

Charcoal-blue velvet sofas by designer Jens Juul Eilersen drove the interior design of the living room, which includes a Stark rug, Montclair Danby marble fireplace surround, and painting by Italian artist Slasky. One of the most sophisticated spaces in Drew and Hali Stafford's home, it's not off-limits to anyone, including the family dog, Harley.

A CANVAS FOR LIVING

Reimagining a formal home's floorplan and architectural features creates a comfortably elegant foundation for art and all the activity of a former professional hockey player's young family.

BY SHAWN GILLIAM
PHOTOGRAPHS BY SPACECRAFTING

The home is full of what architectural designer Maria Jose Larenas calls “little surprises,” including a built-in bar in the dining room. Painted black, it’s outfitted with brushed gold metal mesh panels—for a more textured look than standard glass—and cremone bolt (vertical rod) hardware.



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Every time interior designer Carrie Ellington stops by Drew and Hali Stafford’s newly renovated Edina home, she fully expects to find a new painting or sculpture worked into a space. “Hali has a gift for finding great art and for putting together unique pieces,” Ellington says. “Next time, it might be a robot. It could be anything. And in this house, it works.”

That ability to serve as a backdrop for art was a priority for Ellington’s design and the home’s renovation as a whole. Neutral architectural finishes and furnishings, plus a floorplan that finds a happy medium between room definition and openness, ensure the Staffords’ art shines.



FRONT AND CENTER

An airy entry (above) replaced a series of small walled-in and doored-off spaces, including a coat check. “It was just a very old-school, formal way of entertaining,” Hali says. The gallery hall—newly centered on the front door—stretches to the family room and solarium.

PERFECT PAIRING

Cloister vault architecture and Visual Comfort light fixtures bring a sophisticated quality to the gallery hall (right). A series of five photorealistic “retired superhero” paintings by Swedish artist Andreas Englund keeps the look from getting too serious.



But it’s a far cry from where the home started. “It was a 1984 orange-brick colonial with half-round windows all over the place and snap-on window grids that looked like orange slices,” says architectural designer Charlie Simmons. And those were just the issues you could see from the outside. Several redeeming qualities, though, built a compelling case to remodel. “It had good bones, a lot of square footage, and a beautiful property,” builder John Kraemer says. “Drew and Hali actually got more square footage out of the deal with a remodel than if they had built a new home.”

For several years, Drew and Hali spent only summers in Edina, where they could be close to family while on break from Drew’s professional ice hockey career. (Following hockey at Shattuck-St. Mary’s School in Faribault and the University of North Dakota, he played professionally for 13 seasons, most recently with the New Jersey Devils.) But they knew the city was where they wanted to settle after Drew retired in 2019 and they readied for their next chapter, including raising kids Mason, 7, and Mila and Maddox, 5-year-old twins, as well as building Carte Blanche Art, Hali’s art consulting business. “I kind of dove head-first into learning about the entire process of planning, design, and building,” Drew says.

COLORFUL PERSONALITY

In anticipation of a large work of art for the dining room, interior designer Carrie Ellington kept chairs and rugs neutral. That way, the art—which turned out to be a painting by Elham Etemadi—could be the star. A pair of Oly Studio chandeliers in a faux bois design are “interesting without going too far,” Ellington says.



ARCHITECTURE AS ART
A built-in (left) with latticework doors—created of rift-cut white oak—stores everyday dishes a step from the breakfast table. “It’s an example of when the architecture becomes art,” architectural designer Charlie Simmons says. The table and chairs came from the Staffords’ previous home.

GETTING COZY
A white oak-paneled ceiling, built-in daybed, and sectional sofa make the family room (below left) the comfiest spot in the house. “Although it was already an informal space, going the extra mile with things like the little daybed nook made it even more relaxed and playful,” Larenas says.

But the couple already knew what they wanted. “You live in so many places with hockey that you get to experience different kinds of homes and quickly learn what you like and don’t like,” Hali says. Topping their wish list: a more modern and family-friendly look and feel inside and out, with warmth, nods to classic style, and, of course, plenty of room for art.

“The next thing you know, we’ve basically gutted the interior of the first floor,” Simmons says. “I would say that maybe 60, 70 percent of the interior walls were removed.” The team also squared off window openings, fitting them with new black-framed windows, and specified warm white oak floors, cabinets, and ceiling millwork, which pair with walls painted Benjamin Moore White Dove. “It’s modern but not sterile or antiseptic,” Simmons says.

