

A Nelson home becomes an art collector's haven

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Design on display

When Kristen and Glenn Martin dropped their daughter off to begin her college career at the University of Virginia in 2013, they weren't planning on renovating a house in Nelson County's Stoney Creek development. But, less two years later, that's what the Pennsylvania residents found themselves doing.

"It was very outdated," says Glenn of the 1979 structure. A number of buyers had passed it by, but the Martins looked past its unappealing finishes and awkward layout. What they saw instead were great views: a pond down the hill and the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west.

The renovated home they envisioned—and now occupy full-time—has an entirely different character than what they bought. Conceived as a showplace for the couple's excellent contemporary art collection, it's awash in gallery white. "Simplicity was the key," says Glenn.

The Martins, who did the design work themselves, found that the norms (and covenants) of Stoney Creek were not quite prepared to accommodate their vision of a strikingly modern house. While they were free to renovate the interior in any style, some of their notions for the exterior ran into roadblocks. HardiePanel siding, for example, had to give way to more traditional-looking HardiePlank.

"We took liberties inside," says Glenn. "We knew we could do something with the view, and make the outside come inside."

More and larger windows, especially on the south side, which faces the pond, accomplished that goal. And the stripped-down color and materials palette let the outdoor vistas, and the artwork, do the talking.

The living room, dining room and kitchen received a more open layout, and a pair of skylights in the high, vaulted ceiling was enlarged. Together, these rooms make a strong, minimalist statement. The white of walls and trim is ampli-

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The open layout of the kitchen, living and dining area makes a strong, minimalist statement. White walls and trim provide an unfettered backdrop for the homeowners' art collection—from the furniture to the walls—and continues into private spaces, too.



came a double-sided fireplace that can be enjoyed from either the living room or the next-door den. This meant that the south wall could accommodate three large windows, the sweep of glass being a fitting accompaniment for classic modernist furniture such as Wassily, Barcelona and Eames lounge chairs. Floor lamps—something else the couple likes to collect—provide the lighting.

All the furniture in the house is vintage, collected at auctions and secondhand stores, and in some cases refurbished by Glenn. Many pieces are made of transparent Lucite. “I would have everything invisible if I could,” says Kristen. “It makes a smaller space bigger,” adds Glenn. They’d hoped to use Lucite for railings where the upstairs hallway overlooks the great room, but couldn’t get approval from the county building inspector. Instead, they opted for the same material that forms deck railings outside: inexpensive stock fencing, which looks plenty modern but also reads as a nod to the local vernacular.

A double barn door—white, of course—glides open to reveal the first-floor master suite. Three new windows above the bed afford views of the Wintergreen ski slopes in winter, and a door opens onto a small private deck. Glass cube end tables echo the vanity with its Lucite legs.

In the bathroom, Heartwood repurposed a wooden mid-century credenza as a two-sink vanity. Small glass tiles make for a stripped-down shower design, and a small bumpout addition makes room for a walk-in closet and a bathroom enlargement.

With facelifts for the two remaining bathrooms, the interior renovation was essentially complete. The result is a cool, serene home in which objects, rather than the structure itself, draw the eye: animal skin rugs, guitars on display and, of course, art and furniture. “The art is the color of our house,” says Glenn.



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fied by the flooring—Kahrs engineered wood in a white finish—which continues throughout the entire first floor and on the staircase to the second. Its virtue: “It sort of disappears,” says Kristen.

The kitchen itself eschews upper cabinets and tucks the refrigerator (actually, two of them) under the counter, leaving room for an Alexander Calder piece at eye level. White Silestone countertops and white cabinets, crafted by local shop Heartwood, make the room ultra-sleek. The renovation here is a balance between simplification (i.e., turning a box window into a more standard window flush with the exterior wall) and upping the luxury factor, as when the Martins added a second sink.

The fireplace, previously located on the south wall, moved to an interior wall and be-

