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# MODERN INTERVENTION

A TRADITIONAL HOUSE IN CONNECTICUT IS DRAMATICALLY UPDATED WITH THOUGHTFUL MATERIALS, MINIMALIST DETAILS AND A CONNECTION TO THE LANDSCAPE.

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INTERIOR DESIGN / AMANDA MARROCCHIO, AMANDA MARROCCHIO ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN LLC,  
AND GARY CRUZ, GARY CRUZ STUDIO  
HOME BUILDER / RICK BELLEFEUILLE, PRUTTING & CO. CUSTOM BUILDERS LLC  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / DIANE DEVORE, DEVORE ASSOCIATES LLC





In the light-filled entry, an ottoman designed by Jean-Michel Wilmotte, from Holly Hunt, is upholstered with Zimmer + Rohde fabric and provides a place to view *When I Was Ten*, 2008, by James Siena. Designer Gary Cruz customized the wool-and-hemp rug, which features a silk border.



**D**riving along almost any winding Connecticut road, numerous clapboard Colonial houses dot the lush landscape, a fact architect Amanda Martocchio had in mind when she renovated the New Canaan home of David and Virginia Schwartz. But perhaps more than anything else, Martocchio was thinking about modernism. "New Canaan has a tradition of modern design," she says. "The area has a strong appreciation for what the movement was all about, which is openness, a connection to the outdoors, a pared-down aesthetic and interesting materials."

The Schwartz's original residence was a 1990s house built in the Colonial style to fit in with the nearby historical homes. Because of this, the structure lacked a certain authenticity and had no modern qualities—things the couple had come to appreciate and crave. "We had lived in our house for a little more than ten years," says David, who worked on Wall Street and is now a private investor. "We loved our neighborhood and didn't want to leave, but we wanted something different. We wanted something clean and simple." At a point when the couple was at the end

of their traditional rope, they serendipitously bumped into Martocchio and, soon after, the Schwartzes commissioned her to renovate their master suite. "They were dipping their toes in the water and were apprehensive about remodeling their entire house," she says. "But once they saw the completed master suite, they decided to take the plunge."

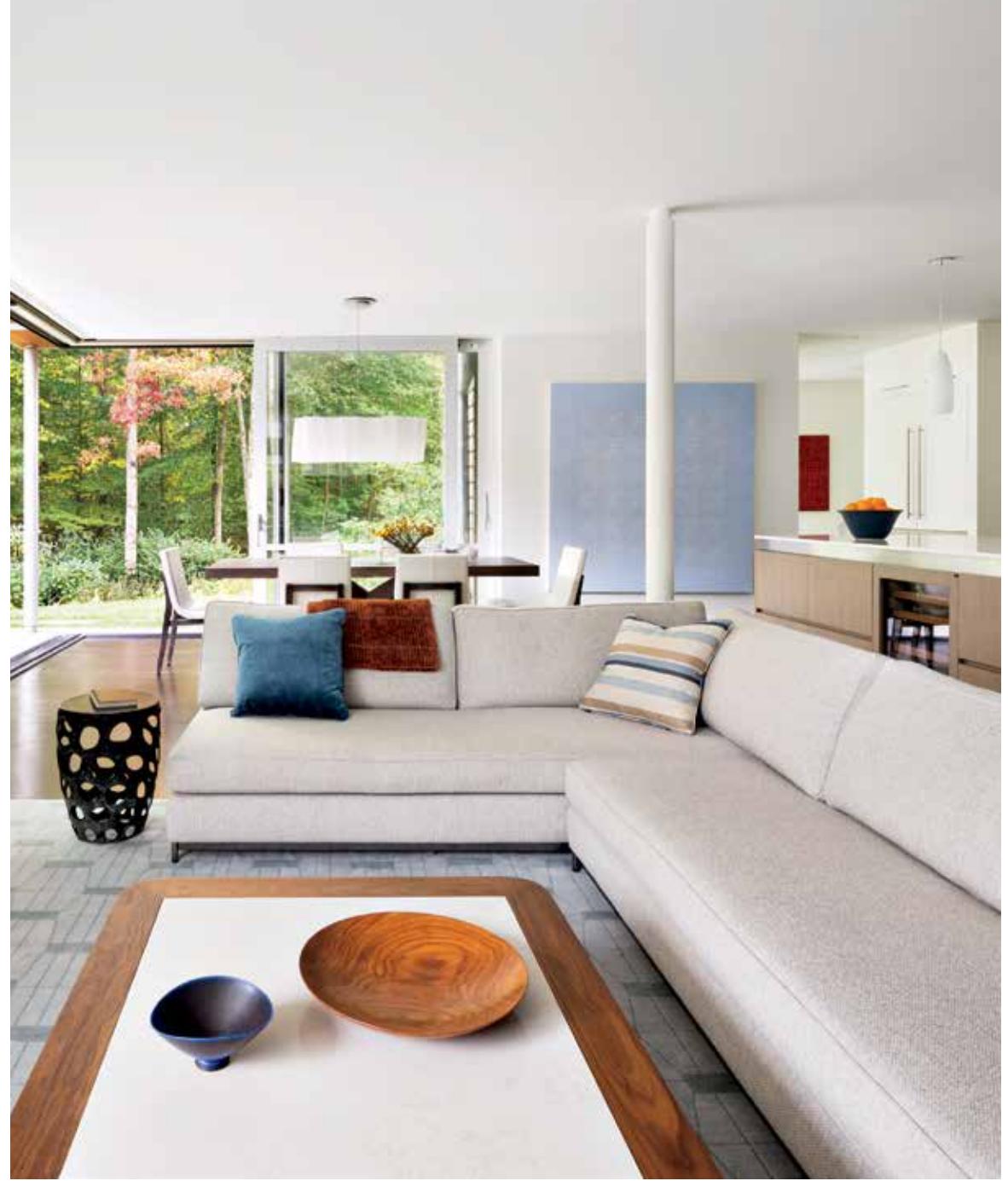
Making her initial updates to the home on the outside first, Martocchio, with the help of project manager Rick Bellefeuille, replaced the cedar shake roof with standing-seam lead-coated copper. "We gutted the entire house and kept only the frame, which we then added onto," says Bellefeuille. "We took a traditional home and incorporated numerous modern features." The team also switched out double-hung windows for the casement variety and maintained the stone front facade, but decided to change the portico to a glass canopy that suspends above the teak door—a modern move on the architect's part.

