

# New England Home

CELEBRATING FINE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2007

CLASSICS WITH A TWIST  
GLOBAL CHIC DOWNTOWN  
COLOR THAT SIZZLES  
VERMONT CHARM UPDATED

**Special Inside:**

The First Annual  
New England Design  
Hall of Fame

## COMPLEMENTARY COLORS

The fiery hues a homeowner remembers from her childhood in India add spark to a palette of serene counterparts in a family-friendly Georgian Revival home near Boston.

REPRINTED FROM THE  
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2007 ISSUE  
OF NEW ENGLAND HOME

# Complementary Colors

*The fiery hues a homeowner remembers from her childhood in India add spark to a palette of serene counterparts in a family-friendly Georgian Revival home near Boston.*

text by regina cole | photography by sam gray | architecture: thomas egan, america dural  
interior design: phillip jude miller, america dural | produced by kyle hoepner



When Mark O'Brien and his wife, Anjali, looked for a house, they didn't intend to launch into a home improvement proj-

ect. All they wanted was a home they could love, where they would raise their two sons, Kiran, nine, and Harry, six. "We had never done a remodel before, not even a small one," Mark says, "and we weren't planning on remodeling this house. But then we walked in, and the rest just followed. | "In my opinion," he continues, "if you don't love a house within thirty seconds of first seeing it, you will never love it. In this particular case, there were plenty of things not to love, but to us, the house's flaws were irrelevant. I think we



Contemporary art and treasures from the homeowner's childhood bring flashes of vitality to the tranquil living room. FACING PAGE: The young family fell in love with a genteel Georgian Revival house that displays touches of modernism.





The personable but uncluttered living room speaks truth to Phillip Miller's maxim: "You should love everything in your living room, but you shouldn't have everything you love in your living room."





**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** A pink lacquered dining table is paired with clear Lucite chairs. A saturated hue that mixes chocolate with aubergine creates a dramatic backdrop for the clean-lined furniture. A nineteenth-century server features book-matched flame-patterned veneer.





Chrome drawer pulls refer to the modernism expressed in the house's original construction. **FACING PAGE TOP:** Bright colors cheer the boys' bedroom. **FACING PAGE BOTTOM:** A small seating area on the stair landing expresses the home's mix of traditional, colorful and contemporary.

somehow knew that it was going to be right for us.”

Anjali agrees. “It isn’t a vast mansion,” she says, “but it has elegant proportions. We really appreciated the good ‘bones.’”

Their home was originally built in 1929, one of the many handsome redbrick Georgian Revival houses constructed in the then-growing “streetcar suburbs.” Wooded areas from that time are now population centers in themselves, leading Anjali to describe their Brookline neighborhood as “living in the city with many of the benefits of a suburban setting.”

As much as they loved the house, the layout just didn’t work for a modern family. “There were halls and walls everywhere, and lots of tiny little rooms,” says Mark. “We don’t need a maid’s bedroom. We wanted what most families want these days: an open floor plan in the main living area.”

To make that happen, they partnered with architect

Thomas Egan and designer Phillip Jude Miller of America Dural, a Cambridge build/design firm. “When we met with Tom and Phillip, they urged us to consider remodeling, and to do it in tandem with the interior decoration,” Anjali says. “Too often, they are separated.”

**M**iller, a Louisiana native who named his firm after his beloved childhood nanny, says, “Their choice of the house told me 90 percent of what I needed to know. It’s a beautiful house, and Anjali has great style. They’re both savvy, cultured, well-traveled, interested in local artists.”

Thus began a six-year construction and decoration project that reconfigured interior rooms, created easy access to backyard gardens, did away with tiny, difficult spaces and

narrow hallways, and filled the interior with light and color. About the only thing that didn't change is the facade, which retains its classic elegance.

Mark and Anjali found the process fascinating and educational. "There's a bit of patience involved," Anjali says. "Phillip told me to hold off on buying *anything* for the house—even much-needed curtains. We lived with fabric shower curtains from Kmart as our bedroom drapes for quite a while. It was worth it in the end, when we could choose everything more consciously."

"I was terrible throughout the whole process, a real slacker," her husband confesses. "I would let Anjali do all the work with Phillip and Tom and their team, and then, when things were half built, I would swoop in and make a fuss and veto the parts that I thought were wrong. I simply cannot look at a drawing or listen to a description and get any meaningful sense of what a thing will be like. Until I am standing in the space, it's all a big mystery. It's really fortunate that my wife and everyone else on the project didn't suffer from the same limitations," he adds jokingly.

Especially striking in the new family-friendly rooms is the easy integration of serene backgrounds with lively color. Anjali, who grew up in India, loves the hot hues of the subcontinent. "I'd see women in saris of every hue—mustard, puce, vivid green. I loved the combination of red, pink and orange that you often see in Indian fabrics. These colors are cheery, dramatic and they connect to my childhood, so I looked for a way to insert a bit of them into every room."

Miller considers color sensitivity one of his strengths, and he cites Anjali's love of color as one of the reasons he and his clients were so compatible. "You've got to look at the house as a whole," he says. "Colors all have to complement each other, even if you don't see them at the same time."

He points to the living room, where cool tones of blue and gray act as a foil for flashes of red in upholstery and art.





Red reappears throughout the house: it glows in the dining room draperies, surprises from the interior of the kitchen cabinets and the back wall of the built-in shelves, and runs in the veins of the granite countertops.

In the dining room, walls painted a rich chocolate-aubergine color make a calming backdrop for a dining table given a vivid coat of bright pink lacquer. “It made me very happy!” says Anjali about the bright addition to the room.

A more muted palette takes over in the kitchen and the bedrooms. “I like a bit of calm in these spaces,” Anjali says.

The kitchen’s sleek sensibility looks to the 1950s with polished chrome hardware, a mahogany-topped island, caramel-colored cabinets and granite on the counters and

backsplash. It opens into a color-saturated family room.

In the master bedroom, Miller hung a row of framed Indian paintings over the headboard to introduce color and as a reference to Anjali’s childhood. Otherwise, the room is a tranquil oasis. “There is still lots of color,” Miller says, “but there’s little contrast in the colors.”

Both parents laud a design that gives their children a private en suite bathroom, while Mark, who works from home, loves having his office available to his children. “My office has a door, but I never close it. I don’t have to clutter up my desktop with photos of my kids because they’re in my office all the time, drawing and writing and chattering away.”

Phillip Miller looks back on this project as a great example of cohesive interior and exterior style. In fact, he doesn’t want to do it any other way. “I cannot understand an architect who has no interest in interiors,” he says. **NEH**

**NOTE** For more about *New England Home*, visit [www.nehomemag.com](http://www.nehomemag.com).



**FACING PAGE:** The master bedroom serves as an oasis of calm in a lively house.  
**THIS PAGE:** With soft celadon walls and white marble, the master bath nods to early twentieth-century modernism.

AMERICA DURAL  
I N C O R P O R A T E D  
DECORATION & ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

143 Huron Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138 | 617.661.4100