

SPECIAL ISSUE YOUR HOME

THE
BOSTON

Globe

08.29.04 // MAGAZINE

From ordinary
to extraordinary,
three humdrum
houses get
bigger, bolder,
and better.

Old Homes Made New

THE GRILL IS GONE

Turn your fireplace
into a rotisserie

PLUS: YEAR-ROUND SCHOOLS ■ NOMAR ON EBAY ■ CHILLED SOUPS AND SAVORY SCRO

YOUR HOME /// SPECIAL ISSUE

NEW MEETS OLD



* the ranch

A rectangular box, the ranch's simplicity of style makes it the perfect starting point for an Asian-inspired expansion. **PAGE 24**



* the Tudor

The front of a staid Tudor-style house belies the lively light-filled family-room addition in back. **PAGE 30**



* the Cape

A basic Cape grows up and out with added rooms and a colonnade that delivers space and classical style. **PAGE 34**

They weren't fancy, just standard houses that worked. Easy and relatively economical to build and popular with buyers clamoring for the American dream, these three basic styles began sprouting along suburban roads and subdivisions from the 1920s through the 1950s and beyond. Today's families find that, with a wing added here and a deck added there, such houses still work. With the basic footprint of the original as the nucleus, each of these homes was made not just bigger, but bolder and better.



EASTERN INFLU

A ranch-style house sprouts wings that envelop a new courtyard and

BY DOREEN IUDICA VIGUE /// PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC ROTH



new look

The back of the ranch house got a one-story addition at the basement level and a deck, sliding doors, and cantilevered roof on the upper floor. The exterior is cedar and Galvalume, a metal product used on farm buildings.

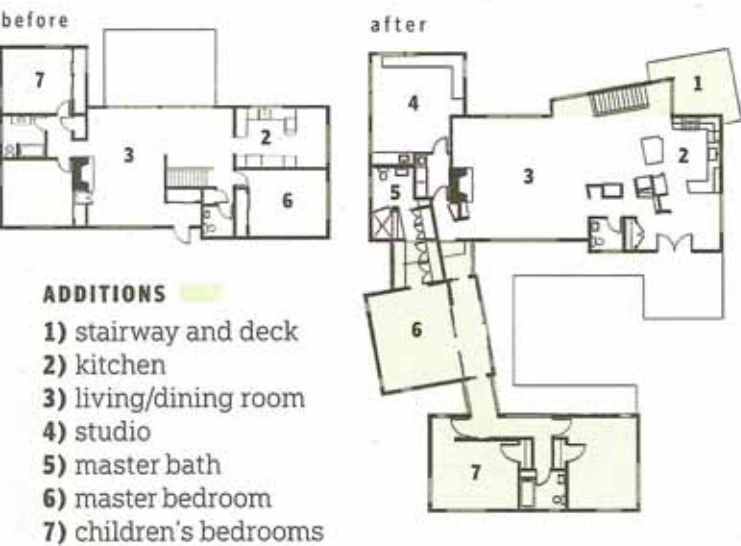


ENCE

an Asian-inspired vision.



BEFORE



Of all the house types found in the suburbs of New England, perhaps the most nondescript is the 1950s ranch style. What a difference a thoughtful renovation can make. ■ From the moment the owners, both artists, bought the house in a town west of Boston, they knew they wanted to make dramatic changes. However, they took their time - almost seven years - figuring out how they, and their two children, like to live. They concluded that they wanted a more open floor plan with lots of light flowing into every room, a place that would make them feel calm the minute they walked through the door, a home that had the sleek, streamlined style of the Japanese and International designs they favored. ■ They hired architect David Pill to help them achieve their East-meets-West vision of turning their one-story ranch into an Asian-inspired showplace. As for Pill, he liked the idea of designing a modern home nestled on a grassy hill in the middle of an old New England town. "It's not about doing something just to be unconventional," says Pill, a principal of Pill-Maharam Architects in Winchester, along with his landscape-designer wife, Hillary Maharam. "It's about doing something for your life

Doreen Iudica Vigue is a freelance writer. She can be reached at vigue@globe.com.



