

HOMEOWNERS LAUREN HOLLERAN (RIGHT) and Katie Salter arranged seating around a corner of the island, making it a good spot for a parent to help a kid with homework. Walnut Cherner stools are from Design Within Reach; Mega Bulb pendants are from Lekker. The patterned floor tiles "add unexpected pop to the space," says interior designer Dee Elms.



# Worth the Wait

AFTER DELAYING 7 YEARS TO COMPLETE A RENOVATION, A FAMILY OF SIX IS NOW PERFECTLY AT HOME

WRITTEN BY JACI CONRY  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL J. LEE

**F**or four years, Lauren Holleran and Katie Salter lived happily in a modest, 1,700-square-foot house in Cambridge, Massachusetts. But in 2008, with their twin sons Teddy and Nick then 4 years old and another set of twins, Eleanor and Henry, on the way, they decided it was time for a change. "We needed a bigger house, but Cambridge is a tricky place," says Holleran, an agent with Sotheby's who has worked in local real estate for more than a decade. "The houses that tend to come on the market are either really small or very large — we wanted a more medium-sized place."

So when an 1877 Victorian with just over 2,400 square feet on three floors came on the market, Holleran pounced on the listing. "I didn't even go upstairs; I took one look inside the living room and I knew it was the one,"



**REMOVING THE WALL** between the kitchen and dining area (LEFT TOP) created an open, inviting space where the whole family can gather. Elms added color to the predominately white kitchen (ABOVE) with orange trim on the Roman shades. The subway tile has a nubby rustic finish similar to brick, which adds texture. From the front door, the view into the kitchen (LEFT BOTTOM) is enhanced by the updated foyer, where contemporary artwork adds interest.



#### KITCHEN INSIGHTS **BALANCING ACT**

Initially, Lauren Holleran and Katie Salter thought about using kitchen cabinets from IKEA. Their contractor, Maurice Keane of M.F. Keane Contracting in Cambridge, Massachusetts, had other ideas. "I really encouraged them to go with custom cabinets in a custom color," he says. "With four kids in the house, the cabinetry is going to get a lot of wear and tear. IKEA cabinets may look pretty, but they don't have a long life span when heavily used." In the end, they agreed on cabinets finished in pale gray, all custom made by Walter Lane Cabinetmaker of Haverhill, Massachusetts.

The kitchen island, finished with a Caesarstone countertop in rich charcoal gray, has seating on two sides. "I wanted the seating on both sides because it seemed it would be a comfortable scenario for an adult working on homework with a kid," says Holleran.

Interior designer Dee Elms also created an expansive farmhouse-style table, which she surrounded with classic Midcentury Modern Eames molded-plastic armchairs. While the room is spare and minimal, Elms injected elements of distinction. For example, into the ceramic faux-bois floor tiles, she inserted patterned tiles that set off the island, and she designed a striking monolithic light fixture above the table.

"We love that the kitchen is a very clean, contemporary space while feeling warm," says Holleran. "It's the perfect balance."

**IN THE DINING** area, Elms removed a brick wall and replaced it with an arrangement of built-ins that provide storage for every family member. She also designed both the expansive farmhouse-style table and the impressive light fixture, which was fabricated by Bone Simple Design.

she recalls. Salter agreed. Soon, the house was theirs.

Although the home was the right size and in the right location, the interior, says Holleran, "was all beat up." There had been an ill-conceived renovation in the 1970s that left the place with a depressing, dated vibe. "We knew the house had so much potential," says Holleran, but the priorities were practical: insulation and new mechanicals. "We spent all our money on the un-sexy things," she says. They did repaint and replace carpets, but that's as far as their budget would extend. They were willing to bide their time until they could undertake a complete interior overhaul.

Flash forward seven years. The couple had saved money for the update, but logistics prevented them from moving ahead. "We'd been ready for a while," says Holleran, "but with the four kids, we were always stumped about where

we'd live during the renovation." That changed when the couple learned that their immediate neighbors were leaving the country for a year-long sabbatical. It was kismet. Now the family could simply move next door to let the work on their house begin in earnest.

