

* The Guide to Modern Design

Metropolitan Home

What
the **PROS**
Know

TODAY
OLDHAM
Color
Fun Hou

WHITE NOW

HOT TIPS for Plotting
the Perfect Palette

9 **DREAMY** Ways to
Dress Your **BED**

Is There
\$100,000

A
Renovated
Beacon
House
Page 86



* Designer Kelly Hoppen's
serene retreat, **p.66**

February 2007
USA \$4.50
CANADA \$5.50
UK £2.95
Display until
February 12, 2007
www.methome.com





The first commandment of renovating a historic property: Honor the original architecture. Here, homeowner Kate Brizius carries her six-month-old son, Thomas, under the fan lights of the restored main entrance. Opposite: The vestibule level looks up most of the five-story stairway, which was refurbished from the parlor to the top of the house and rebuilt to the garden level below, with its newly open family room.



BRIGHT

CITY

WHITES

In **Boston**, Stern McCafferty updated a traditional Beacon Hill townhouse for an art-loving couple with four active children.

While most of their friends were fleeing the city for larger digs in Boston's surrounding suburbs, Chuck and Kate Brizius opted to stay in the city, even though they felt pinched for space. Already living in a townhouse on Beacon Hill, they didn't have to look far to find a 4,000-plus-square-foot, five-story, 1826 Federal townhouse that would give them and their four young children some elbow room. And they would stay within walking distance of Chuck's downtown investment firm while retaining prized proximity to top shopping, dining and such local amenities as the Boston Common and Public Garden.

The new home would also need to accommodate an expanding modern art collection with works by the likes of Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Claes Oldenburg and Josef Albers. Chuck is board president of Boston's famed Institute of Contemporary Art; Kate is a former jewelry expert at Skinner, Boston, and she once worked in contemporary art at Christie's, New York. Their well-honed artistic aptitude helped them focus their vision for the new space.

While house hunting, the Briziuses saw several renovation projects by Stern McCafferty and admired the firm's design aesthetic, so they asked the husband-and-wife principals to give the 180-year-old home a contemporary look. The owners were already accustomed to multifloor living, but now they wanted to avoid the chopped-up look that is characteristic of old Beacon Hill residences.

"We were intrigued by the idea of combining a modern idiom with the historic textures of the original," says David Stern. "We wanted to create a unified whole that extended over five floors." From the initial meetings, the two couples worked as a compatible team.

The spacious living room features a wool-and-silk Tibetan rug on ebonized wood floors. A Sol LeWitt gouache hangs over the sofa; a three-part Daniel Buren piece beside the spare fireplace complements a sleek contemporary chair designed by Piero Lissoni for Fritz Hansen. The room also includes custom white lacquer side tables by Diane McCafferty and a leather B&B Italia *Tulip* chair by Jeffrey Bennett (from *Montage in Boston*).

PRODUCED BY SUSAN TYREE VICTORIA. PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC ROTH.
WRITTEN BY JEFFREY OSBORNE AND CRISTINA MONIZ.







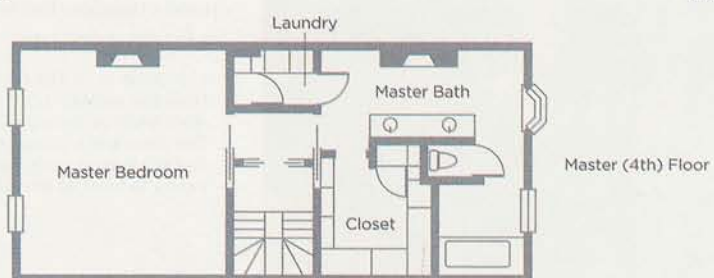
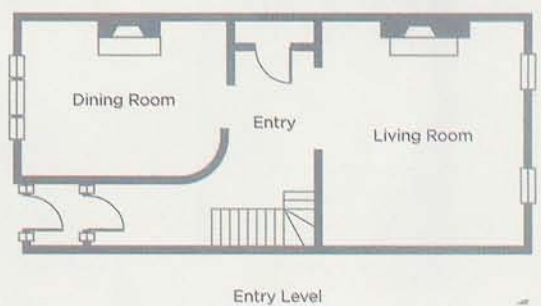
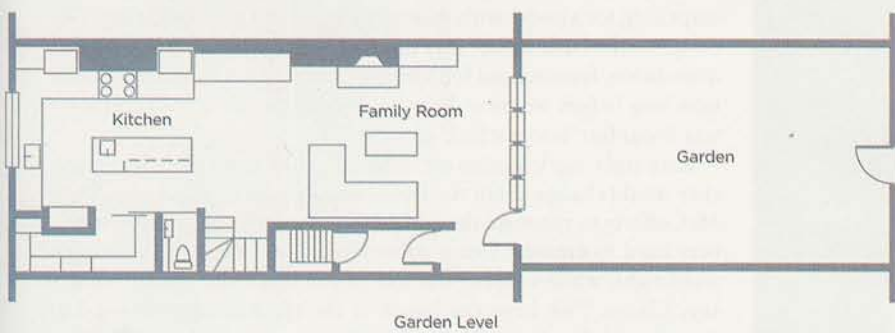
"To a large extent, Chuck and Kate wanted calm spaces, soft hues and use of whites," says Stern. "We spend most of our time working with whites, off-whites, grays and blacks. We are interested in materials, texture and details and don't often use color on its own as a design element." Diane McCafferty sourced most of the furniture and fabrics or designed them herself. The Briziuses contributed a few existing pieces and suggestions such as the fireplace surrounds in several rooms.

