

HOME & DESIGN

ONE-OF-A-KIND
style

FROM A REIMAGINED
HUNT COUNTRY RETREAT
TO A MODERN DC
MASTERPIECE



build + remodel

smart makeover • idea file • industry awards • builder profile



An open axis connects the front and back entries of a renovated Mid-Century Modern home in Chevy Chase DC. Streamlined steps capped in limestone access the backyard. Wheat's Landscape designed the raised beds and plant palette.



FULL CIRCLE

A clever revival elevates a Mid-Century Modern gem in Chevy Chase DC with a strong indoor-outdoor connection



Text by SHARON JAFFE DAN | Photography by JENNIFER HUGHES

The owners stained brick on the 1962 home (opposite, bottom) a charcoal gray and added stucco walls to match. Non-brick openings were replaced with glass; a two-story volume in the front (opposite, top) glows at night. Mahogany siding adds warmth. A rear view (pictured here) reveals the new screened porch with a deck above it.



Scott Satin and David Thompson became fast friends as fellow architecture students at Tulane. The two even co-founded the design firm Assembledge+ together in New York after graduation.

Eventually, Satin left architecture for biotech and Thompson relocated Assembledge+ to his native Los Angeles, but the friendship endured. So when Satin and his wife Marilyn Kitzes acquired an abandoned Mid-Century Modern dwelling after a long search in their Chevy Chase DC neighborhood, there was no question that Thompson would play a role in its makeover.

The original owners had passed away, leaving the three-story home vacant for four years. "It was clearly in disrepair," Kitzes recalls upon first seeing the home in its untouched 1962 splendor—and still full of the late owners' furniture and belongings. "I thought it might be the disaster we'd been looking for."

Though the property was overgrown and the wood siding infested with carpenter ants, Satin saw its potential too. "The house was basically a big shell with one load-bearing wall that went down the center," he recalls. "We could do anything we wanted with it."

Renovation Architecture: **David Thompson**, AIA, design architect, Assembledge+, Los Angeles, California; **VW Fowlkes**, AIA, LEED AP, executive architect, Fowlkes Studio, Washington, DC. Renovation Contractor: **Matt Propper**, Freeman Builders, LLC, Washington, DC. Landscape Design: Wheat's Landscape, Vienna, Virginia.



The open kitchen and living area (top) seamlessly connect to the new screened porch and terrace (above). Gloster seating surrounds a fire pit by Paloform.



drawing board

How do you decide to remodel vs. tear down?

David Thompson:

If often depends on how much we need to stitch in or recreate the exterior envelope to make a house feel cohesive. In some cases, return on investment is better if you tear it down.

What makes open floor plans a challenge?

VW Fowlkes:

Open kitchens that look great in magazines don't look so good when they're covered with dirty dishes during a party. Figuring out how to make the kitchen accessible so that someone can be in it without feeling sequestered, but also not too exposed, is part of most jobs.

What's unique about your screened porch?

Scott Satin:

We offset the porch from the house by 12 feet. Most people put a porch right up against the house, landlocking whatever room is behind it. Instead, we can be in the kitchen, locking out at the backyard instead of at the porch.

Untouched since 1962, the rooms were full of the late owners' belongings (before photos, opposite). The team removed the living room mantel and surrounded the fireplace in whitewashed brick tile (opposite); the same material clads the kitchen walls (above). Ferris Custom Cabinetry fabricated the walnut-veneer and dark-lacquered millwork to echo the exterior; the floors are quarter-sawn white oak. A pass-through beside the tall cabinets opens to the dining room (opposite, bottom), where the original owners' buffet is in use. The former rear garage was converted into a gym (right).

They flew Thompson to DC for a weekend. Like old times, he and Satin worked late nights to create a 3D model of what the home would become. "We kept the brick portions of the exterior, the roof and the foundation and demolished everything else," explains Satin. The plan added windows and skylights to brighten the interiors and expanded sightlines from front to back. New alfresco spaces forged indoor-outdoor connections.

Once these initial parameters were set and Thompson returned to L.A., the owners engaged DC-based architect VW Fowlkes to develop the concept and handle everything from construction drawings and permits to structural, mechanical and electrical plans. Matt Proper of Freeman Builders also joined the team to bring their ideas to fruition.

"We had an incredible power team of

architects and a builder who was game to get into a creative project," reflects Kitzes. A continuous dialog among all parties fostered a spirited collaboration throughout design and construction.

Clean, crisp geometry defines the front façade of the now-complete residence. A two-story volume at the entry, revealed through massive new windows, glows at night. Another bold update was staining the drab, pinkish exterior brick a charcoal gray. "We added mahogany to complement the brick and create a sense of warmth," explains Thompson. "This neutral balance creates a dialog with the Colonial houses in the neighborhood."

A far cry from the owners' former Colonial eight blocks away, the reimagined interiors are bathed in natural light. First-floor spaces efficiently revolve around a central open stair, which



anchors a small office for Kitzes, an advertising copywriter. To the left of the entry are a powder room and coat closet; the dining room lies to the right. The kitchen and living room occupy the rear quadrants, spilling out to a new screened porch and a terrace on the roof of what was a subterranean backyard garage.

The second floor houses the master suite along with a bedroom for the couple's teenage son and a guest room. Another guest room, a family room, laundry and mechanical space make up the revamped lower level, along with a gym in the retooled garage.

The design team celebrated the home's mid-century spirit with restraint so that a spare, modern sensibility prevails. Simple, white-brick tile that clads the living room and family room walls plays off the home's original exterior and lends authenticity. As Fowlkes explains, they wanted to suggest that the new custom cabinetry is secondary to the dwelling itself. "The millwork stops short in places very intentionally," he says. "This allows the shell of the home to reign supreme."

Even in their furniture options, Satin and Kitzes paid homage to a mid-century look. A clean-lined Room & Board sectional and a period-style chair fit perfectly in the living room, while other reproductions—and a buffet they salvaged from the original owners' collection—grace the dining room.

During his dive back into design, Satin immersed himself in every decision. "No detail was too small for him to lose sleep over," remarks Fowlkes.

"Scott's a real talent," adds Thompson. "Architecture shed a tear when he decided to leave."

Sheltering in place of late, the family has enjoyed their new indoor-outdoor digs. "Living here in quarantine, compared to our prior house, is night and day," says Satin, now president of BioTel Research. "We're grateful that we have all this light and space."

Kitzes has claimed the porch. "I call it my new office," she says. "In addition to a ceiling fan, we have heaters to extend the use into spring and fall. It's really wonderful." ■



First-floor living spaces surround the central open stair (top, left and right), screened on one side by slats for privacy. Phillip Jeffries grass cloth adds mood and texture to a wall in the second-story master bedroom (above); a bridge accesses a private deck trimmed in mahogany. The master bath (left) features flooring from Porcelanosa and a soaking tub.