DAVID PILL (left) of Pill-Maharam Architects stands with the project architect, Neil Higgins, in the glass-lined hallway that connects the house to the master wing. The master bedroom suite (right) is closed off with sliding shoji screens, which help create an Asian sensibility in the house's interior.



THE RANCH HOUSE

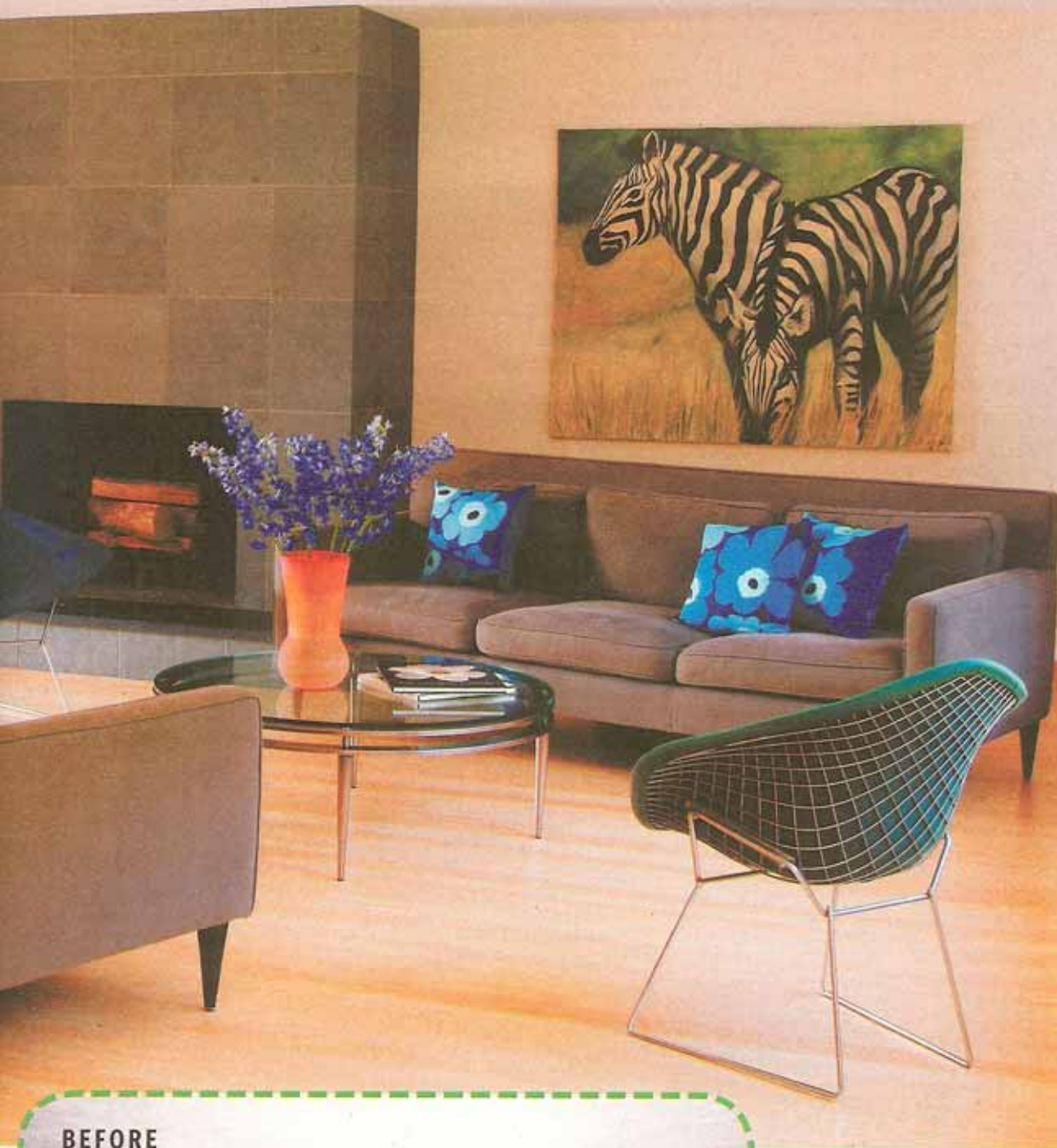


The notion of a New England ranch house may seem contradictory. After all, there are not many cowboys punching steers between Cape Cod and the Green Mountains. Maybe the ranch house is a long way from its seemingly Western roots, yet this particularly American domestic type has flourished here because its casual, informal demeanor speaks to us of both leisure and modernity.

The grandfather of the ranch house was Frank Lloyd Wright, considered to be America's greatest and most influential architect. Developed not in the Rockies or on the Great Plains but in Chicago, Wright's Prairie Style started a revolution by overthrowing the hierarchical American house plan of a box divided by a central hall and flanked by rooms. Abandoning attics and basements, Wright's houses stressed flowing and open spaces beneath low-pitched, horizontal, sheltering roofs, all anchored by a massive central chimney.

