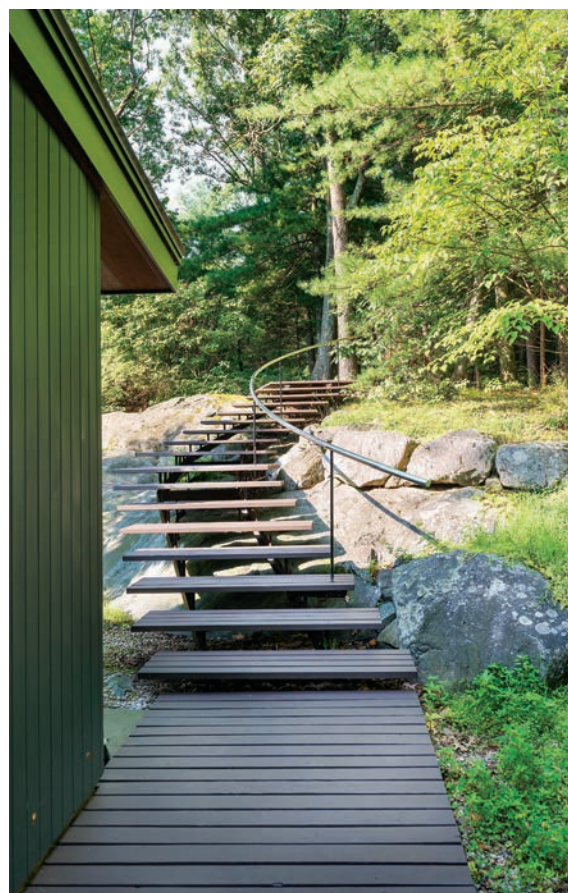


Perfectly Balanced

By LAUREN HOFER
Photography by NAT REA

THROUGH THE
PROCESS OF
RENOVATION, THE
HOMEOWNERS
AND ARCHITECTS
WORKED TO PRESERVE
THE ORIGINAL
FOOTPRINT OF THIS
SYMMETRICAL HOME.

WHILE THE HOMEOWNERS WERE ORIGINALLY CONCERNED
ABOUT HAVING SO MUCH WOOD IN THE SPACE, THIS
FLOATING ENGINEERED HARDWOOD FLOOR IN THE MAIN
LIVING AREAS WAS THE PERFECT FINISH.



(OPPOSITE, TOP) THE HOME WAS IN SUCH GOOD SHAPE THAT THE OUTSIDE NEEDED LITTLE WORK. OTHER THAN FIXING SOME STONESTONE AND PAINTING THE HOUSE GRAY, MOST OF THE WORK WAS DONE ON THE INTERIOR.

(OPPOSITE, LEFT) A SIGNATURE OF THE ORIGINAL ARCHITECTS, THIS STAIRCASE GLIDES NEATLY OVER THE EXPOSED RIDGE OUTSIDE.

Tucked away in Lincoln, Massachusetts, is a small colony of 23 modernist homes. Known as Brown's Wood, these homes were designed as a sort of cooperative in the 1950s by some of the best local architects of the time, and this particular home, designed by Walter Hill and Henry B. Hoover, was built in 1958.

"There's a really powerful symmetry about the house," says Colin Flavin, founding principal of Flavin Architects, the Boston firm that remodeled the home in 2017. "It's a very symmetrical floor plan." Heather Souza, senior associate at Flavin Architects and the project architect for this renovation, oversaw the details and execution—everything from the lighting fixtures and color schemes to the dramatically upgraded master bathroom.

"There's a really powerful symmetry about the house."

INITIAL INTENTION

When interviewing different architects to renovate the house, homeowners Kim and Neal Rajdev found that many wanted to drastically change the master bedroom by removing existing walls, increasing its size and taking over the adjacent bedroom. The homeowners cared so much about the original architect's vision that they opted to keep their smaller, simpler master bedroom and work within the existing footprint of the home. "As they think about the beauty of what was created, they really want to respect that," says Colin. The family was very involved in the renovation and Kim's father even acted as project manager.

TONGUE-AND-GROOVE PANELING ON THE WALLS AND CEILING FILL THE SPACE WITH WARMTH, WHILE THE DARK-GRAY EXPOSED BEAMS STAND OUT AGAINST THE NATURAL WOOD.





DESIGN IN THE DETAILS

Some of the early renovation conversations revolved around what to do with the existing tongue-and-groove paneling as well as the exposed beams and floors. "The client was at first a little nervous about having so much wood," says Heather, "but then we decided to remain with the original intention, and we kept all the wood natural, as it was from the beginning."

The beams and fireplace were initially all white, but painting the beams a dark gray and wrapping the fireplace with neolith iron gray brought a more modern element to the space. The original lighting fixtures in the main living spaces were much smaller opal pendants, so adding the large white Moooi Random Lights was another modern take on the classic midcentury features.

