

YOUR HOME

Design Refreshers

DESIGNER / LEAH WARD

LOCATION / CAMBRIDGE

Sister Act

ALONG WITH MAKING THEIR HOME WELCOMING AND PRACTICAL, A CAMBRIDGE COUPLE WANTED TO ENCOURAGE THEIR FOUR DAUGHTERS' CREATIVITY.

BY JACI CONRY // PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL J. LEE

THE OWNERS OF THIS 1885 Victorian just outside Harvard Square were living in Colombia when their fourth daughter was born five years ago. The husband and wife, who had relocated to South America from Boston, soon decided it was time to head back home.

"They called me from Bogota to ask if I would help them with the interiors," says interior designer Leah Ward, who had worked with the couple years earlier when they lived in the Back Bay. She welcomed the chance to reconnect.

The spacious home is on a cul-de-sac off Brattle Street, within walking distance of the older daughters' school. "It's an ideal spot for them, but when they bought the place, it was completely dark and choppy inside," says Ward. "A lot of work had to be done to make it right for the way they wanted to live."

The family expected art to play a central role in the design of the home. But reconfiguring the space came first. One of the dual chimneys and a secondary stairway were removed to make room for a prominent central staircase at the front of the house. Now, the original third-floor laylight—a glazed panel on the roof, similar to a skylight, that's flush with the ceiling—filters sunlight down through all three levels of the home.



The third-floor art room has amazing natural light, says interior designer Lee Ward. A wall of new shelves gives the girls room to display their creations and treasures. New wide-plank oak floors complement the lively pink-and-orange color scheme. A pendant light by Vaughan, purchased through Webster & Company at the Boston Design Center, hangs above the custom table.

Removing the chimney and second stairway also created more usable space on the second floor that could accommodate the expansion of all four bedrooms. Windows with cozy seats were added on either end of the hallway to anchor the space. "The window seats were also an effort to create natural nooks where the girls can gather together," says Ward.

To make the kitchen a hub, they bumped it out into the yard and connected it with the adjacent family room. Walls came down, leaving space for a banquette at the hand-planed trestle-style table where the family usually sits for meals.

The cabinets and counters are white, but Ward veered away from making the space too monochromatic. "The wife is really not a white-on-white person. She didn't want the kitchen to be too stark, so to make it feel warm and welcoming, we brought in a generous dark walnut-topped island," says Ward. A colorful 30-piece canvas painting by Luc Leestemaker adds flair.

The dramatic painting has plenty of company. "The couple is very interested in the makers behind the art and furnish-



The white kitchen cabinetry (above) contrasts with the gray Imperial Danby marble counters and backsplash. Fixtures, says Ward, “have a handcrafted, warm, textural appeal,” adding both function and visual interest. Bell jar-shaped pendants above the island are fitted with hand-forged iron, and the Ashley Norton cabinet hardware is solid bronze. Blue Manuel Canovas upholstery covers the cushion in one of the new window seats (left); blue velvet pillows are by Crate & Barrel, and orange ones are custom-made with Lee Jofa fabric. The Currey & Company semi-flush-mount ceiling fixture and bronze scones provide light.

ings they have in the home,” says Ward. “They love things that have a story to them.”

The couple’s daughters, now 12, 8, 6, and 5, got to help curate art for the home. “The parents did such a good job creating interest and passion for the arts—they let the girls have a lot of say in the paintings they selected,” says Ward, recalling family trips to the Boston Design Center and local art galleries. “As paintings were brought out, the girls would comment on the ones they liked best.” One of their favorites, a large canvas by Bruno Zupan from Galerie d’Orsay on Newbury Street depicting a blue sky and trees with pink blooms, hangs in the living room.

The parents encourage the children to explore their own creativity too. On the third floor, a storage area became a lovely, light-filled art room. “The idea was for all of the girls to be able to be working on something at the same time,” says Ward. They have a custom-made 50-inch-square table as well as two easels. Ample shelves offer plenty of space to display artwork. And they chose a bold pink-and-orange Stroheim pattern by Dana Gibson for use in the wallcoverings, window treatments, and upholstery.

Throughout the house, the decor incorporates art from Colombia, including vibrant oversize paintings. Says Ward: “It’s amazing how these bold pieces transform this old Victorian.”

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