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Change Is Good

ONE SOCIAL WORKER FINDS HER NEW PASSION

WHEN LINDA WEISBERG AND HER HUSBAND, STEVE, bought a weekend home in the Berkshires five years ago, they got more than they bargained for. The 2,000-square-foot contemporary, ensconced by forest and ferns, is walking distance from Lenox center, making it the perfect year-round retreat for the semi-retired couple.

Except it needed a complete overhaul.

So Linda, a social worker and psychotherapist for more than 30 years, unleashed her creative side. She had already cut down the hours she logged at her private practice and was taking courses at the Boston Architectural College toward an interior-design certificate. But the remodeling project jumpstarted her on a new career path.

Although the 1970s-era house needed lots of work, the Weisbergs had lost a previous bid on a neighboring house, and they didn't want to let this one go. The house's drab exterior—a combination of brick, clapboard, shingles—was painted an unappealing orange and brown. The interior, too, was orange tones and in desperate need of a makeover.

"I thought to myself: This is going to be a challenge," Linda recalls. She credits Steve for giving her carte blanche to remodel. During the process, she realized that working creatively is ultimately what makes her most happy—she also plays clarinet in the Wellesley Town Band and volunteers as a floral designer at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Making their second home a comfortable, no-fuss weekend retreat was first and foremost on Linda's mind. "I wanted it to feel refreshing because this is where we come to relax," she explains.



BE CREATIVE
Linda Weisberg threw herself into designing her new Berkshire home and found a new career in the process. The sunroom is made even more inviting and air with paneled windows, skylights and warm-toned furnishings.





OF LIGHT AND DARK

The living room evokes a harmonious blend of light and dark with a white sofa and chairs, a cow-skin rug, and brown and gold-colored throw pillows. A trio of metal dining stools pull together the sleek style of the new stainless-steel appliances and warm-toned granite countertop. With a freshly painted exterior, the house looks thoroughly modern. The Weisbergs' dog, Leo, keep a watchful vigil on the steps.



To that end, a necessary structural change was to open up the floor plan by removing a pair of sliding-glass doors that separated the living room and the sunroom. That transformed the space into an airy and sun-filled, living, dining, cooking, and relaxing area.

She added a stone façade to the bare-bones cement fireplace, replaced the numerous leaky skylights, and painted the orange-colored walls off-white, making the house feel even more spacious. The entire exterior was painted a rich gray color, making the house more true to its original modern design.

Since the house had plenty of windows and skylights and the landscaping provided ample privacy, Linda decided to forgo drapes and let the windows act as picture frames, allowing the outdoors to become part of the indoor décor. During the day, the multi-window rooms provide splashes of color year round.

"We could have put retractable shades in the bedroom skylights, but I thought it's kind of cool going to sleep looking at the stars. And since we're not here fulltime, it works," she adds.

She had planned to repurpose furnishings from her Boston home, a French Tudor house with traditional décor, but she realized immediately that the pattern and color of one of her older sofas from home worked against the sleek, modern design of the new house. So she covered the sofa with white slipcovers, which established a palette of off-whites and neutrals for the rest of the furnishings.

"I also liked the idea of dark and light counterbalancing each other," she says, and mixing classical with modern accents. In the dining area, a table of dark, reclaimed wood contrasts with oversized antique-white-stained dining chairs and a tan-colored, Italianate-inspired chandelier. Many of the furnishings she sourced from local businesses, including Berkshire Home and Antiques in Great Barrington, and from trips to Brimfield's flea markets.

The small kitchen was spruced up. Custom cabinets were repainted, new stainless-steel appliances and a granite countertop were installed, and four brushed-metal





CLASSIC MEET MODERN
A gilt mirror frame blends with modern fixtures in the revamped powder room. White carries through to the bedrooms with down comforters and drapes. The metal poster bed in the master bedroom creates the illusion of a room within a room. Vintage dressers topped with a white marble counter and a carved bench in the shower stall add richness to a modern master bath.



kitchen stools pulled together the fresh, modern look. Baths, too, were updated with an artful combination of old and new—refurbished vintage vanities and antique-framed mirrors, marble countertops, contemporary tubs and showers, and white-marble floor tiles. In the master bedroom, Linda replaced a wall of curtain-drawn closets with mirrored doors, giving the room a more spacious appearance. Upstairs, white and neutral tones carry over into the two spacious bedrooms connected by an exposed hallway that doubles as a balcony.

For inspiration, Linda didn't have to look far. She admires designer Bunny Williams, who has a home in nearby Sharon, Connecticut, and Edith Wharton, the 19th-century author whose palatial country house, *The Mount*, is just a few miles away in Lenox. "I took a course on the history of furniture, and I had to write a paper on a 19th-century decorator, so I choose to write about Edith Wharton. She was one of the first modernists of her time and the only woman at that time who designed and built her house from the ground up," Linda says.

Wharton's pioneering guide, *The Decoration of Houses*, was written in 1897, when the Manhattan-society matron developed a keen interest in architecture and interior design. Many basic tenets of the guide still hold true today, Linda notes, such as: people should decorate their houses based on individual needs rather than popular trends.

Linda's skills as a social worker may very well come in handy as she helps clients identify and fulfill those individual needs. "There's a lot of compromising and patience when you're designing for others, but the ultimate goal is to find a balance that makes people happy with their choices," she says. As for her new career as an interior designer, she muses: "Like the house, it's a process. I could have just retired, but then what would I do?" ■