Depending on the room, art or furniture fabric drove the interior design. “Each space has a different feel, which makes it really magical,”



The kitchen is a study in warm finishes, including Venetian plaster on the range hood that’s in the same color as the walls but subtly glimmers when hit by light. On the working side of the island, the stone countertop gives way to a built-in walnut butcher block. “It adds some informality and whimsy to a rather streamlined aesthetic in there,” Simmons says. The light fixtures are by Visual Comfort.

Ellington says. “But we also needed it all to flow together and look cohesive.”

Surprisingly, that happens, in part, through the art. Although every piece exhibits its own personality, they all have something in common: “They resonate with people on a happy level,” Hali says. She points to paintings of a “retired superhero” in the gallery hall and a bright, nearly 9-foot-wide piece in the dining room that depicts a playroom. “It’s so abstract that you can’t immediately tell there’s a train, an alligator, and other toys,” Hali says.

In many ways, that happy quality of the couple’s art has become a metaphor for their home. “Now, the kids can run laps and scooter around the inside of the house,” Hali says. “It’s like the house is living again.” ■

OPEN TO NATURE

The solarium—previously more of a walled-off screened porch—used to feel excluded from adjacent spaces. “We ripped open the wall and visually framed this gigantic opening with glass on three sides overlooking the yard,” Simmons says. The beaded chandelier is by Made Goods.





**SIMPLE
YET SPECIAL**

A new fireplace with a black granite surround and a bubble chandelier from Visual Comfort bring little luxuries to the owners' suite bedroom (left), which did not change structurally. "The look is fun and young and really special for a bedroom," Ellington says.

Combining small bedrooms created an owners' suite complete with generous closet storage for Drew and Hali, both of whom enjoy fashion. The same white oak used throughout the home also makes an appearance here, where warm LED lighting illuminates special items displayed behind glass.



A Ferguson tub and Visual Comfort light fixture bring dimension to the owners' suite bath. But there's subtle definition in the Élitis wall covering Ellington specified, too—and it's soft to the touch because it's made of foam from recycled bras.



**"DREW AND HALI ARE IN A LOT OF WAYS CLASSIC,
BUT ALSO ROCK AND ROLL."** —CARRIE ELLINGTON, INTERIOR DESIGNER



STYLISH SCRUB

Pierre Frey's Fontaine et Animaux Barbouillage wallpaper brings whimsy to the mudroom bath (far left). "We loved this black-and-white print and wanted to use it so fiercely," Ellington says. "The only place it felt right was here." The Brockway wall-mounted sink and Triton Bowe Cannock faucets (by Kohler) introduce a slightly industrial feel.

LITERARY MOMENT

A pass-through library (left) between the gallery hall and living room, with a bench opposite, is another example of what Larenas calls a little surprise. "My favorite thing is the juxtaposition of books and objects that might seem chaotic to anyone else," Hali says. Many of the items, including the coffee table books, are from the couple's travels and hockey cities.

Black marble creates a backdrop behind mirrors with curved corners in the owners' suite bath (right). "I thought, *Hey, maybe we can do that in Sheetrock, too*," Simmons says. "So we came up with this vertical piano curve that works with the curves of the mirrors."





IMPROVED CONNECTION

A 16-foot-wide set of sliding doors replaced a considerably smaller window, connecting the kitchen with a new deck overlooking a pool (above), also new. "It's a narrow deck, but it really helps break up that façade and lets you easily step outside from the kitchen," Larenas says.

PARADISE PERFECTED

Crisp lines in the cut-limestone planters and steps up to a seating area play off the geometry of the pool and furniture (below). "It's a reflection of the clients' personal style, with hardscaping that relates back to the architecture of the house," landscape designer Scott Ritter says.



