

CUSTOM

Transitional and modern
elements offer a **NEW TAKE** on
TRADITIONAL style

INTERVIEW WITH NEIL HAUCK,
NEIL HAUCK ARCHITECTS
& MICHELLE MORGAN HARRISON, MORGAN
HARRISON HOME | PHOTOGRAPHER JANE BEILES

BLEND





This home has an interesting backstory. What can you tell me about it?

Neil Hauck: I did a project for the clients about ten years ago, and I have a really great working relationship with them. We had taken a mediocre Colonial and turned it into a very nice Nantucket Shingle-style house. It gave them a lot more living space, but as their three boys became teenagers, the family outgrew that house. The clients had good friends who had purchased a four-and-a-half-acre property. There was an old house on the site that needed serious renovations, so the friends decided to demolish the house and subdivide the property. They then asked the clients if they'd like to buy one of the lots, and that's how the project started. The clients wanted to build a new house that was better suited to their current lifestyle and their needs.

Michelle Morgan Harrison: I met the wife years ago doing a house tour, and she hired me to do their first home, which is actually right around the corner. For this home, they were looking for something more traditional

but with a very transitional, modern feel to it, where they could have more traditional furniture and it would still feel right.

Given this unique setup, were there any challenges? NH: It was fairly straightforward. At the beginning, there was already a plan for one of the houses in terms of its layout and orientation. Since siting was spoken for, I think the final orientation of this house was the best in terms of giving it presence from the drive as you enter, taking the best advantage of the path of the sun so certain rooms get sun at certain times of day, and maximizing views while protecting privacy.

How did the plan for the house evolve? NH: One of my first designs was more along the lines of what I would call a Shingle-style house, but as we got further into it, the wife decided she really wanted something a little more akin to a white country farmhouse. We then changed the façade, the

“A **TRADITIONAL**-style house that embraces a **EUROPEAN** sensibility yet has a **MODERN** point of view? That makes me **HAPPY.**”

—MICHELLE MORGAN HARRISON



above left: The living room anchors one end of the vista that runs along the back of the first floor. To Morgan Harrison, the most important focal point in the house is the bookshelf that can be glimpsed in that room. To make the most of the view, the shelves are backed with a metallic wallpaper in white, silver and gold. In the foyer, artwork provided by Heather Gaudio Fine Art sits above an Oly brass demi-lune table.
right: Jeffersonian-style fretwork adorns the portico over the front door; the formal powder room features a custom stone vanity in polished gray Argento marble and Schumacher wallpaper.
opposite: Encased in windows, the main stairway encourages outward reflection. The millwork paneling is painted Benjamin Moore Super White in a satin finish, and the Vanguard settee is covered in a textured linen by Larsen.





The living room centers around a stone-topped coffee table with a brass base by Century. Seating includes a Baker sofa, upholstered in a Romo silver-green panne velvet and accessorized with a Kravet satin lumbar and Donghia ikat pillows, as well as Baker chairs in a Schumacher glazed linen. Cowtan & Tout gray silk draperies with a Schumacher Greek key trim frame the windows. Artwork above the sofa was provided by Heather Gaudio Fine Art.





style, to what you see today. There's no such thing as a pure style; there are elements of colonial architecture, elements of classical architecture and then the feel of a farmhouse. I would probably call it a more formal version of a farmhouse.

MMH: The wife would find images of homes that had a very European feel to them, with long hallways and vistas, and that's what she gave to Neil, saying, "This is where I want to go." The house is actually a series of architectural gateways, of layers, and there's a long vista that runs from the living room to the breakfast room.

NH: The circulation is pushed to the back of the house, so you pass along the edge of the rooms, not through the middle of them.

What materials did you use to create the exterior look they wanted?

NH: The siding is clapboard, the main roof is clad in Western red cedar shingles, and the gutters, downspouts, flashing and standing-seam metal roofing are all done with lead-coated copper. For flat portico roofs, I like a more elaborate fretwork rather than just square, vertical balustrades. This one is Jeffersonian in layout, hearkening back to Monticello, and it was one area where we could introduce a little ornamentation. And the arched doors were actually the wife's idea—she saw a house that had arched doors, and she fell in love with them. I give her full credit for those!

