

# TRAD GOES RAD

A FAMILY HAD A LIFE-  
CHANGING EXPERIENCE,  
AND SO DID THEIR HOUSE

By KK Young  
Photography by Casey Dunn

In the living room, which overlooks the backyard, two sofas from the Verellen Home Collection face off across a vintage coffee table. The vintage chairs are from Uptown Modern.





A space-hogging grand staircase was moved from the entry (left) to the back of the house, freeing up space for an airy entry between dining room and study. The facade of the house (below) retains its traditional style.



**IT WAS THE ENDING TO A PERFECT STORY:**

A happy couple and their two young children settle into their architect-designed dream home in Tarrytown, poised to live happily ever after. Except that the story took an unexpected twist, when the wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. “Suddenly,” she says, “I had a new perspective on life and how I wanted to spend my time.” Hitherto, much of her time was spent commuting to and from Tarrytown to her children’s school in Barton Creek. When she added that time to the hours she would need to focus on getting well, an idea began to take shape: giving up her beloved new house and moving near her sister and family in Barton Creek.

While that neighborhood was just right for consolidating domestic life, the houses there are traditional, a far cry from the couple’s stylishly modern former home. Even so, the pair found a four-bedroom house with the square footage the family of four needed. The limestone and stucco two-story structure was understated on the outside; and although the cookie-



In the study (far left) a cowhide rug anchors the room; a vintage pendant sheds light on the Williams-Sonoma Home desk and two vintage club chairs. The dining table and stools (left) are from Vintage Material Supply Company.

cutter interior didn't reflect the couple's self-described "clean but eccentric" attitude about interior decoration, it looked like it could be adapted.

The husband and wife quickly assembled their architectural dream team—family friend and builder Randy Chupik, landscape architect David Wilson and decorator Mark Ashby—who took on the task of reconfiguring the interior of the house so that it embodied the modern sensibilities of its new owners.

As a brand-new tract home, the dwelling had a lot going for it. A big entry with a dining room to the left and a study on the right offers room to roam for parties. Just beyond, the living room looks out on the backyard. Tucked away down a hall to the right, the master suite is cloistered from the public spaces. And to the left of the living room,

the family gathers morning, noon and night in the family room/kitchen/breakfast area. But the house's stylized Old World look was dated. To bring the house into the 21st century, builder and designers all agreed: French white oak floors would replace the limestone floors, narrow arched doorways needed to be reconceived as wider passageways for a sense of openness and the space-hogging grand staircase in the double-height entry had to go in order to create a more usable foyer.

"We took away anything that wasn't functional," explains Randy Chupik. "The homeowners are very practical people who didn't want anything trendy, so we stripped down the entire interior to a clean, white palette and brought an architectural consistency to the house."

Two walls of dark-stained cabinets are a dramatic backdrop to everyday activities in the remodeled kitchen. The Cliff bar stools and vintage Saarinen chairs and table are modern icons but can withstand plenty of wear and tear.



The furnishings and textiles, too, reflect the new personality of the house. Under Mark Ashby's guidance, rooms were accessorized with subtly hued furnishings covered in commercial-grade upholstery. "Mark got the importance of family-friendly furniture and the need for cozy comfortable gathering spots," says the homeowner. Ashby also traded out the heavier European-style light fixtures that hung from the ceilings. Now, hovering over the sleek dining-room table, a 1960s-era chandelier with its spiky corona of lights is an affirmation of midcentury humor and style. "We like to weave in a little quirkiness," she explains.

The homeowner, whose disease is now in remission, is happy about the way things have turned out. "My husband and I had this great opportunity to rechoose our life," she says, "and to have more time living and playing and less time driving. We wanted our kids to be near their cousins and friends so they could ride bikes and play kickball in the street." And, as designer Mark Ashby had predicted when he first saw the house, it far exceeded expectations. "There has been something synergistic about blending our lives into this space here," the homeowner explains. "Our family is thriving here, and we feel so blessed. It's a happy house." amh

Linens from Feather Your Nest dress up the suede microfiber bed in the master bedroom. The homeowner's own photographs (right, above) were taken on a trip to Bali with a pinhole camera. A deep marble tub is made just for relaxing.



## FIVE SECRETS TO GOING MODERN

ACCORDING TO RANDY CHUPIK AND MARK ASHBY

### 1 STEP UP THE FLOORING

Randy Chupik notes that limestone flooring is a staple in Austin's tract homes—after all, it's a readily available natural resource. But it's a predictable look now. To create a sleeker statement, replace limestone with light wood planks, such as the prefinished low-toxic French white oak used in this residence.

### 2 FIRE UP YOUR IMAGINATION

"Lighting fixtures can revolutionize a space," says Mark Ashby. In lieu of the all-too-predictable French ironwork chandeliers, brass-and-glass globes, or intricate sconces that are mainstays in many tract houses, go for simple vintage fixtures that are one-of-a-kind and add instant personality to a room.

### 3 GO AGAINST THE GRAIN

Granite countertops in kitchens and bathrooms seem heavy-handed these days. "Smoother materials such as CaesarStone or Carrera marble," Chupik suggests, "lighten up a room." Get your drama from dark wood cabinets. They appear more streamlined and provide a smart contrast to lighter-hued floors or walls.

### 4 ACCENT THE POSITIVE

"Arches and curves create a formal, traditional look," says Chupik. "For a more modern look, opt for squared-off openings for entryways, windows and built-ins." The same goes for doors. In this Barton Creek redo, Chupik replaced traditional multipaneled doors with Shaker-style versions, a simple change that contributes to the consistency of the home's new architecture.

### 5 SEEK SLEEK SURFACES

While textured Sheetrock prevails as the default wall option for many tract homes, Chupik recommends a smooth, glazed finish for a more modern look. Paint colors make a difference, too. Rather than muted beige or khaki, Ashby says, a crisp simple white can give a cleaner backdrop for art or photo collections.

Vintage furniture adds personality to Mark Ashby's selection of furnishings for the house and includes the two lamps and side tables in the master bedroom and the black leather chair next to the window. Curtains are a Rose Cummings silk.