

New Direction

A couple trades cottagecore for edgy sophistication in their new Mercer Island home.

WRITTEN BY MAILE PINGEL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY EMILY MINTON REDFIELD
STYLING BY ELAINE ST. LOUIS



Architecture: Stuart Silk and Erik Bredberg, Stuart Silk Architects **Interior Design:** Jodi Cook, Cook Design House
Home Builder: Tom Gallagher, Gallagher Co. Construction **Landscape Architecture:** Clare Ryan, Shapiro Ryan Design LLC



In the entry hall, a Visual Comfort & Co. picture light illuminates a vintage painting found at Susan Wheeler Home and a Global Views stool. The gallery wall includes works by Kader Boly and Gloria Vanderbilt.

Hammers were just about to swing at a young family’s Mercer Island cottage when a nearby lot—and the chance to build from scratch—revealed itself. “We had a whole plan for their sweet Cape

Cod-style home, but their taste was becoming more modern,” says designer Jodi Cook. The opportunity to create a contemporary residence was too great a lure, and with architect Stuart Silk (who designed the wife’s childhood abode) on board to help create their dream dwelling, the couple took the plunge.

“The property sits on a west-facing hill above a row of houses that are on the lake, so it gives you a really wonderful perspective,” Silk says. “It’s not quite a promontory, but there are views up and down Lake Washington, so we wanted to take advantage of that and the light. We used a lot of glass—as much as we were permitted.” With project architect Erik Bredberg, Silk devised a dwelling that follows the topography, topping it with a flat roof to protect neighbors’ sight lines. By excavating the site, they were able to build a basement level for additional entertainment space. “It’s really three stories,” Silk notes.

Carving into the hillside was no simple task due to groundwater issues and a spiderweb of underground utilities crisscrossing the plot. “Like many of the sites we work on, this one had some constraints and complications,” notes builder Tom Gallagher. The finished structure, of course, belies all that hard work and looks effortlessly sculpted onto the site. And despite being brand new, it feels right at home in its surroundings, thanks in part to a Mediterranean-inspired garden by landscape designer Clare Ryan. “It fits into the neighborhood contextually,” Silk says. “The island is a mix of styles, but nearly half the homes are contemporary now.”

Inside, the design also takes cues from the location. “This house is all about the views, so we amplified them by using black grass cloth and dark paint colors in nearly every room,” Cook says. “These clients weren’t afraid of dark hues. They wanted interiors that were rich and

moody; they craved visual interest.” The wife is particularly keen on interior design and played a key role in choosing all the pieces. “I think she missed her calling,” Cook notes. To find the perfect furnishings and artworks, designer and client shopped together, both locally and farther afield. There were frequent stops at Susan Wheeler Home in Seattle, a visit to Round Top in Texas and a particularly successful trip to High Point, North Carolina. There, the wife had the chance to meet African artist Kader Boly, whose work she purchased for the gallery wall in the stairwell. And when Thom Filicia joined them for an impromptu chat on a sofa of his own design, she smiled and said to Cook, “Well, now we’re going to have to buy it!”

“Part of what she enjoys are the stories behind the pieces,” Cook continues. “She’d buy what she liked, and I’d pull it all together for her—it makes for visually interesting spaces.” In the living room, low-slung and textural furnishings (including inherited metal-frame chairs and that Thom Felicia sofa) create a characterful space, while in the dining room, Cook paired the client’s side chairs with a new sculptural table. “But that’s not to say the space is super formal,” the designer adds. “It also doubles as a place where the kids can do their homework.” The kitchen is equally hardworking, from its durable quartz countertops to its built-in compost bin.

Continuing to put the focus on the surrounding vistas, Cook wrapped the primary bedroom in a mocha-colored grass cloth, giving it a den-like feel. “The walls blend into the framing and it all just disappears, letting your eye carry on to the view,” she says. In the couple’s bathroom, she installed a tile with two types of marble, providing what she calls a “playful twist on a historic look.”

The modern dwelling is stylistically far from the original cottage, but the family feels the reverse course was the right turn. “We wanted a warm home that was great for entertaining and user-friendly with nothing off limits. My personality is a little elegant and a little quirky, and that’s reflected in the art and furniture pieces we selected,” the wife says. “Buying land and building this house was a once-in-a-lifetime event, and I feel so lucky.” ■



Designer Jodi Cook chose a Lee Industries sofa, a rug from Driscoll Robbins and Kravet linen drapery panels for the family room. The sculpture was found at Susan Wheeler Home and placed on a pedestal from CB2.

“The property sits on a west-facing hill, so it gives you a really wonderful perspective.”

—STUART SILK



Above: Ceramic pendants by Visual Comfort & Co. hang above the white oak kitchen island, featuring Rocky Mountain Hardware pulls and a quartz countertop from Architectural Surfaces. A runner from Driscoll Robbins lies in front of the Wolf cooktop.

Opposite: The living room bar area's cabinetry is painted in Benjamin Moore's Salamander. Anteriors stools line the custom quartz waterfall table and face a graphic backsplash tile by Ann Sacks. Overhead are Visual Comfort & Co. pendants.





Cook cloaked the basement media room in Sherwin-Williams' Porpoise, a dark counterpoint to the white oak wall unit by Northwest Custom Cabinets. A Lee Industries sectional, RH beanbag chair and Noir coffee table round out the cozy setting.

“This house is **all about the views**, so we amplified them by using black grass cloth and **dark paint colors** in nearly every room.”

—JODI COOK



The outdoor entertaining area includes sofas and a teak dining table from RH along with chairs from Phillips Scott. Cook sourced the Hestan grill and hood from Urban Bonfire. The pool was built by All Star Pool & Spa.