

Like all loving relationships, the one you have with your house changes over time. Even if you adored every cabinet and coffer when you moved in, five or six years down the road, your tastes may have wandered, and if you haven't evolved together, it might be time for an interior update. Such was the case for these homeowners, who bought this Greenwich townhouse six years ago. More recently, they found it didn't reflect who they were or how they lived.

Architecturally, there was way too much going on. "It was moldings galore," says designer Amy Aidinis Hirsch, who worked with the family to bring home and lifestyle back in line with one another.

Natural Edge

Designer Amy Aidinis Hirsch took this house from overdone to simply streamlined

by ANN KAISER photographs AMY VISCHIO flowers by WINSTON FLOWERS







above: Natural elements like a live-edge bench and new reclaimed wood beams fit seamlessly with neutral upholstered pieces. The living room sofa is from Poliform.
opposite: Design Within Reach's Metropolitan chair is a cozy spot to read or relax, and its modern shape looks great in this simple room, too.

"It was extremely heavy," says Hirsch, whose list of architectural excesses sounds almost Versailles-like: Chair rails and wainscoting and casings and coffering and crown moldings—and so on. "The whole idea for this design was to strip it down."

Just one catch: The homeowners wanted it all done in a six-week period during the kids' summer vacation, so the family could start the school year in their finished house.

Luckily for a designer with no time to waste, the couple knew what they wanted, and they were ready to pare this place down to just what they needed, and simplify their home and their lives in one interior design redo.

They purged the space of anything excessive. The coffered ceiling and chair rail in the family/dining room came down; they changed the base and eliminated the casings around the doors; and they sanded down the wood floors and left them unfinished, except for several layers of an oil-base polyurethane.

But after stripping down, choosing what to add back can be tricky. "Sometimes when you edit and take things away, things can be too

sparse or look unfinished. But in this case, that 'undone' makes it so much more peaceful," says Hirsch. "There's no static." The space is still inviting and warm, and looks even more spacious than it did before.

The design "was kind of on the fly," says Hirsch, but the homeowner knew without a doubt what would work for her life and her family in particular.

For the kids' playroom, they took a space that would conventionally be a living or dining room, ripped out the French limestone fireplace, and put down a super-soft Australian wool rug that's as lush and plush as they come. Cashmere-covered womb chairs, a colorful Bocci chandelier from Room and a wall of Lori Weitzner's Newsworthy wallpaper complete the subtly playful space. The wallpaper has proved to be a magnetic feature for visitors. "I think every person who comes into this house goes up to touch it. They want to interact with it," says Hirsch. The artwork by Eric Zener is from the Samuel Owen Gallery.

The artwork in this house is a major feature in the design, and

Where there once was a coffered ceiling, new wood beams have been placed to create a much more pared-down, organic look.







this spread: The homeowners didn't want their cabinets to go to waste, so they just replaced the fronts with something simpler, and added a new, more industrial-looking range hood. The pullout feature on the island is made from reclaimed oak.



above: Child-sized Cherner chairs give the playroom a stylish look, but the painting by Eric Zener makes the space. Storytime gets very cozy in the two cashmere-covered womb chairs that flank the artwork.

in many spaces, the furniture acts as a quiet complement to it. The homeowner wanted furniture with the right look, but also the right functionality. “She’s decisive about what she likes. And she likes things that have meaning to them, that have a purpose to them,” says Hirsch of the homeowner. “It has to have a form *and* a function to it, and if it doesn’t, there’s no need for it.”

The scale of most of their furniture wasn’t right for the space, and the look of it didn’t suit the couple’s style, but with only six weeks to complete the project, they were limited to stock pieces (many of them from Poliform and Design Within Reach) with some upgrading for replacements. The womb chairs in the kids’ play area were re-covered in cashmere, and the dining room chairs (which share a name with one of the couple’s daughters) were recovered in leather and got a whipstitch detail. “The idea was to have this house that was very comforting, that you want to wrap yourself up in,” says Hirsch.

The dining room table, though more traditional than their other furniture, is special because of its history—it’s from when the couple first married.

Since the homeowner also loves organic elements, Hirsch’s design called for new natural beams to be installed on the ceiling of the living/dining room, and the builder added an aluminum groove along the top of the walls. The live-edge piece under the television is free-form and sculptural, and can be a bench, a shelf, or even a place to put a plant or piece of artwork when the kids get older.

In the kitchen, there wasn’t time for a whole gut and remodel, so they kept the cabinets, and changed out the drawer and door fronts for something simpler. A new modern hood, and quartz countertop and backsplash harmonize the entire space, and the homeowner’s clever idea of installing a pullout countertop in the island allows the family to create more counterspace for cooking or entertaining.



The boy's room has a carpet just like the one he loves in the family's Hamptons home. "Why reinvent the wheel?" asks Hirsch. Two little girls share this pretty-in-pink room, with a modern crib and storage.



Upstairs in the master suite, there was a little more in the way of construction to make the space work better for the couple. The contractor pulled off the two bedside tables that were attached to the headboard, and custom-made two new ones as replacements. A spare piece of Zebrawood became the bench at the foot of the bed, with the addition of a Lucite base.

The master bath, which was originally split up into his and hers, was reconfigured to create one shared space. Now, "it's a true haven," says Hirsch, with simplified details, and a mix of teak, bamboo, and travertine elements. The rock floors create a soothing sensation for the feet. "It's like going away, but you don't have to go very far," says the



opposite: The homeowners already owned the light fixture from Design Within Reach, so Hirsch used it as a starting point for the master suite. A photo of the couple on their wedding day hangs over the refinished headboard.



“It’s like **going away**, but you don’t have to go very far.”

—AMY AIDINIS HIRSCH

designer. All of the fixtures are the from the Fantini USA showroom, which Hirsch and her client stumbled upon one afternoon in New York. “It’s truly like jewelry,” she says.

In the girls’ room, custom built-ins, which integrate the design from the client’s changing table, provide storage for their things, and the designer covered up the fireplace with antique glass. For a little interaction, it was their mother’s idea to add a ballet bar.

Now, the home reflects the family, and no matter what else is happening outside, when they walk through the door, life is simpler. “There are always people in it, coming and going, friends, family,” says Hirsch, whose unadorned design doesn’t compete with the real stars of this home—the people who live there. “It’s definitely an active home, because they’re about family. That’s what the house is for.” **ah**

RESOURCES

Amy Aidinis Hirsch, Amy Aidinis Hirsch, LLC, Greenwich, 203-661-1266, aahirsch.com

Contractor: Sound Beach Partners, LLC, Stamford, 203-323-2200, soundbeachpartners.com

Room, Greenwich, 203-557-9066, roomonline.com



this spread: Though it wasn’t originally part of the plan to redo the master bath, the homeowners must be glad they did: They now have a soothing, relaxing space to start and end the day. The light fixtures are from Room.