

Home

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Tradition *With Flair*

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In a quiet corner of northeast Grand Rapids, a cozy lake-front Cape Cod surveys its tranquil surroundings from a light-filled panorama. Where small windows, undersized rooms and a low sloping roof line once impeded the visual splendor of the landscape, well-planned changes to architecture and design now provide the light-flooded, spacious ambience the homeowners had always desired for this mid-century home.

Over the years, this comfortable lakeside retreat has undergone several changes. "Years ago, before the present owners purchased the house, a previous owner had added a family room and screened porch in front of the living and dining rooms on the lake side," explains builder and designer Mark Shuart of Shuart Associates. Shuart adds that the living and dining rooms had no direct natural daylight. "To make matters worse, the family room addition had a very low exterior wall, with low windows facing the lake. This made for an even darker house with very limited views."



"We were drawn to the lake," says the wife, who notes that she and her husband purchased the home 14 years ago, soon after their children left for college. "Grand Rapids is a nice city to live in—we've been in Grand Rapids for 24 years, and this is our retirement home."

A home suited for entertaining is a necessity for the couple. "The bedrooms are adequate, but we needed more living space—the screened porch and family room needed to be larger, and the kitchen needed renovating," the wife explains. "Mark, my husband and I all had similar ideas," she adds. "When Mark Shuart walked into the house, within five minutes he knew what to do." That's not surprising, since Shuart first worked with this couple more than 20 years ago on an addition to their previous home.

"The homeowners put their trust in a young, relatively inexperienced contractor and that opportunity has never been forgotten and is still greatly appreciated," says Shuart.

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"The owners wanted a family room with high ceilings and a more open, informal feel as well as bringing more natural daylight and views of the lake into existing first floor rooms," Shuart explains of the remodel. To achieve this, the bedroom windows of the second floor could not be blocked. Demolition of two rooms—the existing family room that featured a low sloping ceiling and the adjoining screened porch—made way for a flat roof that would not obstruct second floor lake views. "This roof choice also enabled us to add a great amount of interest and detail to the home's exterior by adding a low, traditional wooden railing along the roof's perimeter and dentil blocks with traditional moldings under the overhangs," says Shuart.

A coffered ceiling and perpendicular beams trimmed with ornamental crown moulding and built-in bookcases add interest to the interior. Exterior walls with French doors opening to the patio dramatically change the previous floor plan; transoms and 10-foot ceilings give the homeowners the panoramic lake view they had envisioned. Shuart notes that the lake-view wall of the home contains so much glass that steel beams and posts were engineered to withstand the calculated wind loads from the north. Another interesting feature is the radiant heating system beneath the wide plank Brazilian cherry flooring.

TOP: The living room features matching sofas covered in an unusual cream and red toile print. The finishing touches of artwork, lamps and accessories were added over time.

BOTTOM: A coffered ceiling and perpendicular beams trimmed with ornamental crown moulding add interest to the space while walls of French doors give the owners panoramic lake views.

Adding flair to the traditional interior design was the task of Christine DiMaria, owner of Christine DiMaria Design, who has known the homeowners for more than 12 years. DiMaria describes the original interior as classic but in need of updating and design coordination between the dining and living areas.

"We actually started with our paint color, which is a deep red," DiMaria explains. "Then the furniture placement plan allowed us to determine which furnishings we would reuse and which pieces we would need to order." DiMaria says that a few existing pieces were reupholstered, a great option if the pieces are classic, stylish, and in good condition.

After the furnishings were selected, fabrics were chosen for both new and existing pieces. "The fabrics in this room are especially beautiful, and not ones you see everyday," says DiMaria of the living room. The matching sofas are covered in an unusual cream and red toile print; the finishing touches of lamps, art and accessories were added over a few months to complete the rooms.

DiMaria explains that a smooth selection process comes from being organized. "It is always best to start out with a list and most importantly, the things that the client is envisioning," says DiMaria. "I like to then start out selecting the things that take the longest to come in and then the things the builder needs next; this ensures that the project stays on track time-wise."