The home is filled with natural light. Was that a priority? NH: I designed the house so it was fairly narrow in terms of its depth from front to back.

above: Mr. & Mrs. Howard X benches in a Pindler blue velvet offer a hit of saturated color in the living room. A Hickory Chair wingback in a Robert Allen chenille is seated beside a gilded silver Pearson side table. **opposite:** With Visual Comfort gilded iron lamps on top, a pair of Hickory Chair side tables fit the scale of the room and unite the blend of aesthetics.





above: A Hickory Chair buffet, table and chairs furnish the dining room. The fronts and seats of the chairs are covered in Kravet Strie velvet, and the backs are in a Beacon Hill silk. The light fixture is the clients' own, and a Carvers' Guild mirror is an additional reflective touch.

left and right: The butler's pantry gleams, thanks to cabinetry painted in high-gloss Benjamin Moore Yorktowne Green, a hammered Elkay sink, Kallista faucet, custom polished nickel-and-glass shelving and Carrara-and-Thassos herringbone wall tile from Tile America.

opposite: In the kitchen, a custom hood presides over the Wolf range.





That allowed a lot of natural light to come in from both sides in many of the rooms.

MMH: One of the most important things was making sure the house was light. Not only was there a ton of light spilling in through all the windows and the two-story foyer, but there was a lightness with the palette and the whitewashed wood floors. Front-to-back light is a repeated theme throughout the house.

That two-story foyer is a really interesting element inside and out.

NH: I like to make a feature of the stairs in my houses when I can. In most rooms, you're sitting, talking, watching TV, eating—the focus isn't always on the outside. I think walking on the stairs, going from floor to floor, presents a great opportunity to pause on the landings and look out onto the landscape. In this case, this main staircase is straight ahead on axis with the front door, and the windows wrapping the staircase offer great views outside.

MMH: The foyer opens up into a big square, so I played with squares here with the way the stair carpet was banded. The foyer's custom

contrast-bordered area rug is the same as the stair runner but reversed—it's a square within a square.

How did the clients want the interiors to look and feel?

MMH: We wanted to go a little more modern, but still have one foot in traditional, and bring in some deeper colors to balance out the lightness. For me, it was about playing with light throughout the entire house, pushing things forward where we could, pulling back and being more restrained where appropriate. It's a very elegant, chic house, but it's hard to put your finger on it because it has modern sensibilities, with the beams, the casings, the baseboard with its clean lines, and yet there's double-stick Shaker. The way it's done definitely has a more European vibe to it, which sets it apart from what everyone else is doing. I helped the clients make all of the finish selections—plumbing, tile, hardware, paint—and it was a very easy house to figure out with where you wanted to take it.

Did you start fresh with furnishings? MMH: I had done the dining room and living room in their previous house, so we brought over the dining

“The floor plan is **WONDERFUL**,
the circulation through the rooms
is **OPTIMAL**, and it really **CAPTURES** what
the clients wanted.”

—NEIL HAUCK





The kitchen's perimeter cabinetry is in Benjamin Moore Nimbus, while the islands are in Benjamin Moore Gray Huskie. The counters and backsplash are honed statuary marble, and the polished nickel faucet by Kallista ties into the Fuse Lighting fixture in polished nickel and crackled glass. Seated at the island are Vanguard counter stools in a Pollack ostrich vinyl.



Glass-paneled cabinets provide storage while maintaining the openness of the kitchen and the light-filled breakfast room. A Visual Comfort polished nickel lantern hangs above the Tritter Feefer table, and the gray Vanguard chairs have seats in a taupe Holly Hunt vinyl with backs in a Lee Jofa fabric.



room and made it a little more modern and fresh-looking with a striped grasscloth, a new rug from J.D. Staron and green Rogers & Goffigon sheers, which are one of my favorite window treatments. We did them with Zimmer + Rohde fret-patterned tape, and they're really yummy—something about them just makes me crazy! I was able to bring some of the living room over as well. I reupholstered the sofa, left the chairs, reupholstered the wing chair and got a new coffee table because their old living room was small and narrow. Big, round side lamp tables were replaced with small, narrow ones, so we did things like that to fit the scale. The living room has a bunch of different tones and textures, from the very cool bamboo silk J.D. Staron rug with shades of green and deeper forest green, to the velvet sofa and metallic chairs, to the pop of dark blue velvet on the X benches. It was a fun house to accessorize and pull together.

