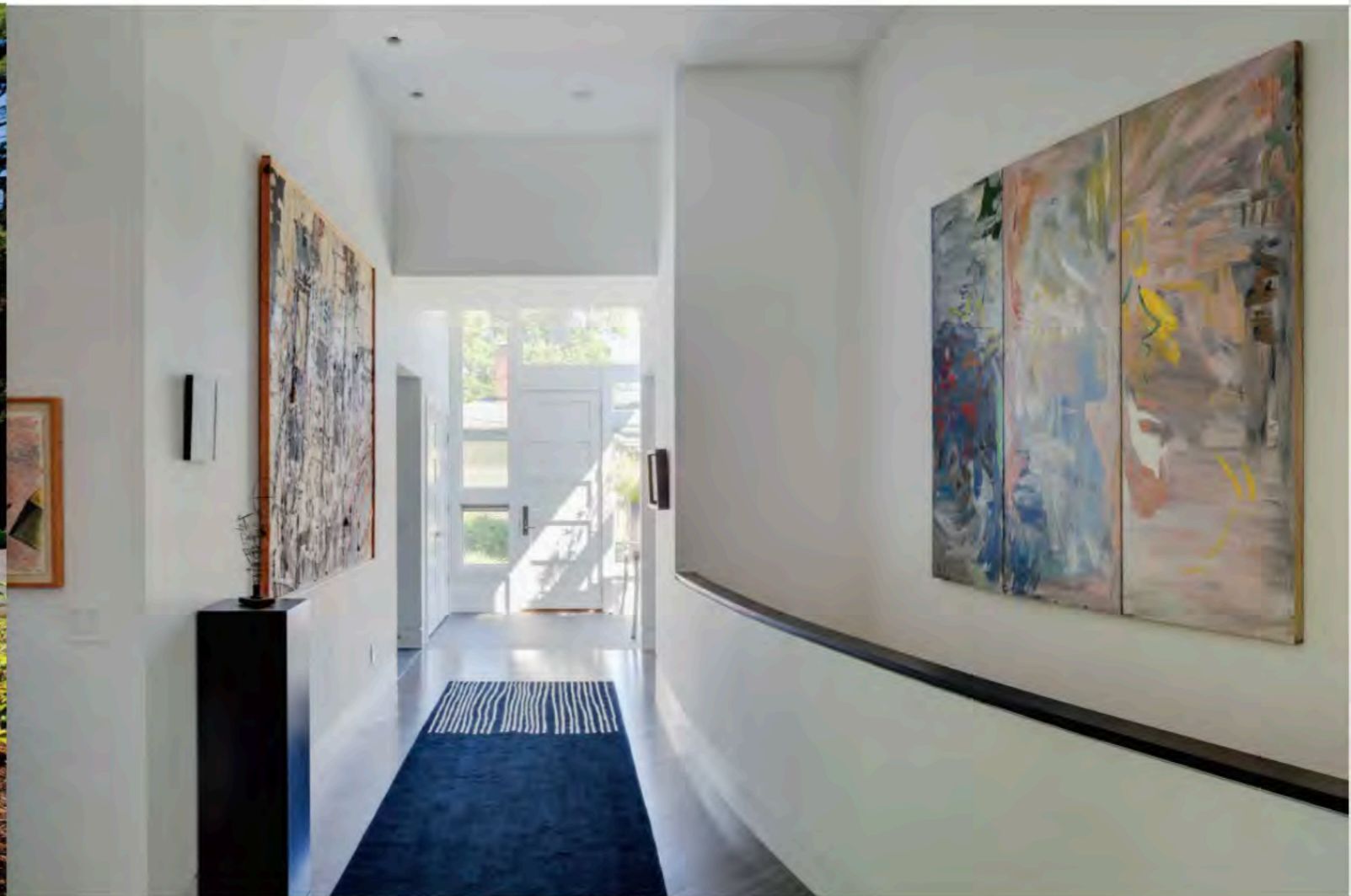


THE LOW-PROFILE EXTERIOR belies the spacious interior of the one-story house. Landscape design by Karen Howard of Howard Designs in Newton, Massachusetts, furthers the sense that the building and its natural surroundings are wholly complementary. The roofline above the entry curves to accommodate the curved wall of the hallway (FACING PAGE).

INSPIRED BY THE curved walls at New York's Guggenheim Museum, architect Richard Levey designed the hallway at the center of the house with a curved wall. "I wanted to incorporate a transitional element from the relatively narrow entry foyer to the wider kitchen and living area without the space feeling like a corridor," he says. "The curved wall does that by widening your perspective, while creating visual impact."



A 'BIG' MOVE

Although they relocated just three doors down, this empty-nest couple made a radical style change

WRITTEN BY JULIE HATFIELD • PHOTOGRAPHED BY GREG PREMUR

A couple, empty nesters in their 50s, were tired of their big (6,500 square feet), old, energy-inefficient, high-maintenance house and thought, just briefly, of doing what many have done in that situation — move to a condo in the city. But they liked their neighborhood in the Chestnut Hill section of Newton, Massachusetts; they just no longer needed or wanted the Victorian manse that had been their home for 30 years. So when a 1940s Colonial-style house three doors down came on the market, they seized the opportunity to create their dream home.

It wasn't the house, which was dated and in need of repair,

that attracted them, but the lot, which is next to woods and a reservoir owned by the City of Newton, conservation land that would forever be protected from development.

