

Simple Pleasures

AN ARTFUL BLEND OF MODERN AND TRADITIONAL



SUE AND BILL GRONER were faced with a conundrum. They had built their shingle-style home in Bedford on the site of an old ranch house that had once belonged to author and composer Mary Rogers (think *Freaky Friday* and *Once Upon a Mattress*) in 1996, and yet, over time, they found themselves drawn to mid-century modern furnishings. Despite loving their home's architecture that was inspired by their annual visits to Telluride, Colorado, they couldn't quite figure out how to balance their two aesthetic passions.

As Sue interviewed design consultants, she often discussed the challenge with her best friend, Debbie Spiro, an interior designer whose personal style was somewhat traditional. However, none of the designers she met with seemed to be able to successfully strike the balance. Then, in 2010, Sue visited one of Spiro's clients' apartments, and she was impressed by her friend's skill with modern design. "I came home and told Bill, 'I think she could really do our house,'" recalls Sue.

"Since we were such good friends, we never considered working together," notes Spiro. "But, when she saw the apartment I designed in New York, she realized I could do her house, and she was very persistent. I told her how I work, and we were on the same page from day one. It was a fun process, and it was a collaboration."

While the kitchen and family room had been decorated, the rest of the house presented the friends with a number of blank slates, and they decided to start with the Groners' daughter's room. "I worked with Sue and Victoria, who was 12 at the time, to design a grown-up but fun room. Victoria is really sophisticated and a talented artist, so working with her was easy," Spiro continues. From there, the designing friends moved on to the guestroom, working their way through the house, room by room.

CUSTOM DESIGN Two of the Groners' favorite architectural touches, the stairtower and sweeping staircase (above), were designed by Duo Dickinson and built by DPD Builders. The dining room table (right) was designed by Deborah Spiro and crafted in New Hampshire.



ARTFUL ACCENTS The living room (left) features a blend of vintage family heirlooms and new additions, such as a Don Voisine painting anchored by a Niermann Weeks chest and Cherner armchair. A Dessin Fournir wall fixture sheds light on a wedding portrait and a print the Groners found at Samuel Owen Gallery. The light-filled kitchen (right) and adjacent family room provide ample space for art and souvenirs collected on the family's travels.



Back in 2004, the Groners, who had been using the original ranch house as a weekend home, decided to renovate and move to Bedford fulltime. They hired architect Duo Dickinson to design their dream home from the ground up, and allowed the Bedford Fire Department to do a "controlled burn" of the ranch. "Duo designed a house full of special touches from the curves you see in the steps and porches to the stair tower and the wood-barrel ceiling in the foyer," explains Sue, who grew up in a mid-century modern home in nearby Stamford.

Inside the foyer, which is the first floor of a two-story connector that bridges the informal and formal parts of the home, is Dickinson's sweeping staircase, accented by a custom table that Spiro commissioned. To the left is the living room where she artfully blended the new and the old. "I am probably most pleased with how the living room turned out," says Sue, who along with Spiro, led a tour of her home. "My father was the primary designer in my childhood home, and I had inherited some special pieces by Florence Knoll and Eero Saarinen. Debbie was able to blend the vintage pieces seamlessly with new things she commissioned, as well as some artwork that Bill and I had purchased."

"Despite the fact that we were blending traditional architecture with modern décor, it wasn't as challenging as you might think," Spiro says, as she enters the



HEAVENLY HIDEAWAY Spiro furnished one corner of the master bedroom with a womb chair and print that she and Groner found at an art show. The bed and nightstand are bespoke. Spiro found the side chairs at Avant Garden in Pound Ridge and had them refurbished. Groner's desk, in her adjacent office, is vintage.



adjacent dining room. "Sue has a very sophisticated eye, so we ended up with a decor that has energy and offers unexpected twists. Everything is custom in this room." Spiro designed the furniture and found a cabinetmaker in New Hampshire to craft it. She topped the bespoke table with a David Weeks light fixture from Ralph Pucci, and Sue and Bill chose an oversized image of a Barbie Doll from the Samuel Owen Gallery in Greenwich to hang above the sideboard.

Bill's office, tucked in beside the dining room, required a bit of compromise. Bill wanted bookshelves, so Spiro suggested a gentleman's library with window seats, but that wasn't Sue's vision for the room. "I got that," says Spiro. "She wanted a cleaner look. I found a navy blue lacquered desk that was the springboard for the rest of the room, and then I designed floating shelves. In the end, we ended up with a warm feeling that we all think is amazing without it looking 'traditional.'"

Upstairs, a hallway leads past a sumptuous white bathroom to the light-



filled master bedroom. “My inspiration for the room was lilacs—my favorite flower,” Sue says. “I had light blue walls and wanted to add lavender, a bit of green, some wood, and lots of ‘clouds’ against the blue backdrop.”

“It’s a great combination but a little different,” says Spiro. “I knew it could work if I found the right fabrics. Once, I did, it was easy.” Entering the room now feels like walking into a chic, heavenly retreat. The furnishings feature simple lines softened by fluffy sheepskin cushions and cashmere throws. Just down the hall are the children’s bedrooms. Son Hudson’s features deep shades of blue and gray with custom built-in furniture and a hanging bubble chair, while Victoria’s makes a bold statement with black and white and pops of fuchsia and mango.

“Bill and Sue have some great artwork that they have purchased over the years,” Spiro says, pointing out a contemporary piece in the guest room at the end of the hall. “But we incorporated some of their children’s artwork in the décor, too. There’s a beautiful pastel by Victoria hanging in the foyer. We have some of hers and Hudson’s work in Bill’s office, too. I love that about them. They celebrate their kids. They celebrate great art and great design. And, they’re open to melding it all together.” ■



DESIGNING WOMEN Son Hudson’s room (above left) features built-in furniture and a bubble chair plus personal touches, like a guitar signed by all the guests at his bar mitzvah and his collection of caps. Close friends, Spiro and Groner (above right) collaborated on every aspect of the design. Outdoor activities abound from swimming and tennis to golf and a backyard firepit.