

New England HOME

Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

Seductive Elegance

Whether classic or contemporary, sheer beauty never loses its appeal.



The entry's tile floor, which continues into the dining room, is original to the house. "It speaks to the home's character," says designer Paula Daher. The adjacent living room floors were restained a dark shade as a foil for the room's creamy-colored woodwork. **FACING PAGE:** A Dennis & Leen sofa with a somewhat formal silhouette plays off the room's contemporary art.

Looking Lively

A bit of rejiggering of rooms and a fresh, contemporary new look add a welcome shot of youthful energy to a gracious old Boston-area home.

Text by *Megan Fulweiler* | Photography by *Michael J. Lee*



CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: Light streams from the terrace into the living room through French doors, creating a visual echo of artist Michael Zigmond's riveting work above the bar

cabinet. Cleaning revealed the deep green tones of the room's original marble fireplace. A game table and upholstered chairs claim a quiet corner.

PROJECT TEAM

Interior architecture and design: Paula Daher, Daher Interior Design

Builder: Cambridgeport Construction



Nothing brings a grand old house to life like the presence of children. So when a bustling family moved into a stately Brookline, Massachusetts, home, they immediately instilled an air of happiness.

The chatter of three kids under the age of nine drifts through the rooms like music. And, in addition to the joy of having such lively inhabitants, a glorious renovation headed by interior designer Paula Daher has let in the light and created a fresh attitude for a dwelling that, despite its beautiful bones, was losing its luster.

The owners had lived in Brookline's Cottage Farm area for several years, but when their twin boys arrived, their condo no longer seemed quite so spacious. They set out to find a larger nest in the same pretty neighborhood and, as luck would have it, found the perfect one. "It was meant to be," claims the wife. "When we saw the spectacular library and



LEFT: A border of reclaimed wood along the base of the vent hood ties in with the kitchen's new beams. **BELOW:** The chandelier came from the owners' previous home. **FACING PAGE:** The breakfast area's raffia-

backed chairs are favorites of the designer. "Modernity was needed, and they have a casual elegance that fits the house," she explains. The banquette features pull-out drawers for bonus storage.

the wonderful yard, we knew it. The house wasn't ideal, but we had Paula in our pocket to help."

Indeed, if the century-old house was going to meet twenty-first-century standards, a radical update was called for. Daher, having worked with the couple on their previous residence, was familiar with their tastes and lifestyle. As for the owners, their admiration for Daher was such that there was never a question of enlisting anyone else. The goal, as the designer explains, was "to preserve as much of the building's character as possible, while also making the house workable and family-friendly."

To that end, Daher launched a life-altering transformation, seeing to everything from redesigning the floorplan to reconfiguring the second floor and finishing the basement. Adjacent to the kitchen, she found space for a smart ADA-compliant guest room and bath as well as a cubby-lined mudroom. On the second floor she carved out a spot for a generous laundry



room. "Paula did it all: floorplan, layout, design, and furnishings, right down to choosing our sheets," says the wife. "And there's not a thing we'd change."

To foster a better flow, Daher cleverly juggled the rooms, turning the library into the living room, the living room into a dining room, and the dining room into a sunny breakfast area. Sweeping away yesterday's outdated galley, she devised a stunning open-

concept kitchen with glass-front cabinets meticulously crafted by Salmon Falls Woodworks in Dover, New Hampshire (the firm responsible for carrying out all Daher's cabinetry designs throughout). A more-than-generous island makes way for the whole family to line up at once. And there's a shiplapped wet bar—set at a height that allows Mom to monitor the kids while she cooks—segregating the kitchen



A pair of Gregorius Pineo wing chairs nestling by an original fireplace are an unexpected delight in the dining room. The landscape above the mantel is by Tracey Lane. A cache of snowy china fills the new floor-to-ceiling cabinets. **FACING PAGE:** Nailhead trim on the upholstered dining chairs and Conrad handwoven shades at the windows introduce an extra layer of subtle texture.

“Paula did it all: floorplan, layout, design, and furnishings, right down to choosing our sheets,” says the wife. “And there’s not a thing we’d change.”



Contemporary and eye-catching, the paintings, woodcuts, and photos put a youthful spin on the classic architecture. Against the muted palette, every piece is a statement, but perhaps none more so than the geometric work by artist and Rhode Island School of Design professor Deborah Zlotzky in the library turned living room.

from the inviting family room with its cozy fireplace. All this savvy maneuvering was anything but easy, however, given the building’s structural issues. Contractors Jim Burke and Randy Milburn of Cambridgeport Construction had to tackle, for one, seriously sloping floors. “Over time, the house had settled,” explains Burke. “To create the open kitchen, we had to level the floors and, because we’d removed several small rooms, construct temporary load-bearing walls to support the floors above during construction.” Today, steel beams—concealed beneath faux wood beams—accomplish the latter. The warm wood tone is the perfect contrast to the kitchen’s slick Illusion Blue quartzite countertops and backsplash. Creating contrasts that give a room just the right balance comes easily to Daher. Case in point? The striking art she carefully helped the owners select.

Its colors are reflected in the chandelier’s mirrored bottom, doubling the painting’s dramatic effect and, most assuredly, awing visitors. “It’s a showstopper,” agrees Daher. But, then, the new library, too, is breathtaking. To lessen the room’s formality, Daher enlisted master finisher and restorer Wayne Towle to strip and re-stain the original dark woodwork. The pale backdrop energizes the space, as does the tailored, understated furnishings and deft mix of textures. A John Pomp credenza made of hand-blown glass rondelles and metal claims one wall, while a Holly Hunt linen-wrapped cocktail table rests in front of the fireplace. “It’s a traditional room. Modern elements bring it down a notch and make it more approachable,” Daher says. Splashes of green—inspired by the antique marble hearth—are scattered here and there,



Detail-conscious Daher designed the husband's walnut desk with a metal band skimming the bottom and, for practicality, a berth for a Rose Tarlow ottoman. The painting is by Kate Doyle. **FACING PAGE, TOP:**

Frette bedding amps up the luxury in the master bedroom. **FACING PAGE, BOTTOM:** On the first floor, the elegant guest bath features a custom granite sink and a generous frosted-glass shower enclosure.



connecting the room to the garden.

Providing continuity, hints of blithe green seep into the dining room, too. Another dazzling space, the dining room sports not only an original terracotta tile floor but also a detailed ceiling designed by Daher that mimics the tiles' shape. Beneath another knockout chandelier, a round table and slew of upholstered chairs assure the room is as comfortable for gathering as it is visually striking. "That's the thing," says the wife. "The house not only looks great, it's also functional."

Daher, who has children of her own, plugged in storage wherever she could. The daughter's bedroom, for example, is as sweet as they come, but also a room that will meet her needs as she grows. Her built-ins feature deep drawers and a desk with a handy pull-out seat that masquerades as a cabinet when not in use.

The parent's sybaritic bedroom, with its wallpapered entry and sumptuous white-oak headboard, also has its share of organizational features. Take a minute to note the bookshelves flanking the fireplace and the couple's substantial nightstands. The elegant bath holds—in addition to a posh steam shower and sculptural tub—a sizable multi-drawer vanity. Adjacent to the bedroom, the husband's study includes an efficient waterfall desk and wall-mounted cases for his treasured baseball collection.

Remarkably reordered and revived, the old house has all it needs now for a brilliant future. Best of all, the family it shelters couldn't love it more. "I tell everyone," says the wife, "this is our forever home."

RESOURCES: For more information about this home, see page 207.