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NEW HOMES, BOLD IDEAS
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"The Hartleys are of the form and function mindset," says designer Amy Morris. "Our goal was to keep everything simple. The whole point of the house was not to have room that was not used." The living room, which doubles as a family room, is a fitting example of this conceit. Sleek but comfortable furnishings were incorporated into the space and fun, cowhide-covered "X" benches instantly lighten up the look and add modern appeal. A vivid citron canvas by Sidney Guberman brings the whole scheme to life, *opposite* "The stairwell was Brad's genius," adds Morris. Fronted by a massive steel window matching that on the opposite wall, it forms the sculptural centerpiece of the room and provides a much cleaner look than a traditional millwork staircase would have.



A photograph of a modern interior space. A large staircase with light-colored wooden treads and a black metal frame is enclosed in a glass wall with a black grid pattern. A person is visible walking up the stairs. In the foreground, two modern stools with chrome frames and cowhide seats are positioned on a light-colored wooden floor. The background shows a bright, open space with large windows.

stylish **SIMPLICITY**

*DESIGNER AMY MORRIS AND
ARCHITECT BRADLEY HEPPNER
TEAM UP TO CREATE A MODERN-
INFLECTED HOME THAT
STILL PAYS HOMAGE TO THE
ARCHITECTURE OF ITS
TRADITIONAL SURROUNDINGS*

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Since it's used for everything from morning meals to lively evening gatherings, the dining room needed to be both inviting and versatile. A mix of seating styles plays to this function, while walls of windows let in light and allow the family to take in the lush outdoor views from every vantage point. Reclaimed wood ceiling beams and a fireplace contribute tremendous warmth while a four-foot table extension makes room for larger, more formal occasions.



the posterior, Heppner was able to integrate light in a way that feels modern and clean while combining both aesthetics seamlessly.

For the interior design, Heppner brought Amy Morris on board early, the two having worked together on several previous projects. Even though this was one of Morris' first contemporary assignments, the architect knew she would be the ideal fit. "Amy is great at blending a sense of tradition with a modern aesthetic," he explains. "Even her traditional homes have a very modern feel to them. I knew she would fit well with what we were trying to do with this house."

Mia—who prefers to dress in basic shades of black, white and taupe—wanted much the same color scheme for her home. Her request was to create a super-functional modern house in black and white, one with as little ornamentation as possible: simple lines, no rugs, no window treatments, if possible, and above all, no fluff. "I don't like a lot of clutter, and I don't like a lot of busy stuff," she notes. "We appreciate a simplicity of design, for everything to have a practical, pragmatic use."

This absence of excess presented a design challenge for the interiors, but not one that Morris wasn't eager to surmount. To expand upon the neutral scheme yet keep the look simple, she used the homeowners' favorite contemporary art by Martin Dawe as well as a vivid

MMORNINGSIDE DWELLERS MIA AND JOHN HARTLEY called upon architect Bradley Heppner to design the modern home of their dreams in their predominantly traditional Midtown neighborhood. Though its streets are dotted by the masterworks of Crook and Reed, the house they share with their two daughters stands out among the flock for its unique combination of architectural references.

While its façade maintains a traditional silhouette, the modern concrete structure is freshened by a coat of pure white plaster and steep gables, reminiscent of Dutch colonial buildings found in the West Indies and influenced by the modern agrarian architecture of Australia's Glenn Murcutt. By connecting the traditional front portions of the residence with more modern, barrel-shaped elements on

"AMY WILL ALMOST DESIGN A HOUSE TO BE AN ACCESSORY TO A CLIENT. KNOWING THE CLIENTS AND HAVING BEEN ABLE TO GO BACK SINCE THEY MOVED IN. I THINK THIS HOUSE REALLY LOOKS LIKE THEM."

—BRADLEY HEPPNER



A high clerestory ceiling allows light to radiate throughout this homey kitchen. "There's a real hesitancy when you design a 16-foot ceiling, that you're going to feel lost in a space," notes Heppner, "but I think that the architectural curves make this room feel warm and comfortable." To keep things durable and easy to clean, Morris selected practical quartz countertops and used tight grout joints between tiles, while energy-efficient appliances improve day-to-day functionality. Acres of storage were also built into the custom walnut cabinetry which, set against several light-colored surfaces, creates a super-graphic look. For a finishing touch, iridescent ceramic tiles that Morris sourced tirelessly for this project have a look as luminous as mother of pearl. *opposite* Designer Amy Morris



Scant gray linen scrims add surprise in the living space. "We didn't originally plan for them, but I felt that if we didn't have a rug, we would have to have window treatments," Morris explains. "These serve to anchor the room and keep this gathering spot from feeling like it is floating." *opposite* The architecture was equally well-conceived, and maintains harmony with the interiors, too. "It was about indulging Mia's desire to have very modern forms while tying that into the traditional fabric of the neighborhood," notes Heppner. "The lines in and outside the house reference each other constantly," Morris adds.





yellow canvas by Sidney Guberman. Adding to a foundation of the client's contemporary furnishings, Morris incorporated many pieces with a feminine touch, such as gracefully sloping Donghia armchairs and an open-back Holly Hunt banquette. A few custom pieces from Amy D. Morris Interiors—including a bed, dining table and bedside tables—anchor the mix with strong, masculine shapes while the simplest of window treatments contributes softness.