Any special requests for the kitchen? NH: They wanted it to function well for everyday but also for entertaining. The circulation goes around the kitchen, so as you pass through between the kitchen and the family room, you don't walk through the working part of the kitchen at any point. People can be working in the kitchen while a party is going on or during a family gathering. We designed it so the kitchen, breakfast room and family room are open to each other so there's good flow between them, but they're still distinctly defined spaces, as opposed to them being just one big room.

MMH: The wife is a big cook—every time I go there, there are always muffins!—so there were definitely certain things she wanted. She's very educated and had already been through the process once before, so she knew what did and didn't work for her. The size of the range was a bit of a challenge—I went ahead with a really big hood as opposed to creating little cabinets surrounding a smaller hood. There's plenty of storage and a full pantry—it's quite ideal.

How important was indoor/outdoor flow? NH: That was critical to the design from the beginning. I like a lot of interaction between outdoors and indoors, so I try to provide opportunities for multiple rooms to go from inside to outside easily. I also did a conceptual layout of the patios.

MMH: Their home is walkable to town, and with three very active boys, their house has become the hangout of choice with all of the middle school boys in the area. The landscape designer, Anna Haines, is someone I've worked with for years, and she placed the pool and did the landscape design. Considering the house is new, it's a nicely filled-out yard. Outdoor furnishings are a mix of Kingsley Bate and RH, and again it was about balancing traditional with transitional.



left: In the master bedroom, the Vanguard light gray linen upholstered bed is studded with nickel nailheads, and the Redford House side tables are paired with hand-blown glass lamps from Visual Comfort.

below: The master bath leads to a private terrace overlooking the side of the property. Carrara marble was selected for the flooring, counters and bath, and Farrow & Ball Blackened is on the walls. The shower boasts Rohl plumbing and an accent wall of white Thassos and Carrara by Tile America.

opposite: A Hickory Chair chaise and a Kelly Wearstler marble stool beckon at the room's entrance, and a capiz bowl chandelier from Oly is a delicate touch.



“For me, it was about
PLAYING WITH LIGHT
throughout the
entire house.”

—MICHELLE MORGAN HARRISON





The outdoor dining area is nestled in the corner of the rear patio with easy access to the family room and dining room. Kingsley Bate outdoor furniture and Visual Comfort exterior sconces are the ideal blend of traditional and transitional.





What do you love most? NH: The floor plan is wonderful, the circulation through the rooms is optimal, and it really captures what the clients wanted in terms of relationships and adjacencies between spaces, but also in terms of creating privacy where necessary, either within the house or with neighbors. It's a handsome house.

MMH: I love how the finishing touches really complete this house. They bring warmth and texture to what we did, and they perfectly punctuate it. There are organic textures mixed in throughout, from the shags to the woods, and there's a bit of a hygge vibe to it. It's a nice blend;

the interiors reflect the architecture. The fact that it's a traditional-style house that embraces a European sensibility yet has a modern point of view? That makes me happy. —INTERVIEW BY LAUREN FETTERMAN

Resources:

Architect: Neil Hauck Architects, Darien; 203-655-9340; neilhauckarchitects.com

Interior designer: Morgan Harrison Home, New Canaan; 203-594-7875; morganharrisonhome.com

Builder: Coastal Construction, Westport; 203-292-3210; ctcoastal.com

Landscape designer: Anna Haines, Avant Gardens, Woodbury; avantgardensllc.com



left: The home's clapboard siding is enhanced by a veneer of native fieldstone covering the chimneys and the lower portion of the two-story foyer. Multiple outdoor seating and entertaining spaces encourage both mingling and intimate conversations during parties and family gatherings.