The couple, both medical doctors, tore down the existing house and built anew to their exact specifications, which included privacy, energy efficiency, an open floor plan (in contrast to the plethora of small dark rooms in their old Victorian), a screened porch, and single-story living.

They engaged Richard Levey, principal at RBL Architects in Newton, to make it a reality. Before he took pencil to paper, the architect studied how the couple used the space in their old

MARIPOSA CHAIRS FROM BoConcept add a burst of color to the dark-gray and white palette of the kitchen. The backsplash behind the stainless steel sink and work area is handcut ceramic "Level" tile by Clayhaus. The kitchen opens to the living area (FACING PAGE, TOP) where a wall that holds some of the owners' art collection can slide open to reveal a television.



house and made note of their large art collection. What he designed — and Keystone Development of Marlborough, Massachusetts, built — is a 5,400-square-foot glass-and-cedar-clapboard contemporary house with an open floor plan, 16-foot ceilings, and folding glass doors that open to a large screened porch overlooking the conservation land. Built to be energy-efficient, it has 46 rooftop solar panels that kept last summer's electric bill to zero.

The house does offer one traditional element, a wood-burning fireplace. Set in the wall between the great room and the porch, it is open on two sides and can warm both spaces.

The couple's art is a key element from the moment of entry. The front hall is a perfect spot for the whimsical Xylophone table by

Georgia-based sculptor Gordon Chandler. From there, the wall gently curves as the space widens to reveal the airy dining area/kitchen/great room combination. In the great room, Keystone master carpenter Peter Benson built a gallery wall that holds paintings and sculpture and slides open to reveal the television.

The main floor includes the master suite as well as an office for the wife, who works for a global technology firm, and an office with separate entrance for her psychiatrist husband. The basement level has a gym and a guest bedroom with bath.

The wife, a serious cook, spends a lot of time in the kitchen, which is augmented by a large adjacent pantry that is completely out of sight. In the old house, the kitchen was closed off, the cook isolated. Here,



► **KITCHEN INSIGHT**
CONTRASTS AND HARMONY

Each of the homeowners grew up in a warm climate and wanted a house that felt open to the outdoors without sacrificing privacy. Architect Richard Levey gave them both, especially in the kitchen, where the wife can look out onto conservation land as she works at the island. And since the couple rarely see anyone in the woods, they have a sense of seclusion. Behind the island, a 13-foot-high wall of cabinetry topped by motorized clerestory windows provides natural light and ventilation while keeping the neighboring house from sight.

Since the couple's art collection is a focal point, the backsplash needed to hold its own. With three Philip Guston prints in the living area, the preference was black-and-white tile that was artisanal if not frankly artistic, with an element of fun. At Ideal Tile of Newton in Newton, Massachusetts, the wife found "Liquid Art" (LEFT), whimsical handmade Italian tiles from Unica by Target Studio. Their loose, informal quality bridged the industrial stainless steel work area with the more refined sections of the kitchen. The Viking range created a natural division between the work and serving/entertaining areas, where countertops of dark gray Silestone blend with the dark-gray cabinetry.

To transition from hardwood flooring in the dining and living areas to tile in the kitchen, Levey reversed the curved line of the hallway's half wall to create a concave line on the floor where kitchen and dining areas meet (FACING PAGE). The floorboards, stained gray, are laid on an angle so the planks nestle gently into the curve of the tile floor, which the wife says creates a "magical" effect.



- 1 FRONT LANDING
- 2 GARAGE
- 3 ENTRY
- 4 HER OFFICE
- 5 PANTRY
- 6 HALLWAY
- 7 HIS OFFICE
- 8 PATIO
- 9 DINING AREA
- 10 KITCHEN
- 11 LIVING AREA
- 12 SCREENED PORCH
- 13 REAR LANDING
- 14 MASTER SUITE
- 15 GUEST SUITE

BUILDER
Keystone Development



she has full views of the living and dining areas, which have expanses of glass overlooking the garden and trees beyond. "I love cooking here," she says. "Even in the midst of a snowstorm, I'm facing the woods."

The furnishings are just as new and contemporary in style as the house itself, with a wood- and- steel dining table by Boston artist Paul Walcott, metal chairs that are quirky enough to be considered part of the art collection, polka-dot upholstered pieces, and more color in the great room than was ever seen in the old Victorian. "I love black, white, and gray," says the wife, "but purple is my favorite color," pointing to the purple couch. Working with interior designer Sue Falls of Mast & Falls Interior Design in Concord, Massachusetts, she also selected a turquoise chair for the great room and red chairs from BoConcept for the table-height kitchen peninsula.

The couple may not have moved far physically, but stylistically, they are on a different plane. "It's so much fun to live here," says the husband. Going modern agrees with them. ■



THE HOMEOWNERS TOOK matters into their own hands when it came to finding art for the screened porch (FACING PAGE, TOP). "We needed weatherproof art and I thought neon might work," says the wife. "I designed it myself. I sent Rich Levey my sketch and asked him to scale it to fit the wall." Her husband found Neon Williams Inc. in Somerville, Massachusetts, to execute the design. The porch floor and steppingstones in the side yard (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM) are lava stone pavers from Ideal Tile. The metal dining table (RIGHT) is by art-furniture maker Paul Walcott of PVW Designs in Boston.