

Taking the Long View

One wise couple spent a year in their house before undertaking a re-do that gives it an open, contemporary feel while keeping the stylish details of its Victorian past.

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LACKEY, CHARLES R. MYER AND

PARTNERS • INTERIOR DESIGN:

RACHEL REIDER • BUILDER:

S&H CONSTRUCTION •

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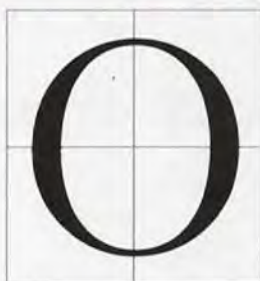


What was once a narrow front door is now a light-filled double-height back entry, while a new front door opens onto the spacious foyer. Architect Pete Lackey introduced the clerestory windows to bring more light into the adjacent kitchen.

“Rather than trying to coerce the house to do something new, we tried to reawaken it.”



Right and below: Dark grasscloth and jewel-toned accessories add dramatic impact to the neutral palette of the living room. *Facing page:* Multiple patterns and textures keep the formal dining room from being stiff or stuffy.



One of the joys of homeownership lies in expressing ourselves through our surroundings. Our houses, whether old or new, traditional or modern, muted or colorful, tell the world how we live, what we treasure,

who we are. Most of us can hardly wait to put our personal stamp on our living spaces. It is, after all, part of the process of turning a house into a home.

The couple who bought this Boston-area Victorian had more patience—and perhaps wisdom—than the rest of us, though. They lived in their house for a full year, noting how they used the space and how the light flowed (or didn't), thinking, planning and discussing before undertaking any serious renovating or redecorating. By the time they brought in the professionals, they had a good idea of what would be required to turn their house into the home of their dreams.

The whole team—architect Pete Lackey of the Cambridge, Massachusetts, firm Charles R. Myer and Partners; Dave Madden of S&H Construction, also in Cambridge; and designer Rachel Reider, who is based in West Roxbury, Massachusetts—was in on the project from the start. “The clients went about it smartly,” says Madden. “They felt the house out, gave a lot of thought to what they wanted. Then they interviewed construction companies at the same time as they interviewed architects. As the architect’s plans developed, we were able to give estimates. The clients could make sure they weren’t getting outside their budget or planning on things that wouldn’t work out for one reason or another.”

Bringing a sense of openness to the house and improving the flow between rooms was a primary goal, says Reider. “The house had a lot of smaller rooms, and we wanted to make it more modern, more suitable for the homeowners.”

Although the process involved substantial renovation, including replacing the entire heating and cooling system and adding radiant heat to the whole first

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Reider re-stained the study's original paneling in a warmer tone. A velvet window seat cushion and mohair sofa add to the room's plush feel. *Facing page top:* The Romo wallpaper has a hint of shimmer. *Facing page bottom:* A cheerful powder room has a custom hand-hammered metal sink.

details as possible.”





The airy kitchen sports a black granite farmer's sink and countertops paired with bright white cabinets. *Facing page:* Reider painted the original banquette white and had the table custom made to echo the curve of the wall and banquette.



floor and all the home's bathrooms, Reider says the owners didn't want to erase the home's Victorian charm. "A lot of the original details, like stained-glass windows, ornate radiators, tile work and fireplace mantels, were still intact," she says. "The clients felt very strongly that we should keep as many of those details as possible."

Most of the renovations to the three-story house were centered on the first-floor living spaces and second-floor bedrooms, says Lackey. The changes began with forging a new entry from what had been a back door. The main entrance now opens (via a porch addition) to a spacious hallway that draws the eye through the house to the former front entry. Lackey redesigned that old entrance, turning it into a double-height space that sits between two wide arches. Lead-glass windows fill the arches, keeping the Victorian sensibility while letting light flood the home's interior. "I look at it as an excavation, if you will," says the architect. "Rather than trying to coerce the house to do something new, we tried to reawaken it."

Reider's palette for the hallway offers hints about

the rest of the house with its combination of pale, soft neutrals and deep, rich color. Among her favorite elements in the space are the hanging lamps of mother of pearl. "They're like little jewels," she says. "They have a nice sparkle and an ambient glow."

Lackey played off the existing wainscoting and ceiling in designing the clerestory windows that bring light to the kitchen on the other side of the wall. "In modern life, we all go straight to the kitchen" he says. "I wanted to connect those two spaces, the hallway and the kitchen."

The old kitchen and its adjacent formal dining room were opened up to create a bright, spacious kitchen and family room with a casual dining area. The dining area, tucked into a curved nook, illustrates the clever use of existing details. The wainscoting and banquette, both original to the house, were revived with a coat of crisp white paint, and the dining table was designed and custom-built to echo the curve of the banquette.

One of Reider's challenges involved satisfying her clients' different tastes. "He loves color—the bolder





Left: The family room's neutral walls, rug and larger pieces satisfy the wife's penchant for soft tones, while colorful accents appeal to the husband's love of color. *Below:* A small bath and closet became a roomy master bath. *Facing page:* Bronzes, soft blues and plums make the master bedroom a soothing retreat.



the better—and she could do the whole house in beiges, creams and whites,” the designer says. “I had to find a happy compromise.”

In the kitchen and family room, she made both clients happy by starting with a neutral base—white cabinets and earth tones for the walls, rug and larger furniture—and adding bright pops of color in throw pillows, artwork and the dining chairs.

Across the hall from the kitchen sits a more formal dining room. Formality, though, notes Reider, is a relative term. As posh as this room is, with its deep burnt orange and aubergine color scheme, there's nothing stiff about it. The silk fabric covering the softly rounded walls, the cut velvet chairs with their circular pattern and the drapes trimmed with a paisley-patterned fabric all conspire to bring a sense of deep comfort without fussiness.

The living room and study that round out the first floor have a similar feeling of plush warmth. In both rooms, dark walls (brown grasscloth in the living room and wainscoting and cabinetry in the study) are matched with soft neutrals and hits of

bright jewel tones. Second-floor renovations included almost as much structural work as the first floor, says builder Madden. “There was just this gaggle of hallways and rooms and closets,” he says. “We took out a huge number of walls, which required adding structural beams.”

Now the second floor holds a generous master suite and two spacious guest rooms. Reider played up the master bedroom's rounded walls with a custom-designed curved headboard and round nightstands, and gave the space a soothing palette of taupe accented with soft blues, plums and bronzes.

The homeowners moved to temporary quarters for the year or so it took for the renovations to be completed. An inconvenience, to be sure, but a small price to pay for coming home to a house that is, at last, their own. •

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