

designNJ

NEW JERSEY'S HOME & DESIGN MAGAZINE

June/July 2021



**SWAPPING SPACES
IN MENDHAM**
**JEH JOHNSON &
SUSAN DIMARCO'S
FAIRYTALE LANDSCAPE
MAKEOVER IN MONTCLAIR**

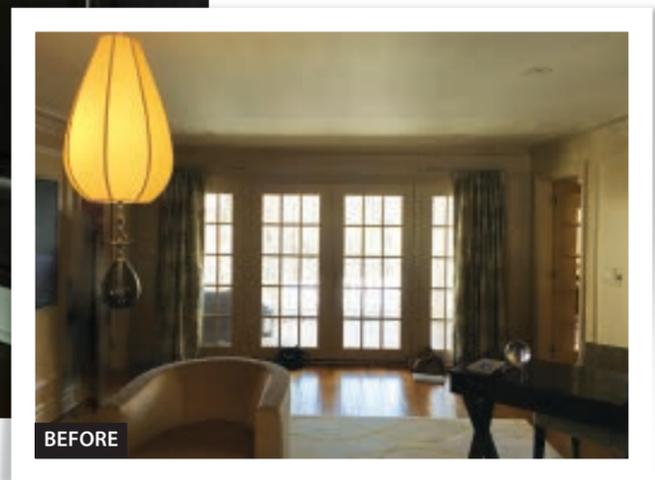
WRITTEN BY MARIROSE KRALL
PHOTOS BY ANTOINE BOOTZ
INTERIOR DESIGN BY VALERIE GRANT
KITCHEN/BUTLER'S PANTRY DESIGN BY JIM DOVE
ARCHITECTURE BY DEAN ENGIN
BUILT BY VINCE LIA
STYLING BY REBECCA OMWEG

Tricks of the Trade

FOR MENDHAM HOMEOWNERS, A NEW
STAGE OF LIFE CALLS FOR REPURPOSING ROOMS



In the living-room-turned-dining-room, designer Valerie Grant retained the panel detail on the walls. "I love rooms where you paint the walls and trim the same color. It's a really clean, updated look." The monochromatic walls save the interest for the ceiling, which Grant covered with textured wallpaper.



BEFORE



DINING ROOM | The tile fireplace surround adds another textural element to the dining room. “It was nice that there was an existing detail that really worked with the new design,” Grant says.

STUDY | The study is furnished with many of the homeowners’ existing pieces. “The desk came from the former living room. We reupholstered the chair to give it a fresh look,” Grant says. “This room is a good example of using things the clients already owned. The goal is to not always replace everything. You can reinvent pieces in the new space.”



W

ith the kids grown and flown, what’s an empty-nester couple to do? Some choose to downsize, but not these Mendham homeowners. “They decided to stay and love their house,” says Valerie Grant of Chatham-based Valerie Grant Interiors. The 7,000-square-foot Colonial Revival house was, indeed, loveable; it just needed some TLC to infuse new life into décor that was past its prime. (The circa-1970 home had undergone its last renovation 20

years earlier.) Grant was faced with a challenge: “How do we transform this home to accommodate its owners for years to come?”

The answer involved more than refreshing the décor. Grant’s plan was, basically, “Let’s rethink everything.” Pre-pandemic, the family loved to entertain, so one goal for this project was to create more space to accommodate guests once indoor get-togethers can resume. Grant and the homeowners took note of the tiny dining room and the largely unused living room and thought a room swap might be in order. “The clients asked me





Grant calls the revamped kitchen “the centerpiece of the house.” It has a modern aesthetic, with neutral tones alongside metallic finishes.

to reimagine the function of the rooms that were rarely being used,” Grant says. Thus, the former living room became the new dining room and the original dining room became a study.

In the newly designated study, Grant removed the existing corner cabinetry (which had served as a china cabinet when the space was a dining room) and added custom built-ins to store office supplies out of sight. A portion of the new study’s square footage was commandeered to add to the adjacent butler’s pantry. The new L-shaped butler’s pantry is much roomier, with space for a sink, two walls of cabinetry and open shelving. Jim Dove, owner of Dove Design Studio in Short Hills and Palm Beach, Florida, worked with Grant on the butler’s pantry and the

Black cabinetry provides a dramatic frame for the tableware within. On the oven wall, shelving stained to match the island is secured to the wall with industrial brackets.

kitchen, developing the new layouts, design concepts and product selections.

The aesthetic in the new dining room is built upon the architectural features that enhanced the space when it was a living room. French doors give the room an airy, open feel and allow for a nice breeze while dining on temperate days. The fireplace creates a warm glow — a boon during wintertime meals. For added interest, Grant covered the ceiling with textured wallpaper. “Sometimes I like creating the drama on the ceiling,” she says. “In a room of that size, you want to include something that’s going to have impact.”