To keep the rooms light, bright and minimalistic, nine-inch white oak planks were used on all the floors while similar nine-inch timbers appear on the home's crowning element—a staircase that's more a sculptural art piece than a utilitarian fixture. To frame it, Heppner installed a steel window just like the one on the opposite wall, an artful addition that also eliminated the need for an additional hand railing. Even more remarkably, he devised a "trap door" to the basement below; concealed unassumingly within the floor, it can be lifted via a pulley to reveal the stairway to the cellar below.

Mia also had clear directives for the dining area. "In our previous house, we had a formal dining room and a formal living room that were never used," she explains. "I wanted a space that we used every day to be very inviting." Because it triples as a breakfast area, dining room and family meeting place, a mix of seating styles was needed to keep the space from feeling too rigid. Happily, a custom table with a four-foot extension makes room for extended gatherings and more formal occasions.

This room is also unique for the manner in which its low ceilings and reclaimed wood beams impart a sense of intimacy. "Modern, to me, can get really cold," Heppner says. "I tried to incorporate a lot of



materials that were made by hand into the house. It still feels clean but it has warmth."

Radius corners lend a similar, cocoon-like effect elsewhere in the home. Their soft curves, along with barrel-shaped elements throughout the house, bounce light around to such a degree that artificial lighting is not needed until sundown, Heppner explains. To that end, the home has no ceiling fixtures; instead, recessed lighting was used



The flattened roofline of the dining room extends to an inviting covered terrace, lending visual continuity to this very private outdoor space. Just beyond, the modular elements of the pool terrace and surround reflect the handiwork of Heppner in concert with landscape architect John Howard, who gave the homeowners smart and sustainable landscaping to match their modern aesthetic.



almost exclusively with the exception of the kitchen, where task lighting was needed. The natural hub of the house, this room was rendered highly functional thanks to roomy ebonized walnut cabinetry and a clerestory ceiling to let light in where it's needed most.

The upstairs was devoted to the girls, who get their own sleeping quarters as well as communal spaces to hang out, study and work on school projects. Outdoors, Heppner worked with landscape architect John Howard to create a level playing field for the courtyard and modular pool elements. Located just off a pool terrace that extends visually from the flat-ceilinged dining room, it is accessible by several doors that open wide, essentially blurring the lines between indoors and out. Walls of windows also play to this theme by letting in lots of natural light. And because the family didn't want a yard to tend to, the surrounding landscaping was designed to be self-sustaining.

Perhaps the best indication of the home's success is how well it lives. "When you walk through the house, it feels so right. The scale is so right. Every room has a purpose," Morris says.

"Everything in the house works just perfectly for us. I tell Brad all the time that I'm amazed every day by how well it suits us," echoes Mia. "I love looking at it and I love living in it. There's nothing I wish I had done differently or would want to change."

It is that sort of reception, as every design team knows, that is the ultimate mark of success. **SEE RESOURCES, BACK OF BOOK.**

In order to eliminate the impression of a basement stairway, Heppner developed a concealed door within the floor that can be lifted via a pulley system. "It's counterweighted. The way we have it balanced, it's very simple," he explains. "You lift it the way you would lift the hatch of an old root cellar in the Northeast." *opposite* Upstairs, the two girls have their own bedrooms and share a jack-and-jill bathroom, as well as a TV room and an illuminated project area at which to do homework.



BUILT FROM SCRATCH

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO BUILD? Two years

INSPIRATION: Books featuring warm modern homes, as well as the strict preferences of the homeowners themselves

REQUIREMENTS: Simplicity of design, sustainability, durability, practicality and a reverence for the traditional architecture of the neighborhood while maintaining a minimalist, modern aesthetic

MATERIALS USED: Quartz countertops, ceramic and porcelain tiles, steel and wood-clad windows, white oak floors, walnut cabinetry, natural linens, reclaimed wood beams, concrete, plaster and lots of glass

DESIGNER'S FAVORITE ROOM: The multipurpose living space, especially since it contains an innovative and sculptural steel staircase





opposite and right Pared-down comforts reign in the master bedroom. "Very early on, the homeowners made a point that they did not like window treatments," notes Morris. "But since the master bedroom was at the front [of the house], I knew we would have to use them. I think they work because they were so simply done; they were simple linen panels, with no details." *below* Horizontally placed, floor-to-ceiling gray and white porcelain tiles create graphic interest in the girls' bathroom, which was especially important considering the simplicity of the rest of the space. *bottom* In the powder room, the simple shape of a concrete bowl sink by Dex Studios is mimicked in that of an inexpensive IKEA mirror. "I'm all about mixing high and low," Morris explains.

