

THE LIVING ROOM for a globe-trotting family of four is sophisticated enough for company but still cozy for game night. Interior designer Vani Sayeed referenced the hot pinks and oranges from multimedia artworks — part of the wife's existing collection — in decorative pillows to spice up the color palette.



there and

# back again

For native New Englanders returning abroad, an art collection and a designer help them reestablish roots while maintaining a global aesthetic

WRITTEN BY MEAGHAN O'NEILL PHOTOGRAPHED BY NAT REA



A NEW BUILT-IN window seat is stained to match existing casework. The window treatment textiles are from Bart Halpern and Manuel Canovas. At the back of the house, a multilevel deck (BELOW) offers entertaining space.

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very piece of art has a story,” says interior designer Vani Sayeed as she scans the walls of the house in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, where she worked with clients who had recently returned from 10 years overseas. As an artist involved in printmaking and painting, Sayeed could relate to the couple’s emotional connection to their collection, which had largely been amassed during their time living in Hong Kong and London with their two children, who are now teenagers.





THE KITCHEN AND great room (ABOVE) are the heart of the home. Sayeed specified relaxed seating to accommodate the family's teenage children; using indoor-outdoor fabric for window treatments and upholstered dining chairs ensures durability. The colors in a piece of art by a family friend informed color choices for the seating area (BELOW) in the great room. The entry (LEFT) declares the home's global aesthetic, with pieces from the family's art collection that were acquired during their travels throughout Europe and Asia.





SAYEED TRANSFORMED A small space off the entry into a jewel box of a powder room (ABOVE) by wrapping it in Elitis's Rajasthan wallpaper and adding a vanity she custom designed. A bench by Baker in the living room (BELOW) can easily be moved as needed. A view into the dining room (LEFT) delivers a pop of color.



That understanding helped Sayeed and homeowner Judi Rosensweig relate as designer and client, but also as world travelers and moms. “We had many overlapping connections,” says the designer, who grew up in India and frequently visits there with her own young children. “I could tell where she was coming from. They wanted a global aesthetic that reflected their tastes and travels, and I got that.”

The design direction was to create a layered look so that the decor seemed collected over time. Preserving the architectural details of the 1920 Tudor Revival house while meeting the needs of a 21st-century family was important, but a bigger task loomed: They had just six months between purchase and move-in to transform the space, which needed serious updating.

When she was hired in January 2016, says Sayeed with a laugh, “I thought I was the last piece of the puzzle — that I’d just be picking colors and finishes.” Instead, the program involved removing and relocating walls and doors, adding built-in case work, rebuilding a deck, and overhauling the decor. With the help of FBN Construction of Boston, the team moved at “superspeed,” says Sayeed.



“Once the early assumptions were vetted out, we all had our marching orders,” says Chris Magliozzi, vice president of FBN, who worked closely with Sayeed on the project. Among the trickiest of his assignments was completely renovating the master and daughter’s bathrooms, which are above the great room. Because the previous owners had recently renovated the first-floor space, demolishing structural work there would have been wasteful. Instead, pipes and ducts were carefully run without damaging existing walls and ceilings.

Likewise, wiring for the living room’s new pendant and downlighting was carefully snaked through the ceiling. Replacing steel-framed, single-glazed original windows with energy-efficient look-alikes and fitting an air-conditioning system were additional challenges presented by the century-old structure. “Key to the success of this project,” says Magliozzi, “was having a good, collaborative team — and that includes the client. It was a very collegial effort.”

The art and furniture that Judi and her husband, Bill, wanted to incorporate into the design became the starting point for Sayeed’s vision. However, those pieces were stored in a shipping container that

**DRIVEN BY THE** wife’s love of color, the mood in the dining room (ABOVE) is refined yet energetic. Sayeed added layers of color, pattern, and texture to create the sophisticated look, surrounding an elegant Baker table with armless chairs upholstered in playful fabric. To accentuate an oil painting, Sayeed installed drapery and window seat cushions, all made with Schumacher textiles, with touches of citron and rust. A graceful Zia•Priven pendant and Hudson Valley sconces add luster and polish.

wouldn’t arrive till June. Unfazed, Sayeed used a handful of Judi’s snapshots of the artwork to develop a palette of pinks, rusts, grays, greens, and blues for the house. “There’s always an element of surprise,” says Sayeed, whose firm, Vani Sayeed Studios, is in Newton, Massachusetts, “whether pieces are coming from a studio or gallery or out of storage.”

In the powder room off the entry, Sayeed created an explosion of color with Elitis’s Rajasthan wallcovering, an intricate pattern reminiscent of an Oriental rug. Diminutive but powerful, the space became a painter’s palette that connects vibrant colors — “Judi has a love of color, and so do I,” says Sayeed — throughout the first floor.



The living room's bright pink and rich orange details draw from the powder room and relate to the textile and multimedia works by Sharon Grosse, a London artist and friend of Judi's. Millwork helps retain the home's period grandeur, while graphite-hued upholstered couches and custom valances soften the space. Swapping out a wood-burning fireplace for gas and changing the surround from brick to Pietra del Cardoso honed limestone updated the living room's personality without detracting from its genteel character. The result is a room that's formal enough to be used when company comes over but also comfortable enough for family game night.