With the help of Dee Elms of Elms Interior Design in Boston, they stuck to the one-year time frame and completed the renovation and moved back home before their neighbors returned.

Space planning was the first order of business. "There isn't a ton of extra space to work with," says Elms, "so we had to be really intentional with the design." The project involved a complete kitchen overhaul, the expansion of the second-floor bathroom, the remaking of the children's bathroom on the third floor, where a new dormer was also installed, and refurbishing the living room and bedrooms.

An exposed chimney ran through the center of the house — smack in the middle of the former kitchen island — which significantly compromised usable space. By removing the chimney, says their builder, Maurice Keane of M.F. Keane Contracting in Cambridge, they got “a great deal more room to move around the kitchen and the two small bathrooms.” In particular, the bathroom on the third floor, which Holleran says was “so horrible, it was barely habitable,” picked up headroom with the addition of the dormer and became not only functional with a full-size tub and shower but also fun with bold chartreuse paint on the angled walls.

The original kitchen was dark and closed off from other rooms on the main level. Taking down a wall between it and the dining room “really changed the space,” says Elms. “It now feels more open and interactive.” Two new windows by the stove bathe the area with natural light. “The idea was to keep all aspects of the room bright, clean, and contemporary,” says Elms. Even the pendant lights above the island are nearly translucent. “I didn’t want them to be heavy or imposing,” says the designer.

“Katie has a more contemporary style; she’s more of a minimalist,” says Holleran. “I



**THE MANTEL** in the living room was given a modern update. Grass-cloth wallcovering by Holland & Sherry “is relaxing and tonal,” says Elms. Touches of blue are found in the silk Roman shades and the barrel chairs Elms had reupholstered in velvet. In the foyer (FACING PAGE), a painting by Sol LeWitt sits atop a custom console table. The orange stools can be used for extra seating in the living room.



**THE THIRD-FLOOR children's bathroom (LEFT TOP), enlarged by taking space from a closet in another room, got a fun finish with Benjamin Moore Fresh Grass paint. In one of the boys' bedrooms (LEFT BOTTOM), an array of small prints adds color and character. A black-and-white wallcovering (RIGHT TOP) by Sara Story for Holland & Sherry enlivens the powder room; Elms designed the mirror. While not large, the master bathroom (BOTTOM RIGHT) packs a punch with cool finishes. The hexagon floor tile has a gray perimeter strip that matches the base of the custom vanity.**



**THE MASTER BEDROOM is cozy, serene, and simply designed. "The owners didn't want to go over the top in here," says Elms. The bed and nightstands are from Room & Board; the grass-cloth wallcovering behind the bed is by Phillip Jeffries.**

love warmth, and I wanted really good solutions for where stuff goes — to help control the chaos of life with young children." In the dining room, new built-ins allow each family member to have his or her own drawer.

There's also a drawer devoted to crafts and another for technology such as iPods and chargers. "Before, we had no storage. We'd do crafts with the kids and then have to throw it away because there was no place to store it," she says.

Because Holleran and Salter both like orange, Elms strategically added pops of the hue to the trim on the Roman shades in the kitchen, throw pillows in the living room, and the cylindrical upholstered stools in the foyer.

While an architect involved in the project early on proposed making the first floor an open plan by removing the living-room

wall, Elms disagreed. "The room has a lovely scale and beautiful trim work," she says. It's now the spot the family gathers in the most. Elms lightened up the space with mouldings painted a creamy off-white and designed a new mantel and fireplace surround that echoes the beige tones in the grass cloth wallcovering.

Two three-legged vintage chairs have a low profile and are upholstered in dark-blue mohair. "As soon as I saw them, I knew they'd be perfect," says Elms. She also added an oversize sectional from Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams where the whole family can curl up. It has high arms, contemporary lines, and deep cozy cushions. "It's big enough for three kids and one parent to stretch out comfortably, and all of us can squeeze on," says Holleran. "We often all end up here reading together. It's really wonderful." ■

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