

Rewarding from All Angles

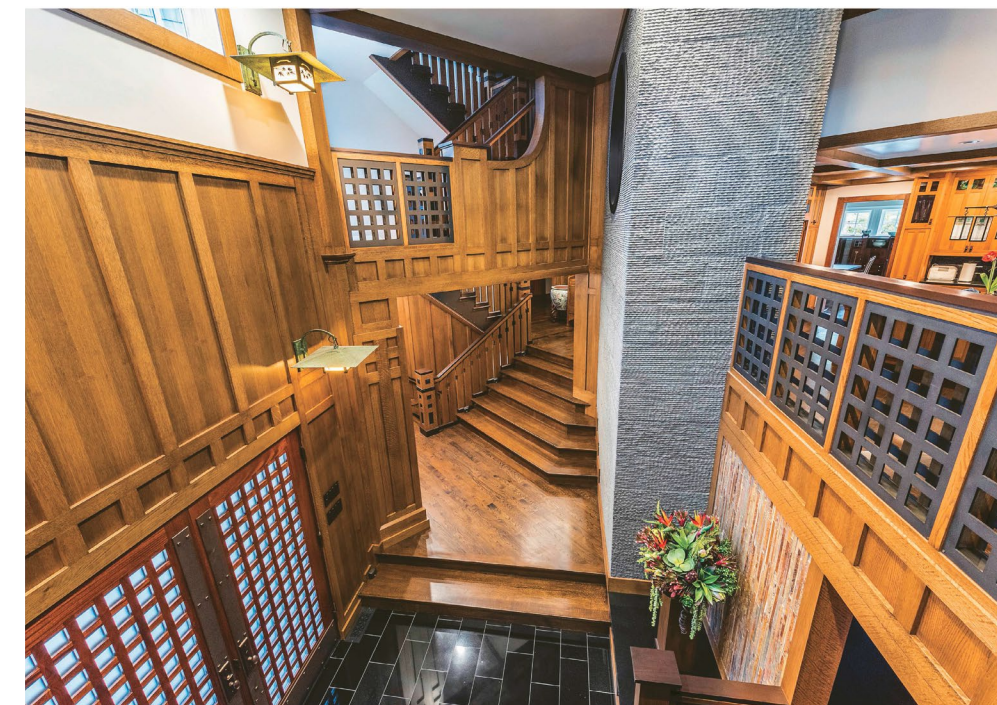
Owners of a split-level home sought to refinish the home's interior, but level changes and angled walls presented challenges along the way

By Kacey Larsen

From the very beginning, this project in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., was unique, says Dan Contelmo, Daniel Contelmo Architects, Poughkeepsie, N.Y. The homeowners were looking to refinish the interior of their newly purchased home to fit their lifestyle and design preferences before moving into it. The husband opted to take on the role of general contractor for the project himself; this decision minimized costs and created an atypical working situation for Contelmo.

"My role wasn't standard because typically we will design the entire project and do a complete set of construction drawings from the start so that every finish is selected, all the built-ins and millwork have been detailed, and then it would go out to bid. In this case, [the homeowner/general contractor] was asking for information upfront so the builder could get started and then we would continue to add information as the project progressed," he explains. "We tried to provide the first batch of information within a month, and that was enough to get the builder to start demolition and do some basic framing. Then, a month later we gave them more information. At that point, we knew the project was probably going on for at least a year. We were still being asked to provide information about stair details and built-ins in their office throughout the construction process."

Despite his continued role in the project (which continues even now), Contelmo indicates that the homeowners stayed consistent with their design preferences, making it easier to pick the project back up when the next stages needed work. "They knew what they wanted — they wanted something that would expose a lot of woodwork. They like quarter-sawn oak and wanted it to have a rich stain, and then blend it with the black iron accents," he



MASTER DESIGN AWARDS 2016 | GOLD
WHOLE HOUSE \$300,000-\$700,000

PROJECT INFORMATION

Daniel Contelmo Architects
Poughkeepsie, N.Y.
dtdarchitects.com

Project name:
Dobbs Ferry Interior

Project location:
Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.

