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WEEKEND TRAVEL
WOODINVILLE WINE COUNTRY

LIFE ON HUNTS POINT

written by DONNA PIZZI photography by JOHN GRANEN





IT ALL HAPPENED IN A FLASH! Alexis and Michael Rowell had sold their Seattle home unexpectedly, and needed another one fast. When a 1990s Hunts Point brick home with stunning views of Lake Washington came on the market, they snatched it up.

The young, high-energy couple had already lived through three successful remodels, and hoped this one would be done as quickly.

“I knew exactly what I wanted from past experiences,” says Alexis. “We needed a house that could function at high capacity - a workhorse that would maintain its beauty, yet accommodate three washers and dryers, tile floors in certain places and plush carpet in others with awesome views of the lake.” They also knew they couldn’t live on the premises while the remodel was underway, so they rented a home in the neighborhood so Alexis could work closely with architect, designer and contractor to realize her vision.

Architect Dave Brunner of Brunner Architects in Seattle, knew that to deliver the details of the Rowells’ vision would require a major gutting of the original structure. “We wanted to open up the living, dining and kitchen to connect them to views of the infinity edge pool, terrace and lake,” says Brunner. “In the original layout, the dining room was closed off; the kitchen was tucked away behind the family room whose large brick fireplace blocked views out to the lake.”

The 5,690 sq. ft. house with four bedrooms, several additions and a three car garage had already been framed when Fairbank Construction Company, Inc. of Seattle came on board, says project manager, Darrell Westlake.

“The house had been completely gutted down to the floor membrane,” recalls Westlake. “A big challenge was the fact the original floors weren’t level, so we had to tweak the framing to get everything to work out correctly.”



FACING PAGE The newly added turret staircase features Cole & Son Fornasetti wallpaper, Procuratie, which depicts building façades in St. Marks Square in Venice. Alexis discovered this outsized wooden “Queen” chess piece online as a replacement to a traditional finial. Maison Luxe added glam to the dining room table with a high luster piano black finish. THIS PAGE Brunner designed a series of thematic archways leading from the brick entry to foyer that “announce” the newly revealed connection between indoors and out. Custom steel panel adds drama to the NW Door & Sash painted solid mahogany door.

Kelie Grosso of Maison Luxe of Seattle designed the custom kitchen table, using a remnant of the Ann Sacks countertop marble from Meta Marble & Granite, as well as the custom banquette upholstery by Kravet: Kid Glove - Graphite color. The dining chairs feature Brentano, Inc. Point-Cerulean Blue faux leather upholstery. Homchick Stoneworks fashioned the stove backsplash using a waterjet to carve the marble to resemble paneling. A NanaWall pass-through window folds back to serve poolside guests and children.