Downstairs, on the garden level, the designers excavated about two feet to increase the ceiling height to create an easy flow from the great room to the outdoors, using accordion doors to minimize the threshold. "Our goal," says Stern, "was to connect the family room area with the breakfast and kitchen areas through the use of similar materials: bleached American black walnut for all the millwork, ebonized oak for the floor and glass for doors and walls. In

order to keep these rooms both functional and clutter free, we used various sliding doors," he continues.

On the garden level, Stern McCafferty managed to incorporate a pantry, office space and powder room that remain concealed when not in use. A vertically sliding cabinet door hides a large flat-screen television, exposing bookshelves above, a feature the owners love. The garden was originally small, dark and cluttered so the designers consulted with landscape architect Jonathan Keep to extend the modern aesthetic outside. They added a long, stone retaining wall that doubles as a bench when entertaining.

Above: The dining room proved to be the perfect place to hang the owners' prized Josef Albers lithographs (and to display work by Claes Oldenburg and Fred Sandback). Florence chairs from John Boone surround the custom rosewood dining table. Opposite: The garden-level great room features an L-shaped Charles sofa from B&B Italia and a webbed Jens Risom chair from Knoll.





What the Pros Know

Boston architects David Stern and Diane McCafferty love white. "By using white as your basic palette, you can build on it by layering in texture and tone," says McCafferty. "In a white environment, form becomes more important. The shape and scale of objects are emphasized in a white environment." She used white wool carpeting in the master suite, which is kept clean by limiting shoe traffic. Some of the side tables throughout were selected in either white or clear acrylic to keep the eye from resting on any particular object at first glance. "There are many whites and each has a certain character," Stern says. "You have to know what you're looking for. Color is a material like any other, and it has its own scale. It's critical to test it with large samples on the walls to see what impact it will actually have. We often custom mix whites to get just the right hue," he says.



Above the parlor level of the house is a floor that was originally designed to house a guest room and a den. With four youngsters in the home, they converted the guest room into a child's room and left the den, which now houses a large collection of art books. The next level up is the master suite, which features a master bath complete with a working fireplace and walk-in closet. The bathroom has two separate zones, one housing the open shower, tub and private WC, the other featuring a floating counter with twin sinks and oversize mirror. Adjacent is a custom wood-and-glass-lined dressing room. The top floor contains two additional children's rooms and a shared bath.

The project was designed and constructed in a record 18 months, surprising for a house with this much detail and customization. "We designed the basic layout very quickly," says Stern, "then did a set of demolition, framing and foundation drawings and started construction long before we were done fine-tuning the design. The process was linear but 'fast-tracked,' as we call it."

Kate and Chuck Brizius are so pleased they claim there is nothing they would change about the house and are now working with Stern McCafferty to renovate their Martha's Vineyard home. "We worked very hard to create a clean, streamlined look that was light, open and bright, while keeping the feel of a comfortable family home," says Chuck. "We kept the bones of the old building but tried to create a timeless feel where art and furniture could shine." ❁

See Resources, last pages.

Left (from top): The master bedroom is a sea of whites with a custom bed from the owners' previous home, a Cappellini side table, a slipcovered Apta chair by Antonio Citterio from Maxalto, a lacquered-wood Dutch Zig Zag stool and a vintage floor lamp; Bianco Venetino and Thassos marble line the master bath. Opposite: Owner Kate Brizius stands at the floating vanity in front of one of the home's many working fireplaces.