MAKING IT COMFORTABLE

Colin says that when renovating midcentury homes in the suburbs of Boston, one of the first features they often notice is a wood-burning stove. "That is an early warning that the house has never been able to be heated properly," he says. As a result, homes like this one can be particularly uncomfortable to live in, especially during the cold winter months.

(ABOVE) KITCHEN RENOVATIONS INCLUDED REMOVING A WALL THAT SEPARATED THE KITCHEN FROM THE DINING ROOM WHERE THE OPEN SHELVING UNIT IS. THIS CREATED A MORE FUNCTIONAL LIVING AREA FOR THE HOMEOWNERS.

(OPPOSITE) ONCE WHITE, THIS NOW NEOLITH GRAY FIREPLACE IS A STUNNING FOCAL POINT IN THE MAIN LIVING AREA.



THE FLOOR IN THE KITCHEN AND DINING AREAS WAS ORIGINALLY TILED WITH 2-SQUARE-INCH TILES. CHOOSING TO USE THESE 24-SQUARE-INCH GRAY TILES MODERNIZED THE SPACE AND GAVE IT A SOFT CONCRETE FEELING.



Part of the home's symmetry lies with the unique placement of the kitchen in the heart of the home.





(ABOVE) INSTEAD OF CHANGING THE FLOOR PLAN TO CREATE A LARGE MASTER SUITE, THE HOMEOWNERS DECIDED TO KEEP THIS SMALLER SPACE TO RESPECT THE ORIGINAL FOOTPRINT.

(LEFT) THIS SPACE WENT THROUGH A MAJOR OVERHAUL. HEATHER OVERSAW MOVING THE VANITY TO THE OPPOSITE END OF THE ROOM TO OPEN UP THIS PREVIOUSLY BOX-LIKE SHOWER AND BATH SPACE WITH MODERN AND FUNCTIONAL FEATURES LIKE THE CURBLESS SHOWER AND ANN SACKS TILE.

(OPPOSITE) THE LOCATION OF THIS DOUBLE VANITY IS WHERE A LARGE CABINET ONCE STOOD. TO OPEN UP THE BATHROOM, THE CABINETRY WAS REMOVED, AND THIS MODERN VANITY WAS INSTALLED.

To make the home more livable, they added insulation to the roof and other necessary heating and cooling features. “We put down new radiant floor heating throughout all the bedroom and family spaces,” says Heather, also noting the addition of mini-split units to the walls in multiple rooms to supplement for warmth.

THE HEART OF THE HOME

In the main living space, the team removed a wall that separated the kitchen from the dining room. “That was sort of typical in the 1950s,” says Colin. “The kitchen would really be kept contained from the rest of the house.” Opening up the space to better fit the family’s lifestyle allowed them to keep the concept intact while still modernizing the layout.

“We want to respect the integrity of what was created originally. So in this kitchen, for example, the location of the cooktop and sink is where things were originally,” says Colin. “We replaced all the finishes, but we kept the concept.” Part of the home’s symmetry lies with the unique placement of the kitchen in the heart of the home. “It sits right in the center of the house, which I think is a neat metaphor,” says Colin, “It has a wonderful kind of family-centered focus.”

“We decided to remain with the original intention, and we kept all the wood natural, as it was from the beginning.”

PROJECT NOTEBOOK

PROJECT BREAKDOWN

Year built: 1958
Location: Lincoln, Massachusetts
Original Architect: Walter Hill and Henry B. Hoover
Room Count: 5 bedrooms and 2 baths
Year of Renovation: 2017
Length of Renovation: 6 months

SAVE VS. SPLURGE

A major financial focus was on upgrading the infrastructure of the home to make it a more comfortable living space, especially during the cold Massachusetts winters. Adding insulation to the roof and updated heating and cooling systems throughout the home was a necessary splurge. “Areas where we were a little bit more cost effective were the interior finishes,” says Heather. While the flooring and other finishes may have fallen under the Save category, the impeccable quality is still evident.

THE OUTDOOR STAIRCASE

The staircase outside, gliding neatly over the nearby exposed granite ridge, was designed by the original architects and is very much a part of the home’s design. “Rather than excavating steps into the stone, the original design intent was to respect the natural features of the site and let the stairs just kind of touch it very lightly,” says Colin. The placement of structures in Massachusetts is important relative to areas of exposed ridge.

FULL CIRCLE

The home was built in 1958 under the general contractor Ralph S. Osmond Co. While Ralph Osmond worked on the project, his young son David would sometimes stop by after school to sweep and clean up the construction area for his dad. Years later, the current homeowners went to the local town hall to find a builder. They discovered that not only was the Ralph S. Osmond Co. still in operation, but it was headed by David who had worked on the property as a kid. After coming full circle with this project, David Osmond hung up his belt and retired.

