

More From Less

Peeling away outdated layers exposes a house's modern soul.

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The family room is adjacent to the kitchen. Its sleek fireplace wall, finished in floor-to-ceiling gray porcelain, replaced a heavy rustic stone hearth that felt of another era. "The fireplace design emphasizes the verticality of the room," says architect Amanda Martocchio. "The asymmetrical shape gives it energy."

For a couple facing retirement and an empty nest, the goal was simplicity. However, getting there was not a simple task. Downsizing meant not just a smaller house and one-level living but a complete change of architectural attitude.

“Our last house was a large colonial with heavy moldings,” says the husband. “We had evolved to liking cleaner, more modern settings.”

A house hunt led him and his wife to a beautiful piece of property—four acres of former farmland near New Canaan. The existing house situated on said property, however, seemed





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: On the exterior, Martocchio replaced a foreboding stone turret with a welcoming glass-encased vertical portal that breaks through the linear roofline. Adding an expanse of sliding glass doors enhanced the view from the kitchen and family room to the pool and pergola. In the dining area off the living room, dark-framed windows add visual contrast while also emphasizing the view. The kitchen reflects the architect's penchant for Scandinavian design; light wood cabinets by Crane by Northeast frame the white backsplash behind the cooktop, and Foscarini pendant lights emphasize the cathedral ceiling's height.



uncomfortably stuck between genres. Built in 1984, its long one-story roofline said contemporary, but its cylindrical stone tower stood like a feudal sentry at the front door. “The property deserved a better house,” says the wife.

Enter Amanda Martocchio, whose eponymous New Canaan-based practice is inspired by a legacy of local midcentury modern design; the town boasts more than 100 houses designed by such architectural legends as Marcel Breuer, Eliot Noyes, and Philip Johnson.

Martocchio was also smitten by the site: “I have to underscore how fabulous this property is.” Although it is some ten miles from the Connecticut coast, she says, “It’s set on a hill and on a clear day you can see Long Island Sound.”



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Game-changing renovations in the primary bedroom include a raised ceiling and a pair of sliding glass doors with a window above. The updated mudroom, which can be entered from the garage or backyard, offers storage both practical and attractive. A structural beam and new staircase in the front entry become a sculptural visage; the stairs lead to a small home office, the only livable space on the second level.



Together owners and architect addressed the dated house. They came up with a new design that turns the disparate pieces into a cohesive whole while bringing welcome light into the interior with new windows and sliding doors that maximize the views. “The clients were great allies in the design



ABOVE: Tall pines and ornamental grasses are a lush backdrop for the simple poolside pergola. **BELOW:** The site was also given a cleaner, more modern appearance. A terrace for outdoor entertaining has a view of the valley that is dramatic in all seasons; in the foreground, lawn and stepping-stone slabs lead to the pool.

and definitely supportive in the clean-line approach,” says Martocchio.

The stone turret is gone, replaced with a two-story glass-front entry that when lit from within is a welcoming beacon calling the traveler home. Extending the linear configuration of the house added square footage for a much-improved kitchen/family room at one end and an expanded primary suite at the other. In each instance, Martocchio raised the ceilings to the rafters. “The elevated spaces are uplifting and have a sense of wellness,” she says.

Taking full advantage of the setting also required reworking the landscaping. The homeowners worked closely with Broadbent Design Studio to cull overgrowth and soften the hardscaping. “We found that even changing small things can have a big impact,” says the wife of the experience. “I loved our other house, but we’ve never looked back.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: For details, see Resources.

ARCHITECTURE: Amanda Martocchio Architecture

BUILDER: Auburn Landing

LANDSCAPE DESIGN: Broadbent Design Studio

