

New England HOME CT

Inspired

Preserving the past, embracing the now



Architect Laura Kaehler and interior designer Jack Montgomery recently took on the renovation of a lakeside 1970s colonial that they had both worked on more than a decade ago. The most recent project included expanding the primary suite and updating the rear facade, giving it a much more contemporary look with floor-to-ceiling glass walls that expand views of the water.

EXPECT the UNEXPECTED

Traditional colonial from the front and modern marvel in the back, this New Canaan home serves up plenty of surprises.

Text by Alyssa Bird | Photography by Stefan Radtke





Creating a dream house isn't necessarily a one-shot deal: sometimes it requires multiple phases over several years, but luckily, patience is often rewarded in the end. Such was the case with this New Canaan project that architect Laura Kaehler and interior designer Jack Montgomery had each worked on more than a decade ago. During Kaehler's first go-round with the 1970s colonial, the homeowners



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The home's front facade remains largely untouched. The living room sports a sleek vibe, thanks to new windows, Stanton rugs, and a variety of custom seating upholstered in Romo (purple) and Osborne & Little (orange) fabrics. Kaehler and Montgomery collaborated on a new window above the front door that frames a xylophone-inspired light fixture by Venini. Also in the living room, a fireplace surround features black granite tiles inset with a handblown glass installation by artist Andrew Erdos.



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—Interior designer Jack Montgomery

asked what the architect might be able to do in the future, and she presented them with a sketch for a new rear facade. That sketch eventually became the inspiration for this most recent renovation, which included expanding the primary suite and updating the living room, the daughter’s bath, and some entry details, as well as redecorating the dining room, music room, and the daughter’s

bedroom. In rethinking the home’s colonial bones, the architect was able to let her imagination run wild, thanks to homeowners whose tastes are anything but traditional.

“The clients wanted something minimal and contemporary that would maximize both the daylight and the views out to the lake,” explains Kaehler, who envisioned a rear wing with floor-

ABOVE: Montgomery helped the color-loving homeowners transform an extra space into a new music room where they can also display pieces from their contemporary art collection; the drop-like light is by Leucos, and the circular wall art is by Manuel Mérida through Heather Gaudio Fine Art. **RIGHT:** The powder room, which was completed by Kaehler during the first renovation, features a red glass mosaic tile backsplash, a black-and-white marble floor, and a custom vanity topped with Striato Olimpico marble.





ABOVE: The kitchen, which is painted Benjamin Moore Spring Moss, contains a walnut-and-steel dining table designed by Montgomery, chairs from Hive, and a rug from Stark. **BELOW:** A mural created by Montgomery and based on an aerial photo of an African irrigation system makes a statement in the daughter's bedroom. **FACING PAGE:** Montgomery painted the dining room Benjamin Moore Dark Lilac and designed the table and banquette to coordinate with Kartell chairs; the artwork on the left is by Theodoros Stamos.

remains largely inconspicuous, save for a sleek new horizontal window above the door. Kaehler and Montgomery collaborated on this detail, which frames a sinuous Venini glass light fixture that recalls a xylophone. That playful piece serves as a hint to visitors of what's to come. The client directive for the interiors was clear: color, color, and more color.

"The homeowners aren't afraid of statement pieces and bold shades," says Montgomery, who notes that the couple's fascination with art has skyrocketed since he first met them and is now a major factor in the design scheme. "Having clients who are open to daring choices is such a blessing."

An existing green kitchen and red powder room are now joined by an

to-ceiling glass occupying all three levels, from the top-floor primary suite to the living room on the main floor to the walk-out basement. "I don't like when people try to copy older architecture," says Kaehler, "so we brought something new to the table that's more representative of this era."

To help with the construction—which included adding roughly 375 square feet to the primary suite, thereby lining up the exterior wall with that of the living room below—the architect brought on builder Ian Hobbs, a longtime collaborator. "We love being challenged with contemporary architecture," says Hobbs. "Traditional moldings are meant to hide imperfections, but we replaced those with very minimal versions that required us to be very precise. It takes more planning since any non-alignments will stand out."

While the rear of the house was completely reworked, the front facade





CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: Blue dominates the newly expanded primary suite; Montgomery commissioned artist Norbert Brunner to create a glass installation for the wall that separates the bedroom from the rest of the suite. The dressing room is painted Benjamin Moore Seaport Blue. The suite includes a cedar-and-glass sauna, a wet bar, a fireplace, and a porch with a spa.



orange-and-purple living room, a lacquered plum dining room, a music room with red art and accents, and a calming blue primary suite—the latter of which was top priority for the busy couple. “They both have stressful jobs, so this space functions as their retreat,” says Kaehler. “It has everything you might need: a wet bar, a sauna, a fireplace, and a porch with a spa. Jack refers to it as the ‘James Bond suite.’”

And Montgomery clearly has a special affinity for this space. “As a designer, I form such intimate relationships with my clients, and they were blown away when we revealed this room to them. This house is truly a dream come true for the homeowners, and to be part of that is powerful.”

EDITOR'S NOTE: For details, see Resources.

ARCHITECTURE:
 Laura Kaehler, Matt Arnott,
 Laura Kaehler Architects
INTERIOR DESIGN:
 Jack Montgomery,
 Jack Montgomery Design
BUILDER:
 Ian Hobbs, Hobbs