While Martocchio took a less-is-more approach to the architectural details, she took a more-is-more approach to the coveted indoor-outdoor connection the Schwartzes craved. Sited next to a wooded nature preserve, the

Traditional elements, including a stone façade and cedar clapboard siding, are balanced with such modernist details as a glass canopy above the teak front door and a lead-coated copper roof. Landscape architect Diane Devore designed a stately lawn plinth for the approach that sets up the house's old-meets-new aesthetic.



Jens Risom for Ralph Pucci armchairs, covered with Nina Campbell fabric, flank a Christian Liaigre table in the living room, which connects to a screened-in porch. Charles Clary's *Drug-a-Diddle Cirrhosis*, 2012, hangs above a console by Holly Hunt Studio opposite *Calypso Blues*, 1992, by Dan Christensen. The drapery fabric is from Osborne & Little.



An open-plan space that comprises the kitchen, a casual dining area and the family room was added to the house's square footage. *Cycle IV*, 2013, by Dan Walsh hangs in the dining area, while a Minotti sofa, a Vladimir Kagan low table from Ralph Pucci and another Cruz-designed rug lend sleek simplicity to the family room.

property featured an enviable landscape, but as it were, the house had small windows in all the wrong places. "Amanda blew out the entire back corner of the house and added 1,000 square feet to the rear façade," says Bellefeuille on how they decided to let in more light. Martocchio then installed a 12-foot-wide glass door on the northeast corner to capitalize on the views. "You can slide the doors into pockets and really remove part of the house to connect with nature," she says. Just beyond the glass, the interior is a modernist oasis that features an open-plan living space. Two upper-level balconies, a lower-level screened-in porch, a mudroom and an office make up the rest of the house's added space.

To streamline the interiors, Martocchio partnered with her longtime friend, designer Gary Cruz, who brought in his innate sense of color to liven up the neutral palette. "I like to start with rugs and build up from there," says Cruz, who designs his own hand-knotted floorcoverings that are woven in Nepal and sold at his studio in New York City. The designer customized rugs for each space in the residence, giving each room a distinct color—such as a pumpkin border on the rug in the dining room and a chartreuse edge on the rug in the entry—despite the open floor plan.

When it came time to choose art, it was important to both designers that the artwork wasn't purely for



The northeast corner of the house displays massive sliding glass doors that connect the casual dining space to the backyard and an adjacent nature preserve. An Artemide pendant suspends above an oak table from Cliff Young and Holly Hunt Studio chairs.

**Right:** Architect Amanda Martocchio created fluidity between the indoors and the outdoors with transparent walls. Wood floors add warmth while bluestone pavers, also featured on the residence's exterior, provide texture, an organic quality and continued harmony between the interiors and the landscape.

**Opposite:** Plenty of storage and remarkable views to the wooded nature preserve, seen through casement windows that Martocchio used to replace double-hung windows, make the office one of homeowner Virginia Schwartz's favorite places in the new house.



"NEW CANAAN HAS A STRONG APPRECIATION FOR MODERNISM: OPENNESS, A CONNECTION TO THE OUTDOORS AND A PARED-DOWN AESTHETIC."

-AMANDA MARTOCCHIO

Limestone tile on the fire surround and a woven stool from Trovare Home Design are textures that add interest in the monochromatic master bedroom; *Rose Window Series*, 2006, by Mary Judge, lends a graphic quality. Osborne & Little fabric covers a chaise designed by Christian Liaigre; the drapery silk is by Kravet.



An idiosyncratic pendant by Luceplan suspends from a barrel-vaulted ceiling in the master bath. Built-in sconces by Circa Lighting, made with brushed nickel and frosted glass, offset the custom walnut vanity. Venetian plaster walls and quartzite tile flooring create luxury in the space.

decoration—there had to be intent. “Amanda and I urged the Schwartzes to start looking at the work of great contemporary artists,” says Cruz, an artist in his own right who received a Pollock-Krasner grant and exhibited work at White Columns exhibition space and The Drawing Center museum in Manhattan. The couple had a great collection of traditional wall hangings but they seemed out of place in their new, more modern home. So, with a persuasive bent from both Cruz and Martocchio, they decided it was time for a more serious art collection. “We reduced the amount of decorative objects so that the art we were bringing in was regarded as spectacular and special,” David says.

The new design expression of the Schwartz’s home now successfully incorporates the unique, modern heritage of New Canaan while still highlighting its illustrious traditional vernacular. By preserving the gabled roof and the stone façade outside, and then eliminating impractical details and ornamentation on the inside, harmony prevails between the old and the new. But what truly stands out is how the architect created something more fluid and connected to the outdoors. “With so many houses going up in the last 20 years that look identical, there’s a greater appreciation for diversity and innovation,” Martocchio says. “I always want to create homes that are unique and reflect the way we live today.” ■



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