

FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTENT

Charlie & Co. creates a light and airy modern home rooted in traditional architecture.

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Architect: Charlie & Co. Design
Builder: Anderson Reda
Interior Designer: Ellington & Co. Design

ARCHITECTURE PLAYS A ROLE IN MEMORY, ESPECIALLY THOSE formed during childhood when the mind is a sponge, and life is lived in technicolor. The kitchen nook where meals were served, crafts pasted together and squabbles settled as quickly as they started; the closets filled with coats, dog leashes, sporting equipment and other paraphernalia of family life; the quietest path from the front door to your bedroom past curfew. Even 30 years later, blindfolded, you could probably get from room-to-room without bumping into a wall.

So, it's not surprising that people gravitate, sometimes unconsciously, to homes similar to those they grew up in. Take this new 6,500-square-foot home by Charlie & Co. Design. "Our clients desired a modern home that felt rooted in a classic saltbox shingle-style Colonial you might see on Cape Cod or Martha's Vineyard," says founder and principal Charlie Simmons. "When I pointed out the similarities to the house the husband grew up in [where Simmons has done a few projects], that made it special for them."

The assignment wasn't unusual for Simmons, who's adept at

reinterpreting traditional forms for modern living, but this project had a unique point of inspiration — a sculptural plaster staircase like the one featured on the March 2020 cover of *Architectural Digest* in Kanye West and Kim Kardashian's minimalist Los Angeles mansion. The homeowners loved its volume and elegance and wanted something similar in their new home — a home with the heart of a Colonial. It was no small task.

Simmons began by following the rhythm and patterns of Colonial architecture to create a familiar exterior form. There are symmetrical windows, a centered front door, a steeply pitched roof and cedar shake-type siding. Then he veered off script with a flat roof bump-out clad in an iridescent black brick, and a two-story glass link between the main house and the garage. "We took the DNA of a shingle-style Colonial and stripped out everything unnecessary to create a modern interpretation," says Simmons.

The front door opens to a white gallery that runs side to side, parallel to the street. At one end lies the formal living room. At the other, sits the



staircase that started it all. The gallery is lined with cloister vaults that bounce light and shadow and sets the tone for the drama of the stairs. It's another riff on a traditional Colonial that would have a central hall from front to back. "We pulled the circulation away from the front because this house has great views, light and privacy in the back," explains Simmons.

A soft plaster ellipse that curls up to the second floor and down to the lower level, the staircase provides a pleasing counterpoint to the sharp angles of the house. "We chose an ellipse because that shape implies direction, whereas a circle implies a destination," says Simmons. Building anything curved is a challenge and something as large as this, more so. Fortunately, contractor Anderson Reda had the patience, skill and enthusiasm to make it happen. "Building curved staircases is kind of a lost art," co-owner Kareem Reda points out, noting that it took over two months to construct this one — bending layers of metal and plywood to create the skeleton, then covering the form with sheetrock and finally plaster. The homeowners and their three kids view the staircase as the heartbeat of the house. It offers a transition between the hustle and bustle of the main floor and the more private upstairs that, despite its elegance, is an unpretentious space where fingerprints happen and Magic Erasers are in abundant supply.

Along the back of the house is the hub of family life, with big west-facing windows overlooking a marsh and providing sunset views. The spacious kitchen has two islands for entertaining and an informal eating area with a banquette and custom table by interior designer Carrie Ellington of Ellington & Co. Design. The adjacent family room is a cozy nest filled with tufted furniture, placed one step down from the kitchen, an intentional transition that helps define the spaces. Beyond that lies an office and formal living room separated by glass and steel doors. "They wanted a connected layout where you can see into other rooms but not an open plan," explains Simmons.

Touches of white oak add warmth to the mostly white interior, particularly in the living room, where a fireplace clad in the same iridescent brick as the exterior bump-out engages in pattern play with a corduroy-like vertical slat wall. Here and throughout the house, Ellington worked with the homeowners on furnishings that suit their lifestyle and enhance the architecture, such as a curved sofa and chairs that echo the staircase. "This is an adult space where they can mix a drink at the bar, sit in front of the fire and listen to music," Ellington explains. Another area she made extra special for the homeowners: their en suite bathroom, which features a striking white marble streaked with purple veining. "We were careful about where we incorporated color to keep the overall palette of the house calm and minimal," says Ellington.

As sophisticated as this house is, it works like a dream for this family, combining an architectural point of view with functional ease. "We're thrilled with how Charlie brought this design to life," says the homeowner. "While the drawings and architectural plans checked every box for us, it was not until we moved in that we could appreciate the true beauty of the work. The home is so livable and filled with natural light and life, and we love how he brought the outside in for us to enjoy at all times." ●

