

Dated Bethesda rambler gets a thoroughly modern remodel

By Merlisa Lawrence Corbett
Special to The Washington Examiner

When Ami and Tom Arend first laid eyes on a 1950s split-level rambler, they fell in love with its Bethesda location and ignored its neglected condition. They looked beyond its dated, shrub-covered exterior and envisioned a contemporary house that could accommodate their modern family, which includes multiple generations — nine people, living under one roof. Although the house had several challenges — including no insulation in any of the walls — the tree-lined Westgate neighborhood, walking distance to Friendship Heights Metro, sold the Arends on the property.

They hired Grossmueller's Design Consultants, which transformed the 2,000-square-foot rambler into a 3,600-square-foot modern marvel that won two regional Contractor of the Year awards from the National Association of the Remodeling Industry.

"It had potential," said Ami Arend of the once modest property. "We loved the location and we know what we like. We love very contemporary. We love color. We love simple."

Simple, yet dramatic, best describes the Arend home. From the custom-made knotty alder front door with stainless steel inlays to the Frank Lloyd Wright-like suspended staircase, everything



about this home bears witness to the Arend's cool, nonconformist, streamlined style.

Instead of demolishing the house, Grossmueller's preserved the basement, the frame and brick exterior. "We took it down to the bare exterior walls of the entire house. Then everything was done all new," said Marc O'Grady, designer and project manager at Grossmueller's.

The biggest transformation was on the first floor, where the addition created a vaulted ceiling, allowing the Arends to showcase the stunning suspended staircase with its powder-coated iron rails.

Instead of the usual drywall-surrounded support beam at the base of the stairs, Grossmueller's hung a support beam from the roof structure to hold up the staircase. "It's a feature we just love," said Tom Arend.

The move was tricky. "We hadn't done anything like that before," said O'Grady. "We worked with our engineer. It made a big difference."

The beamless staircase opens the living room to the sleek, contemporary kitchen. Floor to ceiling high-gloss blonde cabinets (from Europa by Norcraft) flank glossy-white base cabinets. Thin, stainless-steel door pulls and open stainless-steel shelves reinforce the interior's linear flow. The open shelves were Ami's idea. "I had it in my old house. I like to see what I have."

Large rectangular white tiles



AFTER: Ami and Tom fell in love with a dated, neglected split-level rambler in Bethesda. They hired Grossmueller's Design Consultants to turn the 2,000-square-foot home into a 3,600-square-foot modern marvel with industrial and commercial materials incorporated into the house. The space was thoroughly upgraded with custom finishes throughout — including a Frank Lloyd Wright-like suspended staircase.

ple element is met with a startling response. The modest and minimalist master bedroom contrasts with the dramatic master bath, which won grand prize for bath design under \$30,000.

Encased in large horizontal gray tiles from Porcelanosa, the master bath is bold and masculine. From the towering power shower with its floor-to-ceiling, stainless steel inlay, to the glossy-grainy Duravit vanity, this bath epitomizes industrial chic.

Grossmueller's incorporated industrial and commercial materials throughout the house. The workout area on the lower level features rubber flooring used in commercial gyms. Diamond plate sheeting, often seen in garages, is used as wainscoting.

"At first I thought, no, it won't look right," said Ami Arend. "But it works great with kids and traffic."

The exterior brick was painted gray to match the HardiePlank siding, a wood-looking composite material with a 50-year guarantee.

Ami Arend loves the house's durability. "We wanted something that will last."

On the Web

- » grossmuellers.com
- » norcraftcabinetry.com
- » porcelanosa-usa.com/home/locations/maryland.aspx
- » doorsbydecora.net
- » jameshardie.com

from Porcelanosa compliment the kitchen's industrial elements, including a concrete floor. "With the kids and the dogs and everything, we wanted very durable floors," said Tom Arend. "I like wood floors, but I didn't want wood floors everywhere. ... It worked out quite well. I must say we're pretty happy with it."

A series of large windows, grouped into an obtuse triangle, flooded the living room with natural light. Built-in bookshelves with contrasting dark-stained accents complement the Jacobean-stained oak floors in this section. Spacious and sparsely decorated, the living room serves as the perfect canvas to showcase a red leather Eames lounge chair and a chartreuse leather sofa.

"We love color," said Ami Arend. "We are thinking of painting a wall red."

The discriminate use of colors and textures gives the home a casual yet dramatic flow. Every sim-

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