Square footage: 3,271

Project cost: \$280,000

PRODUCT INFORMATION

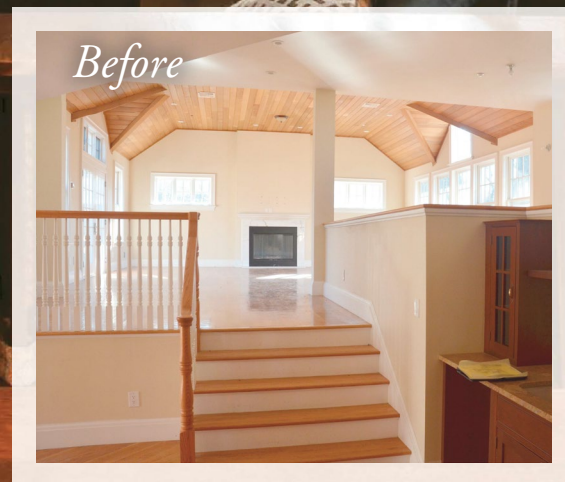
Interior doors: Homestead doors in white oak

Kitchen & bath cabinetry: JEM Woodworking, custom

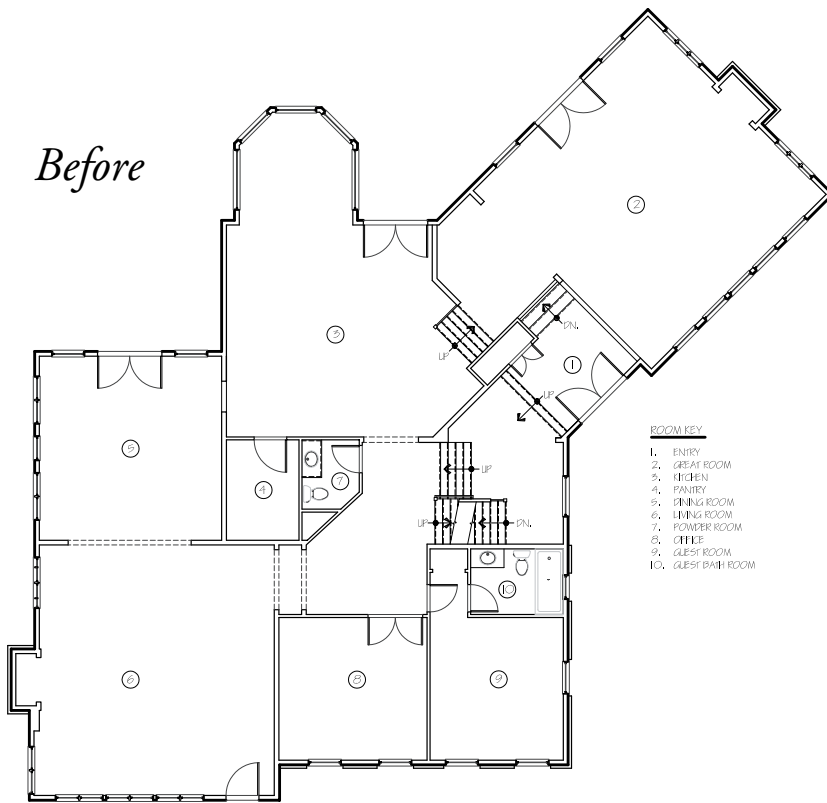
Range: Viking, 5 Series Range

Exhaust hood: Fire and Ice Sculpture, custom

Oven: Whirlpool



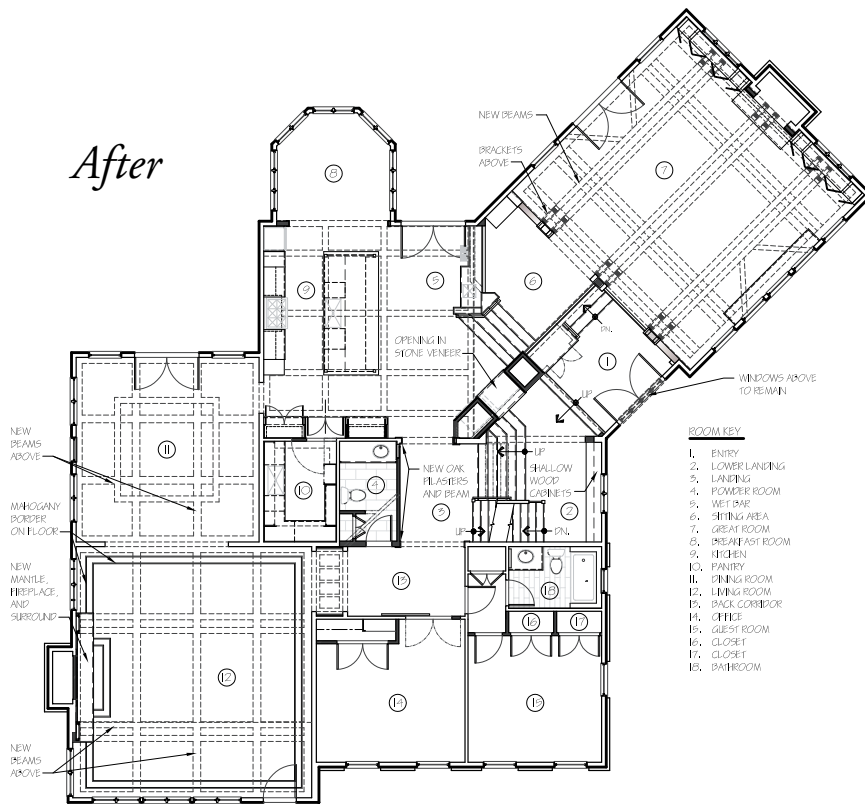
Before



▲ Concealed lighting was placed to shine on murals painted by the homeowner behind the wooden grids.

■ The Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., home's layout was very unique as it was split-level, had three staircases and many angles to work with plus sight lines to consider.

After



says. "When we first arrived at the site, there was very little detail or moulding inside the home, but knowing the clients from a previous project, the house they were moving from, and all the woodwork that was going to be involved, it was difficult to imagine how it would all come together."

OPEN TO SURPRISES

The layout of the split-level home necessitated a careful, detailed design approach, especially considering its openness and level changes which make it possible to view spaces from adjacent areas. "The one thing about this project that's unique is the layout of the house — it is just so different from most of the homes we typically work in because it was a split-level. There were two sets of staircases just leading from the entry to the kitchen level, and a third staircase leading to the family room," Contelmo says. "When we do interior elevations, they are usually drawn with a straight view of the wall, but then when there's an angle coming off of that, with another wall at a 45-degree angle, it's difficult to show that because we sometimes have to fold the drawing out to show how they interact from corner to corner. And when you throw in the different levels of staircases, it makes it even that much more difficult. Nonetheless, rewarding when it comes together."

Most of the project revolved around updating the interior finishes and creating custom built-ins, but a sole entry



▲ Continuity is achieved between the kitchen and great room with the use of wood and metal hardware.

closet was moved. Because of its location about 5 ft. ahead of the entry doors, the closet made the entry space feel cramped and taller than it needed, suggests Contelmo. A walk-in closet was created down the stairs from the entry platform, which, in turn, opened up visibility to the upper level from the entry. Opening up the upper level visibility further, a custom balustrade was built from two layers of bronze sheets punched to create squares and layered about 2 1/2 in. apart to generate texture; built-in recessed lighting in the balustrade lights up the panels.

