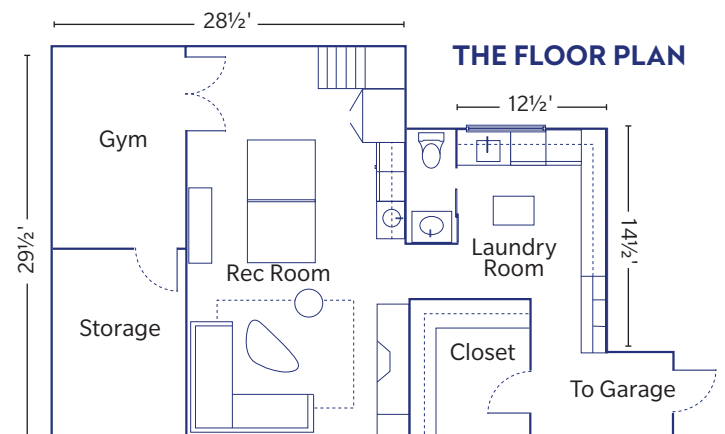
Eventually, the kids outgrew the playroom (or as Nam describes it, "a free-for-all toyfest") and it was time to reimagine the space. With a mix of textural materials, modern finishes and an emphasis on artwork, Nam transformed the basement into a multifunctional space. Though the lower level is definitely a teen domain, Nam and her husband, James Mitchell, regularly kick off their shoes and join in the fun. "We play table tennis and the video game Just Dance," says Nam. "We move the coffee table and hold family dance competitions." Here's her recipe for the ultimate family hub.

Zone 2: Grown-up Play Space

Nam's vision for the basement started with a custom Ping-Pong table; it was inspired by a limited-edition version by L.A. designer James Perse. She bought the top online and then designed an oak base with drawers and a leather net. Engineered-wood flooring gives the room a loft look, as does the industrial shelving and steel French doors. Slate-coloured panelling on one wall offers a contrast to the white brick veneer. "Miles of drywall feels impersonal, like you haven't put your own stamp on the room yet," says Nam.



Table **fabrication**, Lee Quang Millwork; **panelling colour**, Steel Wool (33-14), Pratt & Lambert; **far left poster**, allposters.ca; **far right artwork** by Brett Bonk, Alberta College of Art + Design Students' Association Show + Sale.





LEFT: Outfitted with a microwave, fridge and dishwasher, the kitchenette — formerly the minibar — is always stocked with snacking staples. **Countertop** by Caesarstone, Icon Stone + Tile; **faucet**, Aquabraxx; **dishes**, Ikea; **artwork** by Brett Bonk, Alberta College of Art + Design Students' Association Art Show + Sale. **BOTTOM LEFT:** The gallery walls are made up of flea market finds, prints, original pieces and her own photos. Start with larger pieces and then branch out with smaller ones, says Nam. "Pour yourself a drink and go for it. If you have to move a piece over a couple inches afterward, it's not a big deal." **Photograph** (top), Brooklyn Flea; **pink artwork** by Michaela Bridgemohan, Alberta College of Art + Design Students' Association Show + Sale; **prints**, allposters.ca.



Zone 3: Stylish Laundry Room

Simple subway tile, white oak cabinetry and limestone flooring give this laundry area a clean, modern look. While Nam opted for recessed lights throughout the basement to avoid drawing attention to the low ceilings, she chose a rustic pendant light to anchor the portable island. "The cart was a total Ikea hack," says Nam, who topped it with a custom-cut marble slab.



Cabinetry fabrication (throughout), Siemens
Woodworking; **backsplash tile**, Daltile; **flooring**, Stone Tile West; **stool**, Crate & Barrel; **pendant**, RH, Restoration Hardware; **baskets**, Indigo; **hand towel**, woven tray, HomeSense.