

New England HOME

Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

Presenting:
The 2025
New England
Design
Hall of Fame
Inductees

The New Classic

Time-honored designs, reimagined

Back to Back Bay

Two designers join forces to help a North Shore couple return to city living.

The far end of the living room of a floor-through unit in Boston's Back Bay serves as a dining room with views of leafy Commonwealth Avenue. A John Lyle chandelier featuring a bay-leaf motif hangs above an oblong dining table surrounded by Kravet chairs upholstered in Pindler and Jane Churchill.



Text by DAVID MASELLO | Photography by WARREN PATTERSON



ABOVE: Custom loveseats and Ferrell Mittman Perrington club chairs cozy up to a Lacquer Company coffee table. **LEFT:** The interior designers commissioned decorative painter Mark Grundig to create a faux-gold-leaf effect in the entry. A Visual Comfort & Co. chandelier illuminates the space.

As much as the new owners of this Back Bay apartment wanted to be a part of city life, they also wanted to be able to leave it with ease. They were drawn to the second-floor unit of an 1870 Back Bay building for its bay-windowed views of Commonwealth Avenue *and* for its access to Storrow Drive. “They often head north or to Logan Airport,” explains Polly Lewis, one of the home’s two interior designers. Lewis and Leandra Fremont-Smith, both of whom head their own interior design firms, collaborated, as friends and design partners.



In his office, the interior designers added paneling that they painted Benjamin Moore Champion Cobalt and papered with Winchester Weave grasscloth by Phillip Jeffries. A neutral-hued Stark carpet demarcates the seating area.



“I wouldn’t say we went down to the studs, but we did a gutting,” says Fremont-Smith. The design duo preserved the two-bedroom layout but significantly freshened the Victorian-era floor-through. Referencing the married owners, Fremont-Smith says, “She skews traditional, he more modern, but overall, the interiors that Polly and I created are grounded in traditional style.”

The long, twelve-foot-ceilinged living room presented the first furnishing challenge. “The main thing to solve was positioning chairs and hanging a TV over the fireplace,” says Fremont-Smith. She and Lewis created a tight seating area anchored with loveseats while placing an oblong dining table in the room’s windowed bay. A wallpapered ceiling visually lowers the windows and, as Lewis says, “provides



texture.” Fremont-Smith adds, “The paper reflects natural light and adds chic-ness.”

The designers set a literal gold standard at the entry, where a crown-worthy lighting fixture hangs from a gilded vaulted ceiling. In keeping with the couple’s penchant for blues, the entry’s walls are papered in a lapis Schumacher grasscloth.

Joe DiLazzaro, president of Opus Master Builders, speaks to the challenges of city projects like this one. “No one wants construction being done unless it’s

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:

The designers reclad the existing kitchen island with a light Calacatta marble and brightened the walls and cabinetry with Backdrop’s Interior Motives paint. A variety of blues sets the mood in a powder room. Her office, which features a pair of locally made X-legged benches, a Colefax and Fowler-upholstered sofa, and a grid of bird prints, is as much a workspace as it is an intimate seating area.





ABOVE: Motorized Maresca Textiles draperies envelop the primary suite. The designers had custom nightstands—topped with Avebury table lamps from Vaughan—made to better fit the rounded space.
LEFT: A favorite aerial photograph of New York City from the homeowners' existing collection hangs above a freestanding tub in the primary bath.



for themselves,” he says. “The challenges of houses like this are always the same—access and logistics.”

DiLazzaro’s team erected exterior scaffolding for access to the unit to avoid using the common elevator, and they had to account for a shared infrastructure. “Old units connect with others. When you have one client, you actually have ten.”

Logistics aside, with the project now complete, Fremont-Smith recalls it being a team effort. “The moment I saw the scope of this and what we could do to transform the space, I knew I couldn’t do it without Polly,” she says. Adds Lewis, “With us, there’s no issue of ownership, we just wanted to work together.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: *For details, see Resources.*

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND BUILDER:
Opus Master Builders

INTERIOR DESIGN: Leandra Fremont-Smith
Interiors; Lewis Interiors