Another benefit of moving the entry closet and working on the home's staircases — which came as a surprise to Contelmo — was an opportunity to create unique sight line. "Some opportunities came up as we were working on the main staircase, which is a switchback, going up to the bedrooms. You could see sight lines opened up from different corners of the house, right through the entry and family room," he says. "When you come into the entry, we have a new tower covered with a thin stone with a circle about 4-ft. diameter cut into it. From the kitchen you can look through that same circle and see the staircase in the background. Opportunities such as that were a welcomed surprise."

CONTINUATION OF MATERIALS AND PROJECT

While the interior project worked entirely within the existing structure of the home, the homeowners and Contelmo also worked with several of the home's existing features. Flooring throughout was kept but refinished. A natural cedar vaulted ceiling in the family room remains



▲ A powder room bathroom's vanity takes advantage of the room's width to provide ample counter space.

but was stained to provide contrast with the added beams. "We really did not change any of the windows or doors, so the natural lighting was already there, but we did create a lot of areas where lighting was concealed or hidden behind panels," he says. One such location for concealed lighting is in the living room on the mahogany panels on both sides of the circular fireplace. The homeowner is an artist so she painted murals that appear behind the wooden grids and are lit, which occurs in several spaces throughout the home Contelmo adds.

The homeowners have since moved into the house, but the project continues. Beyond the section of the project submitted to the Master Design Awards competition, Contelmo indicates the master bedroom suite has been remodeled as have all of the home's bathrooms. Up next are the whole exterior and the landscape. But Contelmo doesn't mind — watching the continued transformation has been gratifying. "They are such great people to work with," he says. "I mostly enjoy the fact that their tastes are different than the norm. It enabled us to create a space that uniquely different from anything we had done before. But that's what was rewarding about it — that it came together." | QR