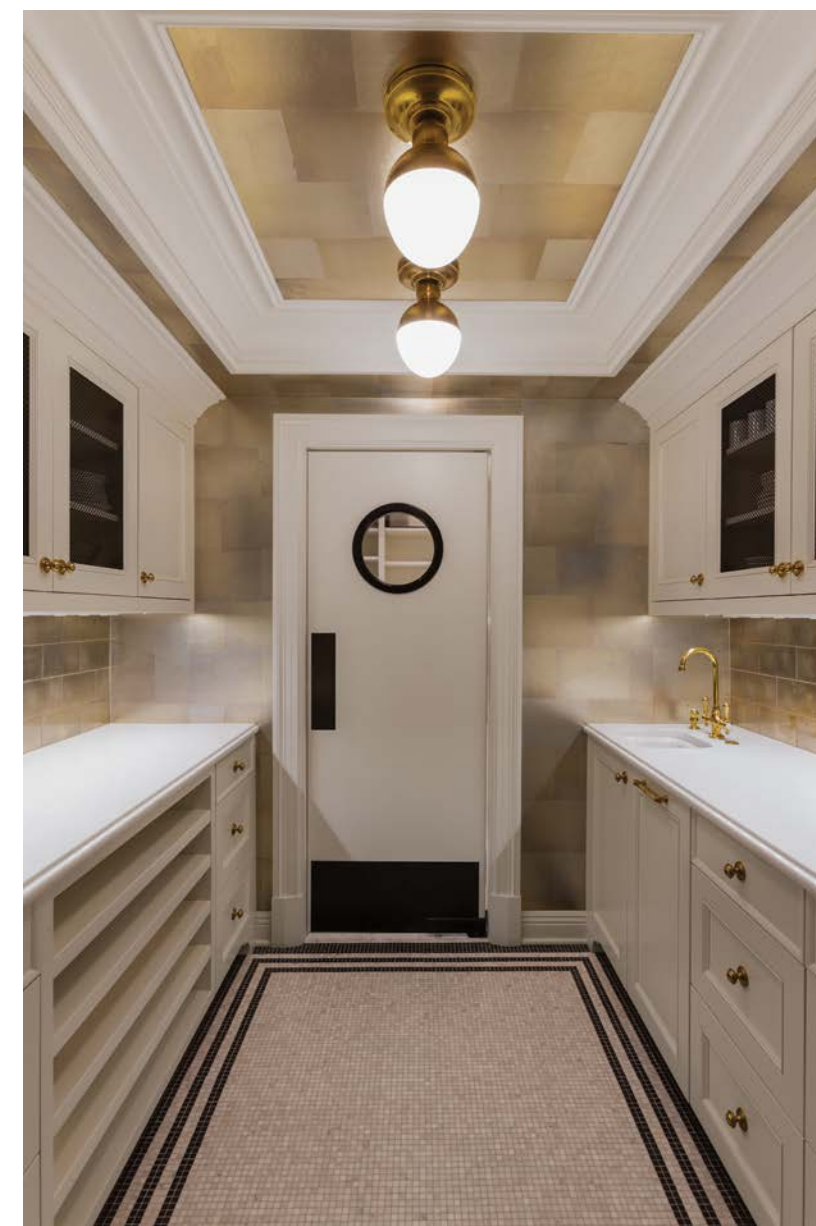


“I give Fairbank a ton of credit for pulling this whole thing off,” says Brunner. “Through our archeological discovery, we found the original framing, particularly the lower level, was horrible. Our guess was that framer had been fired. The work was more skilled by the time we got to the roof, but with all those level and plumb problems we had to redo quite a bit. It would have been easier to tear the house down, but we didn’t want to give up what we had.”

Westlake credits Alexis with remaining engaged throughout the whole 24-month process. “The team met on site with her weekly to figure out ways to make the details work, often using mockups,” he says. The creation of an entrance fountain and a turret addition greatly enhanced the home’s curb appeal. “The main entrance door has a 2-story gabled brick façade,” says Brunner, “with windows above that open to arched brickwork.”

To correct the original partitioned layout, Brunner removed walls between the living and dining room, and moved kitchen, living and dining up to the water’s edge of the house. “We did a flip, moving the family room which is more of a den-like space with media, TV and a darker color scheme into the more introverted space away from the water. Sliding barn doors open up so the children can be seen and heard from the kitchen.”

