



All the Right Moves

Dynamic forms shape the experience of a modern
Seattle house perched on a breathtaking hillside lot.

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Architecture: Dave Norrie, Sandall Norrie Architects **Interior Design:** Kathleen Glossa, Swivel Interiors
Home Builder: Clay March, March-MacDonald **Landscape Architecture:** Zack Thomas, Board & Vellum



In the two-story foyer of this Seattle home, a stepped installation of Vibia's Set sconces creates a dynamic interplay of light and shadow. "They draw your eye all the way up and fill the space the same way a powerful piece of art would," designer Kathleen Glossa says. The gallery above displays a woven metal sculpture by Leah Gerrard from Gray Sky.

The Sunday afternoon tour of open houses in the Laurelhurst neighborhood wasn't serious, says a Seattle-based healthcare executive, wife and mother of three. It was just an exploration born of frustration with a renovation project underway at her current place—until she visited the last property on her list.

Situated on a hillside lot, the two-story aerie created in 1957 by Hollywood set designer, artist and architect John Stewart Detlie featured a glass-walled living room that seemed to float among the treetops. Renowned artist Virginia Banks had once called it home, adding a hydraulically controlled dining table that disappeared into the floor, and using its first-floor bedrooms as her studio and the open stairwell as an aviary for tropical birds.

Equally notable were the home's views of Lake Washington and Mount Rainier. "As I looked around, I had goosebumps," the wife recalls. "I thought, 'I just want to be here.'"

Her designer Kathleen Glossa—who agreed that the home's promise far exceeded that of their current renovation project and endorsed the couple's decision to make an offer—understood completely. "When you stepped into the house, you could still feel that artistic soul," she says. Which is what she and architect Dave Norrie devoted themselves to preserving, even after Norrie determined that the existing wood-frame structure would need significant repairs, updates and replacements, and couldn't support the new, open floorplan and third-floor bedroom addition their clients required. "The house was telling us what we wanted," Glossa says. "We needed to maintain that spirit of confident modernism."

Starting afresh, the new structure reinvents its predecessor's stacked and stepped rectangular forms, now framed in steel and wood and clad with dark, rough-sawn cedar under the guidance of general contractor Clay March. It rises above a garden that landscape architect Zack Thomas planted with ferns, grasses and meadow flowers for year-round color and texture and aspens and birches for privacy. "The design is about the experience," Norrie explains, "and it starts from the street, where you're below the house. As you enter, there are windows that present the experience of being on a hill; you really feel the earth. Then you come to a stair that leads up to a glass room where you're in the trees." This dramatic space,

encompassing the living room, dining room and kitchen, opens to a view deck via floor-to-ceiling folding glass doors. Above it, a new bedroom suite delivers the sensation of hovering above the house.

Norrie and Glossa continued the experience by activating every room with dynamic design elements: a pivoting entry portal, sliding doors and wall panels, cabinets that seemingly float above recessed steel plinths—including one that shape-shifts into a pass-through from the dining area to the pantry—and lighting that invites interaction. "Look at the dining fixture, and your eye can't help but notice the stepped-down portion of the fixture, reminiscent of the series of stepped spaces in the home," Glossa says. In the foyer, an installation of linear wall lights draws attention up to the gallery, where a suspended woven-wire sculpture turns in the breeze.

Merely hanging art on walls is antithetical to Glossa's approach. "The collaborative process started with, 'How is art part of the architecture?'" she says. In the kitchen, a photograph of a Texas longhorn—printed on metal and finished with a wipeable coating—forms the backsplash. On the first floor, an eye-catching work by Warren Dykeman is painted on the concrete floor.

The color and energy in the artwork by Alden Mason and Alfred Harris also inspired Glossa's modern furnishing selections, which include locally made pieces like a live-edge dining table and an entry bench that overlays wood on bright-green metal. The juxtaposition of hard and soft repeats on a Glossa-designed coffee table that floats curved bands of blue and green metal atop a black metal base.

"It's not often you're designing a house with a bird's-eye view of the trees, and I wanted to acknowledge that viewpoint by mirroring some of the same colors," says Glossa, who took a more stringent approach to fixed finishes. "The architecture of the home is very confident, and we wanted to convey that same confidence with the interiors—but synergistically, not competitively," she says. "So, we all agreed that our materials palette needed to be super disciplined"—just black, white and blond rift-sawn white oak—"so nothing is shouting, 'Look at me!'"

Except for the views, which, the wife promises, will keep her away from open houses forevermore. "I feel more than satisfied," she muses. "It's a magical feeling to live in so much light surrounded by trees and art." ■

The living room's concrete floors and custom gas fireplace wrapped in black steel provide a crisp backdrop for splashes of color. West Elm swivel chairs upholstered in a multicolored Donghia fabric pick up the deep pink hue of the Zimmer + Rohde fabric on the Walter Knoll sectional from Inform Interiors and the blue in a metal coffee table designed by Glossa and fabricated by Pivot. The arrangement rests on a Perennials carpet from Susan Mills Showroom.





Above: In contrast to the original modernist home on the site, which included view-blocking interior walls, architect Dave Norrie conceived an open-plan living room, dining room and kitchen that flows out to a deck thanks to LaCantina folding doors. AndLight's Pipeline CM 2 pendant in aluminum and cast acrylic hangs over a live-edge English elm dining table from Urban Hardwoods and Bensen's Torii chairs in black-stained ash from Inform Interiors.

Opposite: "I don't know how many clients would embrace the idea of a Texas longhorn running the length of their kitchen backsplash, but these clients did," says Glossa, who had photographer Robin Layton's "Ferdinand" printed on metal and finished with a wipeable coating. Kartell's Spoon stools pull up to an island topped with quartz from Architectural Surfaces.





Interior living spaces merge with an outdoor terrace in the treetops. Glossa appointed the expansive deck with Gloster's Grid sectional from Summer House and a square ceramic fire table by Brown Jordan. The colorful pillows are a collaboration between Glossa's firm and Vancouver, B.C.-based Maximuse.

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—KATHLEEN GLOSSA



Above: "I didn't want any furniture there to block the view," the homeowner says of the primary bedroom's glass-walled corner, "but Kathleen is very sneaky and brought in a beautiful stool, and I said, 'Oh, I really need that.' It's just rustic enough because we have so much that's modern." The custom wood piece was crafted locally by the Casual Surveying Co.

Opposite: A floating wall of rift-sawn white oak separates the main bedroom suite's closet and bathroom from a hall leading to the stairway. Just beyond a pocket door hangs a black-and-white, mixed-media work by Alfred Harris.

