

New England HOME

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This *New* Old House

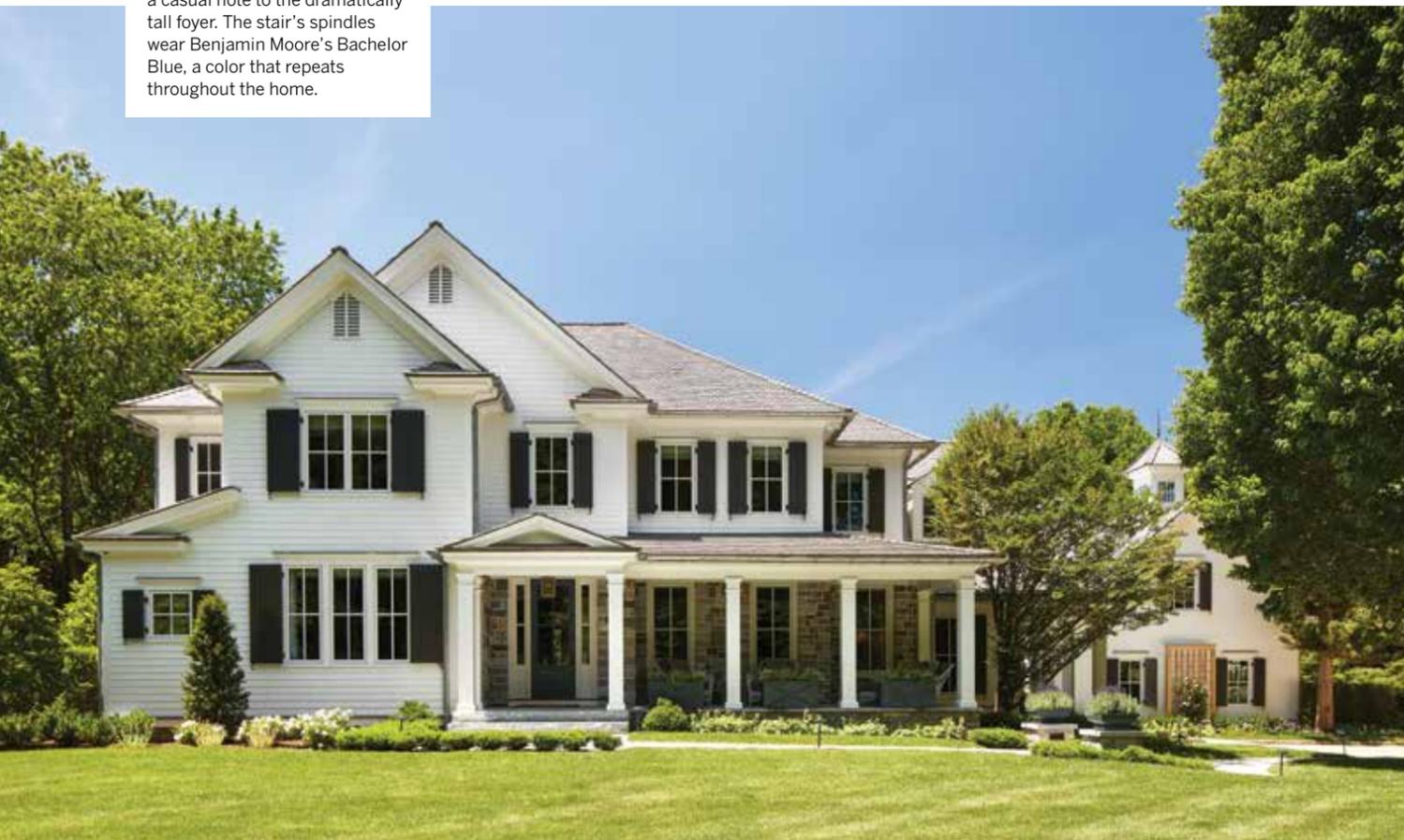
A Fairfield home is so transformed, even its owners hardly recognize it as the house they've lived in for two decades.

Text by PAULA M. BODAH
Photography by LAURA MOSS
Styled by ANNA MOLVIK

Landscape architect Neil Brunetti completely reworked the backyard, creating a series of relaxing and entertaining spaces linked by stonework, fencing, and low-maintenance plants in a variety of shapes and textures.

Back in the early 2000s, their new house was just what the couple wanted. The two-story dwelling combined gabled and hipped rooflines and sported a columned front portico, a generous porch, and the asymmetrical

BELOW: Architect Michael Smith brought symmetry and consistency to the front of the house with simple two-over-two windows flanked with shutters. Removing the porch railing exposed the attractive stonework skirting; Brunetti replaced the overgrown shrubbery with dwarf boxwoods and low-growing perennials. **FACING PAGE:** Paneling inset with shiplap adds a casual note to the dramatically tall foyer. The stair's spindles wear Benjamin Moore's Bachelor Blue, a color that repeats throughout the home.



combination of arched and rectangular windows that had a moment of popularity as the century was turning. And its location, a pretty and spacious lot in a Fairfield neighborhood, made for a fine place to raise a family.