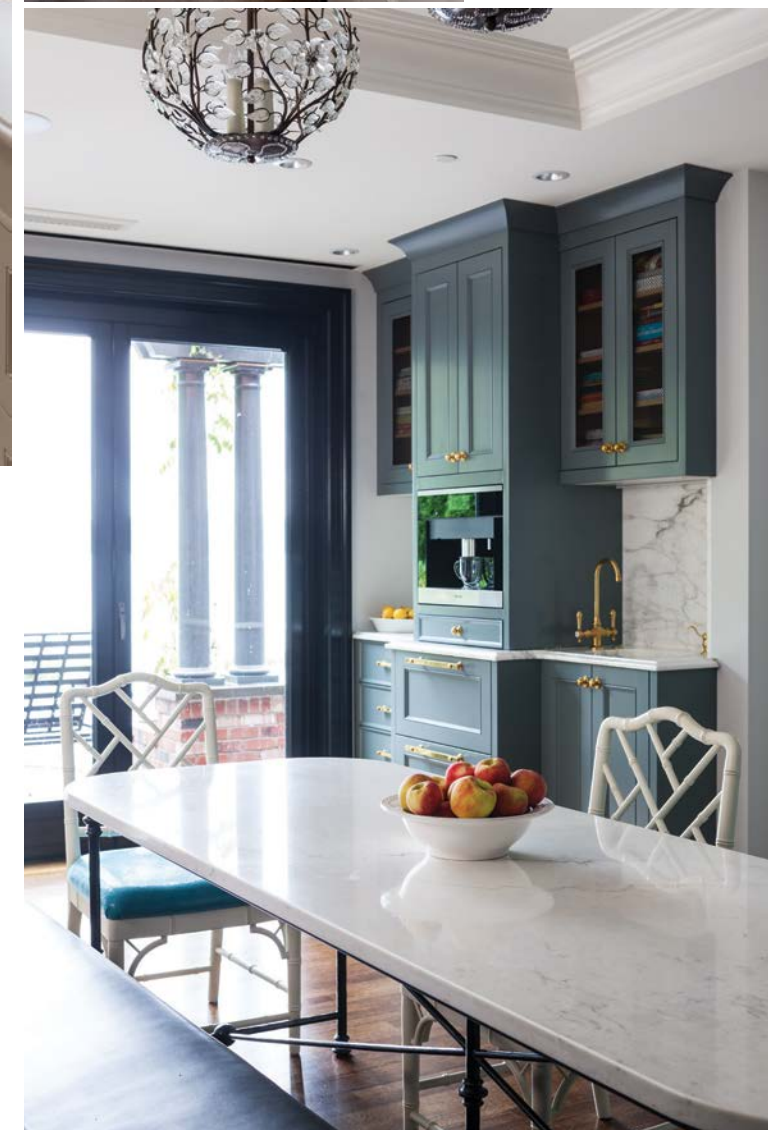
The house originally had two staircases, creating a U-shaped grand staircase at the entry. “It was a redundancy of function,” says Brunner, “that took up a lot of space, and looked odd.”



To keep the grand feel, a formal staircase to the right of the entrance features a bronze, lamb’s ear railing that overlooks the 2-story entry. “A fun, secondary spiral staircase,” adds Brunner, “is tucked nicely into the turret element with more direct access to the upstairs bedrooms.”

Fairbank brought in seasoned craftspeople with knowledge of old school techniques. “We knew the barrel structure couldn’t be done with sheetrock or modern materials,” says Westlake, “So we created a bent space, framed it to hold all the mechanical systems, then left a void so a plasterer could come in with his metal lathe to do a traditional lathe and plaster technique.”

“When the Rowells first reached out to me,” recalls Kelie Grosso of Maison Luxe of Seattle, “their initial concept was a sort of Great Gatsby feeling – a fun house in a traditional setting, with a quiet, sedate and stately exterior and a very fun interior with lots of whimsy, geared toward a young, vibrant family who loves to entertain.”





With the new open interiors, Grosso suggested a continuous, classic palette of soft neutrals to highlight the architecture of the house, its built-ins and the beauty of its physical surroundings. “The waterfront property is amazing,” says Grosso, “so we didn’t want the interiors to interfere, because your first instinct is to look past them to the water.”

“We shared a common goal,” says Alexis. “Kelie knew the style of home we wanted. A little jewel box, where every corner has its own character and personality. An estate that looks as if it’s been there for 100 years.”

“Each room is a continuation of the space before,” says Grosso, “creating the feeling of a thoughtful and continuous color story throughout.”