Wright's nontraditional house spread to Europe. Modernist immigrants brought their various Dutch, German, and French treatments of the master's house back to America in the 1930s. Meanwhile, West Coast architects were discovering the simple 19th-century ranch houses of California. All of these sources were melded together in the Eisenhower years with the comfortable yet oh-so-modern ranch house.

The emphasis was less on historical sources than flexibility and economy: The ranch house was often built of redwood or cedar, a carport replaced the barnlike garage, and the kitchen was filled with the latest space-age appliances. Best of all, a spacious living room, which flowed seamlessly from the kitchen and dining areas, was centered on a large stone fireplace. As for external aesthetics, in the hands of a sensitive designer, the ranch fit naturally and comfortably into the landscape. —Will Morgan



BEFORE



living room

The renovation called for the reconfiguration of the living room, but the most dramatic change was afforded by resurfacing the fireplace with slate. New bamboo flooring was selected for its light color and durability. The homeowners' modern upholstered furniture was augmented with two mid-20th-century classics, Diamond chairs by Harry Bertoia. Top: The house embraces the serene courtyard.



clean, lean

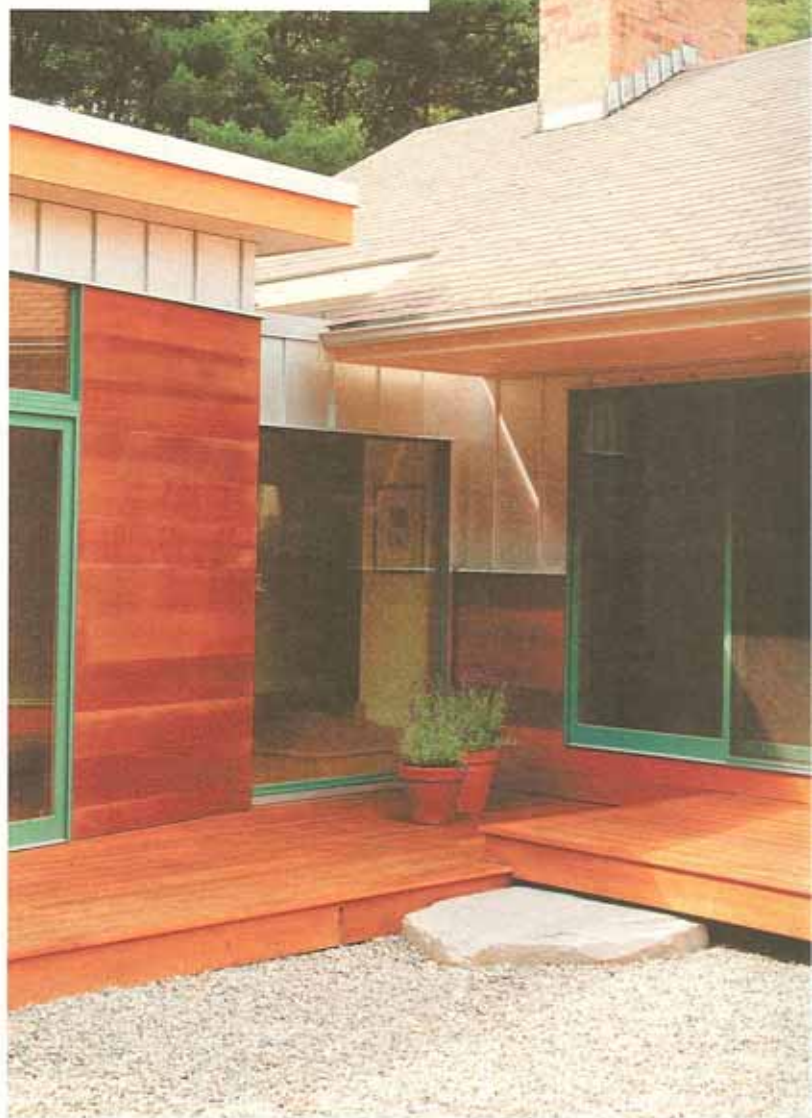
The kitchen island is set on wheels for maximum flexibility. Roll it to a nearby counter, and it snaps into place like a piece in a jigsaw puzzle. A built-in whiteboard next to the double ovens can help keep children busy while the adults cook.

