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YOUR HOME: MAKE IT MODERN

Hints of midcentury modern design bring a Belmont ranch back to the future

“There was a cacophony of styles; they wanted a consistent, modern aesthetic,” interior designer Annie Hall says.

By **Marni Elyse Katz** Globe Correspondent, Updated September 21, 2023, 8:50 a.m.



Architect Bill Boehm dressed up the garage facade with new siding that extends beyond the roofline for a more modern silhouette. The left portion of the second-story addition is set back from the primary bedroom portion on the right so the design doesn't look too blocky. FROM BOEHM ARCHITECTURE

More than a decade after moving into their 1948 ranch in Belmont, the owners hired interior designer Annie Hall for a style overhaul. The first phase included redesigning the kitchen and tackling the dark woodwork, tile floors, and lackluster decor in the main living spaces.

“There was a cacophony of styles; they wanted a consistent, modern aesthetic,” Hall says. Later, Hall brought in architect Bill Boehm to rethink and expand the bedroom area with a second-story addition, where Hall also worked her modern magic. Boehm transformed the tired exterior too, while landscape architect Melissa MacDonald revitalized the outdoor spaces.

Hall started by pulling together a clean, bright, and approachable palette of color and materials. “I’m not fond of starkly modern interiors. They don’t invite you in and make you feel at home,” the designer says. “I always aim for warm, cozy, and comfortable in my designs.”

The living room is now neutral, with an asymmetrical concrete fireplace surround as the focal point. The idea grew out of the homeowners’ desire for concrete floors, which ultimately didn’t work out. Hall designed floor-to-ceiling, white oak built-ins with back-painted glass doors as a backdrop for the TV and incorporated a tufted animal print ottoman to temper the sleek sectional. “I try to sneak in a traditional touch when I do modern,” Hall notes.

The dining room is spare but peppy. Natural woven shades dress down the owners’ burlwood table, which Hall sent out for refurbishing. Leggy fiberglass shell chairs in orange, blue, yellow, and gray key off the Artaic mosaic tile backsplash in the adjacent kitchen. “The backsplash reflects the home’s midcentury modern architecture,” Hall says.

The color-block effect of the kitchen cabinetry, done in white oak and pale blue custom-matched to the lightest blue tile, has a corresponding midcentury modern style. White oak panels reach beyond the kitchen to the dry bar, further uniting the kitchen and dining area. As for the sunroom on the other side of the dining table, Hall tied it into the scheme by painting its new built-in console the same pale blue.

When Boehm came on board, the homeowners tasked the architect with designing an addition that would grant them a getaway spot. (Hall's living room redesign was so successful that the couple's twins had taken over the space.) First, however, Boehm had to de-jumble the bedroom wing. "The layout on that side of the house was a mess," he recalls. "You had to walk through the girls' bedroom to get to the couple's offices." There was also an awkwardly placed guest bedroom beside the front door.

Boehm cleaned things up, creating a bedroom for each daughter with a bath between them. A short hall with a laundry closet offers access to the bedrooms at one end and a door to the offices at the other. Hall wallpapered the bedrooms in bold, modern stripes with different color combinations for each girl and painted the bath bright orange.

For the parents, Boehm designed a second-story primary suite with a separate lounge that Hall outfitted with asymmetrical built-ins, a cushy sectional, and a wet bar. Boehm gave the bedroom a vaulted ceiling that follows the lines of the gable roof and corner windows that take cues from several existing windows below it. "We picked up on some of the home's modernist aesthetic, like the corner windows and the picture windows flanked with divided light casements," he says.

To site the staircase to the primary suite, Boehm persuaded the homeowners to eliminate the guest room. (A pull-out sofa in the husband's office now accommodates out-of-towners.) The staircase, a midcentury-modern-meets-industrial design with open risers and perforated metal panel guardrails that match those of the basement stair that Hall redesigned in phase one, lets light flood into the bedroom and entry halls. "Before, the guest bedroom walls prevented any light from penetrating the center of the house," Boehm says.

As for the exterior, Boehm implemented relatively simple cosmetic changes that made a substantial impact. He graced the front entrance and rear terrace with a jet-age pentagonal awning and refaced the facade of the garage with a funky arrangement of shiplap boards and fiber cement panels. “I would say,” Boehm says, “we resurrected the home’s modernist potential.”

RESOURCES

Architect: Boehm Architecture, boehmarchitecture.com

Landscape architect: Melissa MacDonald, melissamacdonald.com

Interior designer: Annie Hall Interiors, anniehallinteriors.com

Contractor: Timberwolf Construction, timberwolfcon.com

Woodworker: McIntosh & Company Cabinetmakers, mcintosh.company