Touches of drama abound, especially in the formal dining room where the dramatic piano black table finish carries through the same aura found in the custom black exterior doors. Grosso and Alexis worked together with Stark Carpets to bring the black accents upstairs in the custom design of a minimalist, yet elegant hallway carpet that connects to the Zebra AX stair runner by Stark Carpet, which adds flourish to the entry staircase.



FACING PAGE Functional built-ins provide a place for everything. Antique Parisian pendants add drama to custom black and white Stark carpet. The powder room features a custom antiqued mirror done in 6 separate panels. Wall treatment (left) is Mother of Pearl by Maya Romanoff. Manor House Gray wall color by Farrow & Ball Paint. Kalista sconces, custom sink with Kalista base. Custom cabinetry by Magraw-Zeka Cabinets in Poulsbo. French doors open onto the new pool and spa. THIS PAGE A pair of swivel custom Louis Lounge chairs by Cisco Brothers upholstered in Zimmer & Rhode Palladio fabric are crowned by Circa Lighting chandelier by Aerin Lauder. Antique gold Diego Bench by Oly Studio upholstered with faux fur.



The living room furnishings are all custom designed by Grosso, except for the Oly Studio coffee table and Global Views accent table. “We established a palette for that room, starting with the custom O’Henry House sofa,” recalls Grosso, “which we upholstered with Schumacher Palermo Mohair Velvet - Quartz.”

The Medici Arm Chair from Windsor Smith Home is upholstered in olive green leather. Other furnishing colors include amethyst, navy, and ivory with gold accents.

“Everyone was really invested in this project,” says Grosso. “It was a very collaborative effort. When there was an opportunity to do anything custom, we took everyone’s opinion, which led us to the best design.” Brunner refigured the upstairs as well. “Only the master suite and another bedroom had a water view,” he says. “With the master bath taking up valuable space.” To improve the value of the home, Michael Rowell suggested adding another waterside bedroom, so Brunner moved the master bath back, and added a third overlooking the water.

“Fairbank made it all happen,” says Brunner. “They had some complicated issues to resolve, including adding radiant heat throughout an existing structure, and a combined boiler system for house and pool, all with intense challenges.”

“Fairbank was knowledgeable, they had a good, clean cut crew and price standards equitable to their professionalism and quality of work,” agrees Alexis.

“Brunner was also amazing,” she says. “Laid back, wanting to put forth the clients’ visions, not his personal style. So good at listening and delivering everything spot on.”

Grosso and Alexis worked well together throughout, including in the couple’s master suite, where Grosso chose a neutral palette, with pencil lead gray carpet, Solstice Silk wallcoverings in Midsummer Mink by Phillip Jeffries, and soft and tactile upholstery for a peace-filled getaway.

It was Alexis’ energy and passion that drove the process. Her diligent searching turned up the c.1908 antique Parisian pendants in kitchen and upstairs hallway; the Thomas Darnell Peony painting in the entry and Shinekia Thomas – L’Atelier ballet dancer in the dining room, whom she spent three months tracking down via Pinterest after seeing her work in Traditional Home.

Fairbank’s Superintendent Dave Nixon, says Alexis, was also great to work with. “He was a father figure who I fought, laughed and talked with. He was my guy!”

PROJECT SOURCES

CONTRACTOR: Fairbank Construction Company
www.fairbankconstruction.com

ARCHITECT: Brunner Architects
www.brunnerarchitects.com

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Ken Large Landscape Architect

PLUMBING FIXTURES: Kohler Signature Store by Keller Supply
www.Kohler.com

WINDOWS & DOORS: Kolbe Windows & Doors
www.kolbewindows.com

Plumbing Fixtures: Kohler Signature Store by Keller Supply; Kohler, Waterworks, Rohl, Toto; Kitchen Appliances Sub-Zero, Wolf, Miele, DCS, Fisher & Paykel, Vent-a-Hood; Cabinetry: Magraw-Zecha Cabinets; Exterior Doors: Nana Wall Systems, Northwest Door & Sash; Stone Fabricator: Homchick Stoneworks; Exgterior Masonry: Stone Age Masonry