that suits your tastes, that suits the way you live. A lot of people who live in New England stick with what they see in New England. I loved the challenge of doing something unexpected." ■ The homeowners were involved in every step of the planning, says Pill, recalling how the couple and the design team, including project architect Neil Higgins and contractor John Saleme of Detail Construction in Marlborough, would sit around the blueprints eating homemade scones and going over every detail. It was decided to add a wing to the original footprint. The more than 1,400 square feet of new space forms a kind of modernist ell that houses the children's bedrooms and a master suite. ■ Materials were chosen for their usefulness and durability as /// CONTINUED ON PAGE 42



old meets new

In this corner, the original ranch house meets its Eastern-inspired addition. The living room, master bedroom, and children's rooms overlook a placid courtyard, making the house feel open to the outdoors.



A CUSTOM STORAGE CABINET takes the place of a handrail at the top of the new staircase. The stairs were moved to create a more open floor plan and are part of a small addition adjacent to the dining area, which is shown in the "before" picture. The new space is set at an angle to the house and features sliding glass doors that lead to a new deck.

BEFORE



Eastern Influence

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

much as for their aesthetic value. Bamboo flooring, for example, lends an exotic appeal but is also stronger than most hardwoods; cabinetry was made from blond maple, stainless steel was used for appliances and accessories, translucent glass on doors allows for both privacy and light.

The original structure measured 1,510 square feet on the first floor, with 908 square feet of living space in the basement. Making the dark little house brighter was a priority, says Pill. Walls were removed, and a staircase leading to the basement family room was moved to allow for more open living and French doors to draw the sunshine into the living/dining area. New walls are set at angles, and the play with geometry makes for space that is anything but static.

In the modest-sized kitchen, the focal point is a custom-designed center island that is set on wheels, so it can be rolled over to a counter and hooked into place like a piece of a giant puzzle. In addition, there is a pantry space, a dedicated wall for the kids to doodle on a whiteboard, and a "toasting station" that houses a toaster oven and microwave.

The fireplace in the living room was refaced in slate, giving the room an air of sophistication. A short hall leads to a former bedroom and bath, which Pill transformed into an art studio and a laundry room.

The hall leading to the new bedroom wing is



WITH INDUSTRIAL FINESSE, Pill judiciously used materials not often found in residential design, such as (from top) corrugated plastic canopies above exterior doorways; siding made of a galvanized-steel product used in agricultural buildings; and stainless-steel rods rather than wood railings on the deck. Such practical details also enhance the modern design of the home.

where the home makes its most dramatic transition. A wall of glass faces the front of the home, where a square courtyard filled with smooth stones creates a Zen-style garden. Pill designed the master bedroom to face the courtyard, a serene setting that inspires the owners' day or calms them for sleep. The bedroom is set off by giant shoji-screen pocket doors.