Time passed, as it does, and the children grew into adulthood and moved on to lives of their own. The husband and wife took a hard look at their home and realized it could use an update.

While some couples might have chosen to downsize, this pair liked the idea of keeping the house that held so many happy memories. “We wanted it to feel fresher and more modern,” the wife says. A new look, chic and elegant but casual and comfortable, was really all the house needed to suit the next phase of the couple’s life, which the wife confesses she hopes includes entertaining grandchildren in the not too distant future.



Interior designer Christine McGovern went for plenty of texture in the living room, starting with the abstract rug the homeowners already had and adding a crushed velvet sofa, Phillip Jeffries jute wallpaper, and draperies of linen by Anna French for Thibaut.



“I’m always thinking about ceilings. They tend to get overlooked, but there are so many design possibilities.”
— ARCHITECT MICHAEL SMITH



Simple kitchen cabinets sport polished white-bronze pulls to match the trim of the range hood. Pendant lights from Circa Lighting hang above an island topped with leatherside white quartzite. **FACING PAGE:** The jewel box of a dining room wows with its glossy blue ceiling, a live-edge walnut table, and OCHRE's Arctic Pear chandelier.

Of course, when it comes to home renovations, nothing is ever as simple as it sounds. The overhaul turned into a ten-month project that involved gutting the inside almost entirely. “We replaced every surface, every door, every piece of trim,” says architect Michael Smith.

The essential structure and footprint are the same, but the changes wrought by Smith, along with interior designer Christine McGovern and landscape architect Neil Brunetti, are so profound, it almost seems like magic.

Outside, Smith introduced simplicity

and symmetry for a timeless farmhouse look. He swapped out fussy windows with simple two-over-twos flanked by shutters. An Alaskan cedar roof will weather to a pleasing gray to complement the new white siding. The only additions are the cupola-topped detached garage and a sitting room that takes advantage of the sunny rear of the house.

The front door opens to a double-height foyer that might be called grand if not for a certain playfulness. A dazzling Shakúff chandelier of glass cylinders hangs from a brass herringbone-patterned plate



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The Galahad chandelier from Currey & Company, a stunner of sea-green glass disks of varying sizes, hangs in the main bedroom above a custom platform bed by Baker, while Vanguard club chairs upholstered in chenille flank the fireplace. A hallway is outfitted in Phillip Jeffries Husk wallcovering in Iris Root. The main bathroom's shower is clad in Fior Di Bosco quartzite.



ARCHITECTURE: Michael Smith, Michael Smith Architects
INTERIOR DESIGN: Christine McGovern, Christine McGovern Design
BUILDER: Chris Shea, Domus Constructors
LANDSCAPE DESIGN: Neil Brunetti, Brunetti Design Group

that echoes the wood floor below. Smith outfitted the high walls with square panels inset with horizontal shiplap. The foyer holds the first glimpse of the blue hue that carries through the design. “The starting point for the palette came from the kitchen’s Lacanche French-blue range,” McGovern explains. Here in the

foyer, it manifests in the staircase; McGovern called on decorative painter Deidre Mannix, who cerused the columns of the railing with black stain then rubbed Benjamin Moore Bachelor Blue into the grain of the wood. The same blue makes an appearance again in the dining room, this time in the

stunning high-gloss finish on the ceiling, a design triumph with its X-spoke coffers and shiplap. “I’m always thinking about ceilings,” Smith says. “They tend to get overlooked, but there are so many design possibilities.” In fact, every room has a unique ceiling treatment, from the relatively simple cedar of the sunroom to



The sunroom is everybody's favorite indoor spot, tailor-made for relaxing by the fire with a cocktail or a good book. Summer Classics woven sofas face off over a low coffee table crafted of reclaimed Russian oak.



the deep coffers of the main bedroom.

The interior design plan, which both the homeowner and McGovern say was a close collaboration, emphasizes texture—a crushed velvet sofa in the living room (in that same luscious French blue), Phillip Jeffries silk and abaca wallcovering in the main bedroom, the rustic live edge of the dining room table—with furniture

and fixtures in a mix of classic and contemporary style.

The design team and their clients agree the end result is a true transformation. “It really looks like a different house,” the homeowner reports. Even her kids, she says with a laugh, can hardly believe this beautiful “new” house is their childhood home.

EDITOR’S NOTE: For details, see Resources.



A walkway and stairs of Hispania granite run between the pergola-covered dining area and the swimming pool. **FAR LEFT:** A walkway between the house and the garage leads through the arched gate to the backyard swimming pool.