With the living-room-to-dining-room shift, the first floor was down one sitting room, which meant the homeowners needed to make the most of

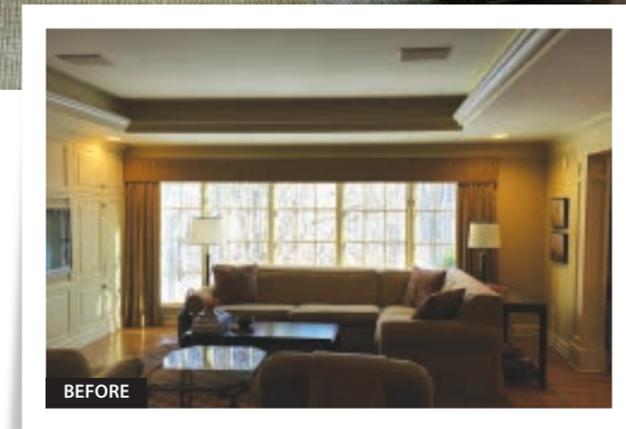




BUTLER'S PANTRY | While the kitchen is predominantly light with dark accents, the butler's pantry is primarily dark with light accents. "We knew that we wanted consistency between the kitchen and the butler's pantry," Grant says. "This graphic wallpaper helped tie everything together. It has a dark ground, but lighter accent tones soften it. The colors in the two rooms coordinate nicely."

KITCHEN DINING AREA | A single door to the sunporch was replaced with two tall, slim doors flanking a solid wall in the kitchen dining area. "The transoms above the doors help to open up the space," Grant says.

FAMILY ROOM | "Elegant forms and subdued colors enhance the natural beauty of the property and the spectacular views," Grant says of the family room.



the family room. "That room is about maximizing the seating areas," Grant explains, "and making it a slightly elevated, but relaxed, design — somewhere between a great room and a living room." The refurbished room is stylish, but not stuffy. "It's not too precious," the designer says. "I urge clients to make their rooms much more livable. No one wants formality anymore." Indeed, the family room is practical with a heavy dose of panache. A large sofa is piled with plump pillows. Two armchairs opposite the sofa are just as cozy, but they inject contemporary style with distinctive wood T-frame backs.

For modern flair in the kitchen, some of the fussier elements were removed. "We minimized the trim details and removed the crown molding," Grant notes. The remaining millwork is clean but compelling. The tray ceiling is clad in oak planks to mimic the wood on the island. "It's interesting how, sometimes, existing design elements — like the tray ceiling — can be transformed into design features," she says.

The revamped home is "streamlined and modern, yet comfortable and welcoming, with a relaxed, less-formal aesthetic," Grant says. Successfully repurposing rooms requires thought and planning, but it can be worth the



effort. “You have to be careful about considering what the clients want,” she adds, “and making sure the spaces are appropriate for that. Then, you can maximize all the spaces and make better use of every room in the house.” **DW**

SOURCES Overall: design, Valerie Grant Interiors in Chatham; architecture, Mendham Design Architects in Mendham; builder, Lia Construction in Morristown; styling, Rebecca Omweg in New York City. **Dining Room:** carpet, Woven Floors in Mendham; wall color, “Intense White” by Benjamin Moore; wall covering on ceiling, Vahallan Papers; table, Old Biscayne Designs; chairs, Wesley Hall; light fixture above table, Dana Creath Designs; consoles, Century Furniture Co.; window treatment fabric, Larsen (Cowtan & Tout); sconces above fireplace, Visual Comfort & Co. **Study:** wall color, “Shaded White” by Farrow & Ball; wall covering, Alpha Workshops; carpet and desk, homeowners; chair, homeowners, reupholstered with fabric from Romo Inc.; window treatment fabric, Larsen; built-in cabinetry, Lia Construction. **Kitchen:** design and custom cabinetry, Dove Design Studio in Short Hills and Palm Beach, Florida; cabinet hardware, Classic Brass; ceiling (not tray ceiling) and wall color, custom to match the custom color of the cabinetry; trim color, “Black Panther” by Benjamin Moore; Aurea Stone “Lincoln” quartz countertops and stone slab behind range, Atlas Marble & Granite in Springfield; pendants over island, The Urban Electric Co.; stools at island, Wesley Hall; faucets, California Faucets; sink, The Galley; shelving, designed by Dove Design Studio and fabricated by Amuneal; ovens and range, Wolf; refrigerator, Sub-Zero; vent hood, Amoré Design Factory in Rockaway. **Butler’s Pantry:** design and custom cabinetry, Dove Design Studio; wall covering, Jane Churchill (Cowtan & Tout); cabinet hardware, Colonial Bronze Co.; cristallo quartzite countertop, Dente Trading Co. Inc. in Cedar Grove, fabricated by Atlas Marble & Granite; faucet, California Faucets; sink, Jaclo Industries; shelf brackets, Rejuvenation; window treatment fabric, “Great Plains” by Holly Hunt New York. **Kitchen Eating Area:** carpet, Woven Floors; console, Creative Metal & Wood; table, Old Biscayne Designs; chairs and benches, Lee Industries; fabric on throw pillows on benches, MariaFlora and Perennials Fabrics; wall color, custom to match Dove Design Studio’s custom cabinet color; custom light fixture, Valerie Grant Interiors and O’Lampia Studio Inc. **Family Room:** wall color, “Silver Satin” by Benjamin Moore; tray ceiling wall covering, Maya Romanoff; window treatment fabric, Mark Alexander; carpet, Woven Floors; armchairs, Thayer Coggin Inc.; sectional sofa, Taylor King Furniture; fabric for throw pillows on sofa, Castel Fabrics, Donghia/Rubelli and Mark Alexander; ottoman, Desiron; square end table next to sofa, Old Biscayne; lamp on square end table, Arteriors Home; round end table, Robert James Collection; light fixture, Shine by S.H.O.; original oil painting at left, Glen Baldrige; vintage sculpted paper artwork in Lucite frame at right, The Muddy Boot in Summit, through Valerie Grant Interiors.

AS FEATURED IN JUNE/JULY 2021 OF

designNJ
NEW JERSEY'S HOME & DESIGN MAGAZINE