

In the living room, a custom-made oak media unit flanks a custom sectional from Interiors by George & Martha, an Egg Collective coffee table, and a rug from Crosby Street Studios.

A Study in Contrast

A SUBURBAN RESIDENCE MERGES 19TH- AND 20TH-CENTURY ARCHITECTURE THROUGH THOUGHTFUL INTEGRATION AND COLORFUL CRAFT.

BY LAUREN JONES

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREG PREMUR



In the Gothic portion of the home, a luxe bath features peaceful details like a Waterworks bathtub and a stool from Lawson-Fenning.



ON A HISTORIC, TREE-LINED STREET IN BROOKLINE, AN 1856 GOTHIC REVIVAL cottage sits alongside a bold, three-story 1970s addition. While it may seem like an ill-fated coupling, it was intriguing for architects Carter Williams and Douglas Dick of LDa Architecture & Interiors and sister designers Joan and Jayne Michaels of Manhattan-based 2Michaels, who transformed the home for a well-traveled family of four. Its quaint gables were dwarfed by a perpendicular wing of glass and siding, yet they saw opportunity in the contrast.

Every move was intentional as they opened up physical and visual connections with “a seamless dialogue between past and present,” reinterpreted features in a more minimal style, and

restored historical details lost to earlier renovations, notes Williams. The four-bedroom home, set at the base of a sloping hill on a 1.1-acre lot adjoining conservation land, now embraces both its history and wooded site with clarity.

Over three years, they brought in more glass to the contemporary wing and imparted color and materiality to make the exterior feel more cohesive. “We didn’t try and change the style of either, yet fixed the style to some degree on both,” Williams says. Updating the trim language brought the modern section to a more approachable, human scale, as it was clad in Western red cedar, while new windows and an efficient mechanical system greatly

The kitchen’s clean lines are accented with a white-oak island topped with a dreamy blue-green slab that was quarried in Italy.





improved ventilation and overall energy usage.

Inside, reconsidering the form and function of each room was the starting point. “The beautiful Gothic rooms really didn’t get used much because they felt separate from the house,” Dick says. Now its large, open-plan rooms mesh with cozy, intimate spaces, melded by uniquely characterized interiors. For Joan and Jayne Michaels, the clients’ impressive art collection and love for lush color were key. They had traveled all over the world, including Shanghai, Hong Kong, London, and Cairo, before settling in Boston. Even their dog, brought with them from China, felt part of the story. Their only request: no red.

“We blended the two [portions of the home] and balanced [the styles] by concentrating on scale and simplicity of form, almost in a Shaker way,” Jayne Michaels says. The dining room became a touchstone with a custom white-oak table paired with a Roll & Hill pendant and Suite NY chairs.

The music room, located in the Gothic side of the home, has become a “sweet little salon with a rounded green velvet couch,” Joan Michaels says. Low, curved furniture nestles into the Gothic envelope, while an organic-shaped rug from Atelier Février and a walnut coffee table soften the geometry.

Another important element was providing more storage without compromising the light, openness, and flow. “We took an existing

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The dining room has a timeless appeal with a custom table and side-board from Mjolk. “It could be now or Gothic,” Jayne Michaels remarks.

OPPOSITE

The cozy sitting room in a once under-utilized part of the home features a fireplace, a sofa from Lawson-Fenning, a vintage coffee table, and a colorful yet complementary rug by Judy Ross Textiles.





coat closet with a flat secret door as a cue,” Williams says. Sleek built-ins in an array of compositions are seen in the family room, mudroom, laundry, and new pantry. The family room’s custom rift-cut, white-oak display cabinet cleverly hides the TV, while a handplastered fireplace and black granite cantilevered hearth ground the space.

In the kitchen, the clients liked the idea of an unconventional island “sitting across and not next to one another, which is typical with seating,” Williams says. The corner cut allowed for ease of conversation and a place for the Suite NY barstools to park. The sleek gray cabinets have a recessed profile and no hardware for a minimalist touch.

In addition to the home’s new design and architectural

direction, Dan Gordon Landscape Architects helped establish the home’s somewhat ambiguous entrance. “People used to enter through a more casual entrance, and the landscape didn’t provide an emphasis or formality,” Williams says. Now, it has a renewed sense of presence hailed by historic oaks, purposeful plantings, and intuitive grading.

For Joan and Jayne Michaels, who had not worked in Boston before, the project was memorable. “Brookline has a refinement that felt refreshing,” Jayne Michaels says. “At first, we worried about joining two totally different looks, but once we studied the proportions and lines, it became exciting. We’d love to return—it was such a rewarding experience.”

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The guest bedroom is serene in a palette of blues and greens and nature-inspired art. The bed linens are from Italian brand Sfera, while the custom rug is from The Brother Sister Co.

OPPOSITE

The circular room required a lot of conversation when it came to function and design. It’s now a “sweet little salon” with furniture kept low, round, and curved, notes Joan Michaels.

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BUILDER JW CONSTRUCTION

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LANDSCAPE DESIGNER DAN GORDON LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