The children's rooms are large, with high ceilings. Each has a view of the courtyard through oversize windows that start at the floor. In the simply designed garden, branches brush up against the glass and make the ground-level rooms seem as though they are floating among the treetops. "The couple wanted the house to not only feel calm but to feel open to the outside," says Pill. "The site for me is the most important thing. A house has to fit into its surroundings, and we really wanted to make the trees and grass outside as much a

Perennial Designs



Custom silk and dried floral design

Eclectic accessories for the home and garden

117 Chapel Street, Needham

781.449.7227

Open Monday-Saturday, 10-5:30

Eastern Influence

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43

part of what was going on inside."

The basement-level family room, which leads to the two-car garage and backyard, was updated with a mudroom that has lots of cubby storage and a new linoleum floor. The basement is at grade level on the back side, where Pill added a one-story wing that houses a home office with a buffed concrete floor, built-in maple cabinets and shelving, and a long, skinny skylight that brings indirect light into the room. The house now totals 3,860 square feet.

When it came to exterior materials and design, the idea was to "keep it simple," says Pill, who added industrial touches without letting them overpower the warm and inviting sensibility of the facade. For siding, Pill chose fat cedar shingles and accented the outer walls with Galvalume, a galvanized-steel product typically found on the roofs of farm buildings. The cantilevered deck off the kitchen has stainless-steel rods passing through cedar rails. A corrugated plastic canopy shelters the side door to the family room, and a giant steel beam slices through a flank of the home, supporting the deck and expanded dining area.

The ample grounds are sublime. A few perennials greet guests at the entrance, while the yard is a rolling sea of grass that leads to woods where a rope swing hangs from the massive branch of a tall tree.



THE MASTER BATH was carved into a space in the house that was originally a child's bedroom. The bathroom now connects to the master bedroom via a dressing room/closet. The oversized tiled shower is separated from the dressing area by a glass divide that sits atop a slate bench. The floor and walls are finished in ceramic tile.

An Adirondack chair awaits visitors, who, upon sitting down and gazing back at the house, could easily forget they are in New England.

Eight months after the project's completion, Pill says with certainty, "I think we've accomplished everything we set out to do here. It's not about the pediment on the house next door, or the fact that everyone else has a Colonial, or that this is the Northeast. It's about the sun and the trees and the grass and the way you want to live your life inside and outside the walls." **BG**

because your home
theater deserves
a very special stage

new england wall unit - easy order #5
one of a virtual multiplex of home theater
storage solutions by Pompanoosuc Mills.

(1 & BROADWAY) 617 494.0406
ORD NH MAIN ST 603 225.7975
OTHER LOCATIONS IN VT, NH, CT, NY, NJ & PA

MILLS
for life

make yourself at home

REPORT

THE WORLD'S FINEST HAND-KNOTTED RUGS

• OVER 30,000 SQ. FT. IN OUR SHOW ROOM
• OVER 4,000 SQ. FT. UNDER OUR TENT
• OVER \$20 MILLION INVENTORY



IT'S YOUR CHANCE TO SAVE 10% TO 15%
ON THE WORLD'S FINEST HAND-KNOTTED RUGS.

THIS IS A LIMITED TIME OFFER.
ONLY WHILE INVENTORY LASTS.
THAT'S IT. YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT
UNTIL NEXT YEAR. SO IF YOU ARE
EVEN THINKING ABOUT SHOPPING
FOR A RUG, THIS IS THE TIME.
TAKE A LOOK UNDER THE TENT.



1269 WASHINGTON ST. RTE 53
HANOVER, MA • 781-626-0010
DAILY 9a • THURS 10a • SUN 12a

549 WORCESTER ROAD, RTE 9
NATICK, MA • 508-651-3500
DAILY 10-9 • SAT 10a • SUN 12a