SCULPTURE GARDEN

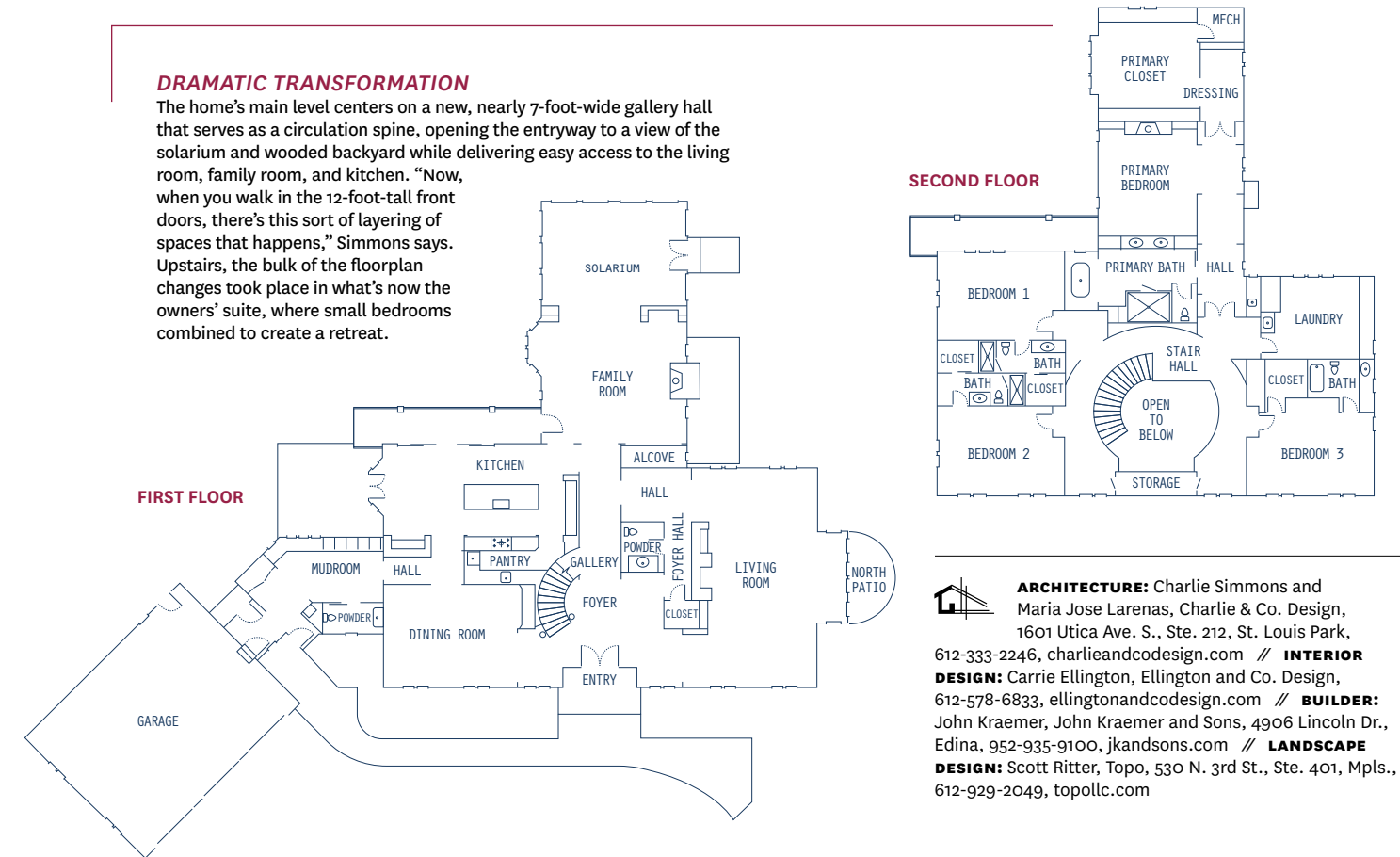
An oversize bust settles into the landscape, adding an artistic touch that's classic—yet cool and fun. "I sent Hali and Drew to look for a lion's head at Hunt and Gather in Minneapolis," Ellington says. "She texted me, 'Bust?' and I texted, 'Yes!'"

DECKED OUT

The Staffords' twins, Mila and Maddox, take a plunge from a pool deck that's anything but standard, thanks to a design by Ritter that incorporates lines of grass. "The grass makes the pool deck a little softer and more of a landscape element," he says.

DRAMATIC TRANSFORMATION

The home's main level centers on a new, nearly 7-foot-wide gallery hall that serves as a circulation spine, opening the entryway to a view of the solarium and wooded backyard while delivering easy access to the living room, family room, and kitchen. "Now, when you walk in the 12-foot-tall front doors, there's this sort of layering of spaces that happens," Simmons says. Upstairs, the bulk of the floorplan changes took place in what's now the owners' suite, where small bedrooms combined to create a retreat.



FLOOR PLAN ILLUSTRATIONS BY RANDALL NELSON

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