

# *Back to their* **ROOTS**

NOSTALGIA FOR NEW ENGLAND INSPIRES  
THE DESIGN OF A SILICON VALLEY HOME.

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HOME BUILDER / BRYAN MURPHY, PENINSULA CUSTOM HOMES



**A**nn Lowengart never met an uninspiring room she didn't immediately want to resuscitate. So, when the Bay Area designer first saw this home in Los Altos in all its beige glory, she couldn't turn down the chance to revive it. "The house had been remodeled in the 1990s, with chopped-up rooms, textured walls, lots of very thin trim and next-to-no soul," she recalls. "Meanwhile, the clients are this super warm, well-traveled, effortlessly chic couple. The wife has style coming out of her pores. The house itself was the exact antithesis of who they are as people, and I saw this project as a wonderful opportunity to transform their home into something that actually embodies them. That challenge was alluring to me."

The clients had discovered Lowengart on one of her social media platforms, and they were captivated by her ability to incorporate bold colors and honor traditional pieces in modern settings. "This project started off smaller in scale but grew as I shared my inspiration boards for the house," recalls Lowengart. "The more I showed the clients, the more excited they were about the project. We thought it was going to be a decorating-only situation, but we ended up remodeling most of the house by the time it was said and done. We built the plane as we were flying it, so to speak."

The wife grew up in a 250-year-old home outside of Boston, and she wanted this house to deliver an aesthetic reminiscent of her New England roots. "She has always loved the sense of gravitas in old houses like that—sturdy, wide-

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plank floors; heavy, beautiful hardware on the doors; pieces of furniture that have stories to tell because of their age," says Lowengart. "The goal was to deliver that kind of authenticity here, to create a fresh take on a traditional aesthetic."

Architect Jeffrey Graham and general contractor Bryan Murphy were brought on to deliver that traditional personality to each space while keeping a cohesive flow throughout the house. One of the ways Graham achieved that was through thoughtful custom trim work. "The clients wanted something that was more substantial and emulated the style of an old New England home," he says. "We started with images of old homes. I would draw the trim and print it out full scale. Next, we would make changes until we designed something that we liked. Then we had a few options fabricated and made further changes until the proportions felt comfortable with the scale of each room."

Meanwhile, Lowengart layered color in interesting and unexpected ways. For example, in the kitchen she chose Shaker-style cabinets painted in high-gloss aubergine so they would demand a double take and reflect plenty of light. Lowengart transformed the formal living room into a cozy library when she added custom built-ins and painted everything in the room—walls, trim and millwork—a moody, dark indigo.

"I wanted this house to have a sense of story and appear untouched," says Lowengart. "Color can do that, and so can the unexpected pairing of pieces from different time periods. The wife wanted to invite that kind of spirit and craftsmanship into her home in order to have a sense of handmade beauty around her family."

The designer took that approach in every space, juxtaposing unique pieces from various time periods and parts of the world. In the blue library—the heart of the home for this book-loving family—Lowengart paired midcentury leather armchairs from Sweden with a tribal ottoman and anchored them with an ethnic rug. A blue velvet tête-à-tête and an antique game table sit nearby, seeming to invite the clan to relax, read and play.

In the end, Lowengart and her client created a storied home, one where every element comes along with a tale. "This client had a hand in picking out everything, because she wanted to hear those stories and be able to tell them in her home," says Lowengart. "Sometimes, a client says here are the keys to the car, but this client got in the car and rode with me, and it was a really wonderful ride." ■



Designer Ann Lowengart and architect Jeffrey Graham thoughtfully curated pieces in this Los Altos house to reflect the wife's love of classic design. In the foyer, Galbraith & Paul's tone-on-tone Fern wallpaper creates the perfect backdrop for a vintage seashell-encrusted mirror and a drop-leaf, George III-style Pembroke table from Antique & Art Exchange. A Lee Jofa rug delivers subtle color.



In the family room, an oval painting by Elaine Coombs pops against the fireplace surround. Lowengart added walnut to the back of the built-in shelves for gravitas. The green Mosaic House tile adds color, pattern and freshness to the space. A sectional by O. Henry House, Ltd. pairs with a sling chair from Coup D'Etat. A Madison coffee table by Paul Ferrante anchors the cozy space.







Lowengart married old and new in the open-concept kitchen and dining space, grounding it with an English farm table from Garden Court Antiques. Minimalist chairs by Mark Albrecht Studio surround it, and Lindsey Adelman's Terrarium pendants deliver a contemporary touch. Rich aubergine and wood cabinetry pops in the white environment, while a large-scale painting by Karine Leger creates a focal point.





**Above:** A Jonathan Adler tête-à-tête, upholstered in indigo fabric from Cowtan & Tout, creates additional seating in the library. The central CHP fixture is by Michael Amato for The Urban Electric Co., and the brass picture lights are by Obsolete. An antique game table is surrounded with Caribou chairs by Ochre. "The library was an amazing transformation of an existing space that really didn't have much character," says general contractor Bryan Murphy.

**Opposite:** Because this is a family of avid readers, they wanted a library to serve as the central gathering spot in their home. Lowengart designed bookshelves for the walls and had everything coated in a blue lacquer. A pair of BassamFellows wingback chairs in dark blue leather sourced from Coup D'Etat creates a reading area by the fireplace.



We built the entire room around the draperies crafted with Christopher Farr's Carnival fabric," says the designer of the master suite. The wool rug was purchased at Harbinger in Los Angeles. "This piece was made for the space, with blues and greens that couldn't be more perfect." An Anglo-Indian teak bench from 1stdibs cozies up to a Perriand Natural Rush bed from Hollywood at Home in Los Angeles.

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**Above:** Galbraith & Paul's Lotus wallpaper defines the master bathroom. The clients' collection of prints from Hawaii tells a colorful—and nostalgic—story above the tub. Lowengart reinvented the existing cabinetry with Wedgewood Gray paint by Benjamin Moore and added new knobs and faucets from Waterworks. Sloane sconces by The Urban Electric Co. wear Charlecote Space shades by Brunschwig & Fils.

**Opposite:** The lofty master suite boasts cathedral ceilings, so Lowengart used subtle color to create warmth. She painted the walls in Benjamin Moore's Picnic Basket. In the sitting area, Lowengart hung two paintings that the clients found while vacationing in Italy. The clients' chairs provide a more private place to read.