In the dining room, hues shift to pick up the rust, lime, and aqua from the powder-room palette as well as a favored painting from the family's collection that hangs on the wall. Fabric details on the dining chairs, pillow trims, and window seat transform the palette subtly, keeping the tone sophisticated and grounded.

**SOFT COLORS AND furnishings lend a sense of repose to the master bedroom (ABOVE). In the master bathroom (FACING PAGE, TOP), Sayeed installed a 60-inch-long soaking tub and used glass tiles by Waterworks as wainscoting to achieve a spa-like effect. The designer found the antique lighting pendant in India. A glass-encased steam shower and floating vanity (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM) deliver high-impact design without taking up too much visual space in the 150-square-foot room.**

The back of the house opens into a long, L-shaped kitchen and great room, where the family does most of its everyday living. "This is the reason we bought the house," says Judi of the expansive space. She acknowledges that the family wondered if a 4,200-square-foot abode would be overkill after living in tighter urban spaces. "For a long time, we felt like this house would be too big for us," she says.

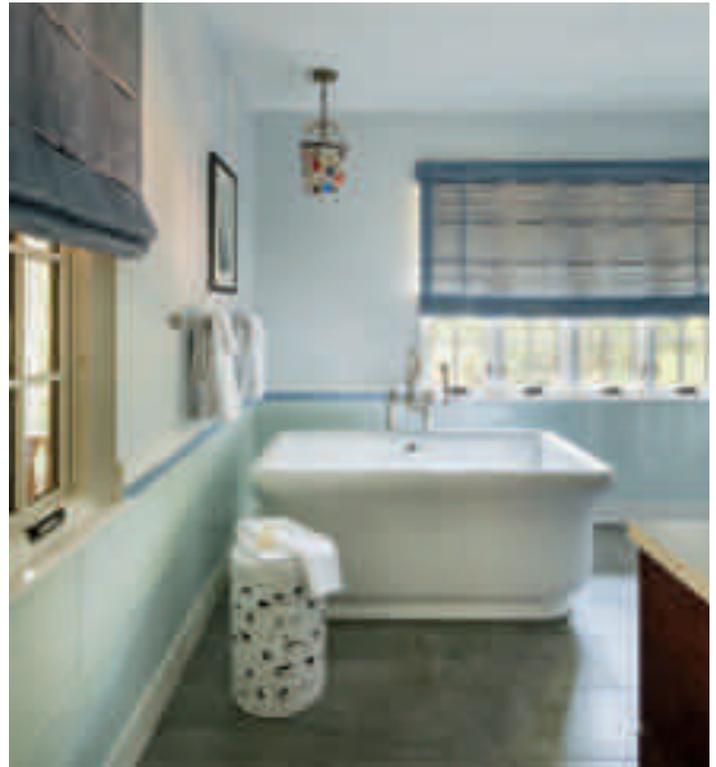
"This room is always in motion," says Sayeed, who made sure that the relaxed seating could be easily moved around to meet the

DESIGN DECISION

*Creating a Tranquil Master Bath*

To meet the clients' request for a spa-like master bathroom, interior designer Vani Sayeed removed an interior doorway and French doors that accessed a terrace to carve out an en suite space. Previously used as an office, the 150-square-foot room now houses a steam shower, elegant floating vanity, and 60-inch-long soaking tub.

Handmade glass tiles by Waterworks "act like wainscoting" on the walls, says Sayeed, and give the shower an ethereal mood. To further refine the space and provide visual calmness, she specified an infinity drain and installed the steam shower's generator under a built-in bench. (Mechanicals are accessed from a storage closet on the other side of the wall.) Radiant heat was added under the floor tiles, which are porcelain but look like stone, a money-saving move. "Literally every inch counted," says Sayeed of delivering a retreat with a sense of repose. "At the end of the day, there's a lot of stuff in there."



needs of the family and visiting teenage friends. Working from another mixed-media piece by Grosse, Sayeed pulled blues and browns and tangy lime greens into the couches and playfully upholstered arm and dining chairs. The family's existing Parsons table connects the space between the den and kitchen. With its ample counter seating, bright light, and access to the deck, the space handily serves as the family's command central.

On the second floor, a series of rooms was opened up and reconfigured to create a luxurious master suite, functional closets, and a laundry room. In the master bedroom, for example, the original closets were small and awkward, with multiple entries. "It was a huge waste of space," says Sayeed, who redesigned them with two sets of double doors that now open so that items in the deep walk-in closets are easily accessible. Likewise, a small room that formerly served as a makeshift office was transformed into a spa-like en suite bathroom.

Their daughter's bedroom and bathroom was also updated, as was their son's, and a charmless space with an awkward ceiling and too many doors became a functional laundry room and guest bath. "It's small," says Sayeed, "but there's lots of action." The son's bathroom benefited from restructuring a sloping ceiling, adding a glass partition, and refinishing the existing tub.

Although readjusting from life overseas took a bit of time, the Rosensweigs love that their home now serves as both a tribute to their adventures abroad as well as a place where they can put down roots. "I love the layers in this house," Sayeed says of the multicultural sensibility and complex mash-up of new and treasured furnishings. "That's part of having a collected space instead of a 'designed' space," she adds. "It's not a museum or a hotel; it's a home." ■

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