Douglas Burgess, co-owner of Dimensions Kitchen and Bath shares DiMaria's philosophy of maintaining a high level of organization and communication with everyone involved to achieve a smooth-running remodeling project. "Planning—it's getting everything coordinated and getting the customer to understand all the processes of what will happen," explains Burgess.

"We give the builders and design teams full charge and let them do their work," said the homeowners. The wife laughs as she notes that remodeling after the children are grown also makes it easier—especially when the project is the kitchen.

Several changes were made to expand a rather diminutive kitchen into a 21st century culinary center that maintains the clean lines of the latest traditional kitchen design. One of the first tasks was to remove the adjoining wall of the adjacent laundry room to expand the kitchen—it was an engineering challenge. "The technology of this house way back when was very sophisticated for that time," notes Burgess referring to the heating system embedded in the concrete floor.

Burgess explains that the kitchen and



Dimensions Kitchen and Bath made several changes to expand the rather diminutive kitchen into a 21st-century culinary center. The result is a beautiful design that coordinates well with the architecture and floor plan of the other living areas.



"It is always best to start with what the client is envisioning."

TOP: The owners wanted a family room with high ceilings and an open, informal feel. It was also a priority to bring more natural light and views of the lake into the existing rooms.

ABOVE, LEFT: With deep red as a starting point for the interior design process, this bathroom continues the flow of traditional interior design with a touch of flair.

laundry room were completely gutted to double the size of the kitchen. "The wife always wanted to have a brighter kitchen," says Burgess who adds that the size of the room afforded additional windows, allowing for maximum natural light while maintaining the architectural style of the Cape Cod home. "We are a more architecturally-based company," explains Burgess. "Understanding the clients' needs and the space to work with, and coordinating that with the architecture and floor plan of the other living areas of the house is key for Dimensions."

DiMaria explains how she and Burgess, along with the homeowners, followed a kitchen renovation process that fell into place easily. "We started with the cabinet selection which included an antique off-white finish on the perimeter cabinets and an antique blue for the island," says DiMaria noting that one of the wife's favorite colors is blue. "We knew right away that the floor would be a cherry wood to coordinate with what was used in the entry way." Honed black granite countertops with their flat black finish are the perfect match for the traditional cabinetry and concealed modern appliances such as convenient freezer drawers.

"I absolutely love this kitchen," the wife says as she relishes the early evening light pouring through the ample windows.

DiMaria notes that appliances are discussed and selected first in order for the cabinet sizes to be determined and ordered. "Fabrics for the banquette and window treatments, lighting, and cabinet hardware all follow to complete the look," explains DiMaria.

For these homeowners who appreciate traditional architecture and interior design, remodeling their peaceful lakeside home to maximize the natural beauty of the extraordinary landscape accommodates their desire for a retirement retreat and an inviting home for entertaining.

As she relaxes with her evening's reading of travel guides to Italy, the wife smiles and says, "It's better than building another home and I never thought I'd say that." ☺



From a young age, art was a passion for **Christine DiMaria**. "At age 10, I knew that I wanted to design rooms." Today, DiMaria still has that enthusiasm, which she applies to every project she undertakes. "If I'm excited, chances are my client will feel that way too."

"I always have a set of goals when starting a new project," says DiMaria. "My client's goals come first; it's also important to work with the builder's goals. I try to have fun and really work as a team with all involved."

"I have a really loyal clientele that I love and appreciate very much, and I am always eager to tackle a new project or idea," shares DiMaria. Along the way, she'll take the time to really get to know her clients: "Designing people's interiors is a very personal thing, so it's so important to be sensitive to how people live their lives and use their living spaces."



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BUILDER	Mark Stuart
INTERIOR DESIGN	Christine DiMaria Design
Kitchen	Dimensions Kitchen and Bath
Hardware & Fixtures	Modern Hardware
Moulding & Millwork	Phillip Elenbaas
Windows	Pella Windows & Doors