

Modern Preservation

A sensitive renovation of a classic rambling Leawood ranch by interior designer Doug Wells creates a home that's perfectly suited to the homeowners



ABOVE: Interior designer Doug Wells. **LEFT:** Wells incorporated African lacewood panels on one wall of the living room to add warmth and a graphic punch. Flowers from Studio Dan Meiners.

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*Photographed by
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There was a time, not that long ago, when mid-century homes may have been regarded as dated relics of a once modern, but kitschy, era. It was not uncommon for enthusiastic renovators to remove original elements and replace them with faux columns or other finishes in order to bring these homes into a traditional fold. Fortunately for this Leawood ranch, it



missed such insensitive treatment and landed instead in the good hands of a couple that wanted to preserve the best of the era.

The owners purchased the house, a generous and low-slung ranch on a corner lot, in 2011. They agreed that it needed updating but wanted to enhance the elegance and function that already existed and were equally committed to retaining the feel of the original open floor plan. “The plans went through a series of revisions,” says designer Doug Wells, who guided the homeowners through the process. “What we settled on was five little additions across the back of the house.”

Each of these additions allows the house to make a little more sense for the owners and modern living. “We wanted to keep the original dining room but needed a breakfast room where we could start the day,” one of the owners explains. The resulting light-filled room, part of the Kleweno-designed kitchen, is enhanced with a vintage starburst light fixture and Saarinen Tulip table. This is where the couple tends to linger. A painting by Brady Legler, who uses the house as a base when in Kansas City, lights up the space.

Throughout the house they favored linear and geometric designs and focused on neutrals accented with metallics. Wells and the owners

Brady Legler is a New York-based artist and designer who grew up in Kansas City. He attended Parsons the New School of Design in New York. In addition to painting, he has created a line of rugs, jewelry and is working on a line of women’s ready-to-wear. His rugs are available at the Rug Studio in Overland Park and his jewelry is available through Tivol.

OPPOSITE: The homeowners found the living room chandelier at the Mission Road Antique Mall. The rug is by Brady Legler. **ABOVE LEFT:** A vintage Arne Jacobsen egg chair that Wells had re-covered in a metallic blue leather sits under a Brady Legler painting. **ABOVE:** Wells wanted to evoke a “Let’s have a cocktail, ’50s kind of vibe” with the wet bar by using darkened mirror and Lucite finishes combined with the lacewood that was used elsewhere in the living room.



agreed that they should keep the existing elements of the living room. “The lacewood paneling and the fireplace are original,” notes Wells. The long, narrow Roman bricks here are the same as on the outside of the house. “The architect, Dan Wessel, sourced brick that matched the original that we needed for the additions,” he says. Frequent entertainers, the owners wanted the living room, which contains a blend of modern and vintage pieces, to be filled with light and movement. Wells capitalized on the Legler-designed rug to inspire the palette and infused shots of a warm and subtle cayenne hue to bring the heat.

The dining room is equally sophisticated, with metal finishes both polished and brushed to accent the neutral scheme. Vintage Murano lamps from an owner’s family grace a stunning Tommi Parzinger cabinet. Wells used a base by modern artist and designer Charles Hollis Jones for the dining table, allowing for generous seating without the heavy bulk of a traditional table.

The owners were committed to creating a house in which they used every single room. “We didn’t want there to be any wasted space. Nor did we want anything to be overblown,” notes one of the owners.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 140. PHOTOS CONTINUE THROUGH PAGE 129

OPPOSITE: The Phillip Jeffries metallic teapaper wallcovering is through KDR Showrooms. The John Pomp chandelier was custom-made for the room. Flowers are from Studio Dan Meiners. **ABOVE LEFT:** A small sitting room serves as Brady Legler’s studio when he’s in town. **ABOVE:** Just off the kitchen, a vintage satellite chandelier that Wells found in New York City hangs over the Saarinen Tulip table.



Onyx slabs form the kitchen island. Neff cabinets from Kitchens by Kleweno stand out from the custom-made figured-glass backsplash.



OPPOSITE: In the master bedroom, crystal and brass lamps from Wilson Lighting sit atop Barbara Barry for Henredon night tables. A Jonathan Adler for Kravet fabric covers the graphic pillows. **TOP LEFT:** The homeowners requested the blue-and-green glass mosaic tile that covers one wall of the master bathroom to elicit a watery ambience. **LEFT:** Quarter-sawn oak was used for the cabinets and tub surround.



One of the homeowners, a landscape designer, created lush, overflowing beds of a mix of annuals and perennials that flank the front door.

“We were very careful to think about what the owners really needed,” says Wells. To this end, the designer created separate offices for each of the homeowners, which allowed each to appoint the space to his needs.

The master bedroom incorporates all of the couple’s favorites; the gleam of metal, the sparkle of glass, the calm of neutrals. The subtle blue of the walls echoes a sense of serenity and healing that is important to the pair. “We wanted a sense of water,” one of the homeowners notes.

Their interest in nature carries through to the pool and patio behind the house. Any team who would take fourteen runs at matching the color of the original brick for the new material was bound to get the outside right as well. The seamlessness of the renovation and the serenity inside and out are timeless, indeed. ♦

Sources

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INTERIOR DESIGN
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KITCHEN
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