

a rancher reborn

An architect and client work together to take a home from its 1950s confines to a capacious 21st-century space.

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Architect Catherine Knight designed the great room so that light would pour in from the wall of mullioned windows. A focal point is the undulating SuperSuede sofa, which homeowner Teri McIntyre calls "a natural gathering spot."



In its 55-year history, the modest ranch in a quiet Princeton neighborhood had sheltered four families, welcomed its share of newborns and served as a prototype for the sprawling midcentury development in South Brunswick known as Kendall Park. But by 2009 it was showing its age.

The owners, Teri and Scott McIntyre, loved to entertain, but the house's cramped and boxy interior was anything but conducive to large get-togethers. In addition, they wanted more room for their young daughter, and they desperately needed a comfortable space for Teri's sister, who lived in England and would often spend weeks visiting her relatives in the U.S. The house next door, a mirror image of the McIntyres', had been razed to make way for a new build, but Teri wanted to honor the spirit and history of her old home while creating a space that made sense for this 21st-century family.

This page: Open to the great room, the kitchen area is demarcated by an island designed by the homeowner and custom-built by Ken Union of Baxter Construction. Topped with dark gray Caesarstone quartz, it adds heft to the otherwise airy space. Opposite: A soaring white wall is grounded by the concrete Spark fireplace. Above it, the Big Bang fixture by Foscarini serves as both light source and artwork.

Enter Catherine Knight, of the Princeton-based firm Knight Architects. She took the house down to the studs—save the recently renovated kitchen and master bathroom—and deftly recast it as a stunning two-story contemporary suffused with light and air. Downstairs, she created a double-story great room that opened to both the kitchen and, through a wall of windows, the backyard. Although the room is expansive, Knight scaled it carefully, anchoring it with a clean-lined stairway and a small balcony so that the space, she says, “doesn’t overwhelm the older part of the house but instead brings it to life.” At Teri McIntyre’s insistence, the focal point of the great room is a soaring white fireplace wall and not a large-screen TV, which lives, instead, behind the mahogany pocket doors of a designated television room. To increase the feeling of space downstairs, Knight widened hallways and doorways, and installed a large bay window





Left: The homeowner selected the floating laminate vanity for an upstairs bathroom, but the color—a vivid red, echoed in the “blob” clock above the towel rack—was her daughter’s choice. Above: The maple vanity, stained charcoal gray, was inspired by a similar fixture in the ladies’ room of one of her favorite Princeton-area restaurants and built by Baxter Construction. A kidney-shaped soaking tub and the shell-like sconce illuminating it complement the room’s otherwise rectilinear design.

in the dining room, resituated to the front of the house.

Overall, she added 2,100 square feet to the original 2,000-square-foot house. About 1,500 square feet of the new living space is on the second floor, which is home to three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a laundry room and an office/storage room.

With its simple but dramatic lines, the house was the perfect envelope for McIntyre’s choice of furnishings. A curvilinear sofa in the great room makes the substantial space feel surprisingly cozy, and jolts of orange and red—in the abstract lighting fixture over the fireplace and a Pop Art-inspired clock in an upstairs bathroom, for instance—warm the house and set off elegantly severe pieces like the dining room’s square glass-topped table and stainless steel chairs. McIntyre’s favorite feature in the house is a large kidney-shaped soaking tub in the master bathroom, another curva-

ceous accent in a mostly rectilinear room.

While Knight designed the preponderance of the home’s architectural features, she ceded some decisions to the homeowners. It was that willingness to work with her client that sparked McIntyre’s confidence—and her encore career as an interior designer. For example, McIntyre helped flesh out designs for the striking three-tiered outdoor patio whose dual focal points are a graceful old magnolia tree that appears to be growing through the striated concrete floor and a sleekly modern outdoor gas fireplace whose simple black concrete surround allows the horizontal line of flame to be the star attraction. And thanks to Knight’s windowed great room, the fireplace can be enjoyed indoors and out.

“It just draws everybody,” says McIntyre—an observation that could apply equally to the house as a whole.



Above: The architect moved the dining room to the front of the house, adding a large bay window to extend the room visually. It's furnished with a glass-topped square table supported by a sleek stainless-steel base, along with matching stainless-steel chairs upholstered in orange microfiber. The large round light fixture offsets the stark linearity of the table below it. Left: The house's 1950s-era windows were enlarged to frame views of the concrete patio and the Spark gas fireplace, clad in black concrete. The architect also added a mudroom, pictured here on the far right side of the home. Opposite: The living room sits across the hall from the dining room, increasing the width of the once-narrow hallway. Mahogany pocket doors slide closed when the space is in use as a TV room. Three niches in the hallway add extra light and interest to what was initially a blank wall.

