

Triangle

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# HOMIE

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# THE EVOLUTION OF STYLE

The black-and-white inkblot wallpaper by Porter Teleo that flanks the stone fireplace was the inspiration for the living room. In lieu of traditional custom built-in shelving, Murphy added a pair of matching black credenzas by Currey & Company. The sectional is by Four Hands while the light fixture is by Currey & Company.





WITH THE  
HELP OF  
DESIGNER  
MICHELLE  
MURPHY, ONE  
CARY FAMILY  
FINALLY  
DISCOVERS  
WHERE THEIR  
DESIGN HEART  
TRULY LIES.

TEXT BY  
BLAKE MILLER

PHOTO BY  
CATHERINE NGUYEN  
PHOTOGRAPHY



CARRIE AND EUGENE LEE NEVER FANCIED THEMSELVES as lovers of modern design. But as they neared the end of a third renovation on their traditional home in northwest Cary, the couple realized that no amount of renovation could ever create the kind of home they really wanted. “We bought the home in 2007 and, at that time, we really didn’t know what our style was or what we were drawn to,” Carrie says. “All we knew was that

we wanted a kid-friendly neighborhood, good schools, and a tree-lined street. The architectural design was more of an afterthought.”

The third renovation would be the final renovation, however, as the couple purchased a lot just ten minutes away and began the process of building their dream home from the ground up. Having worked with designer Michelle Murphy of Demi Ryan on all of the renovations



Murphy reused some of her client's existing furniture to create different, modern spaces in their new home. Here, she added the bed by Skyline Furniture in a Kravet fabric with artwork by Katie Porterfield above. **OPPOSITE:** While the home's color palette is primarily black, white, and gold, Murphy infused a dose of color in the home office with custom cabinetry by Bradley Woodcraft painted Dark Knight by Sherwin-Williams. The leather and burl wood Made Goods desk is complemented with an OLY chair, and the light fixture by Currey & Company completes the room.







**LEFT:** Murphy custom designed the black-and-white oak cabinetry to look more like furniture than storage in the kitchen. She complemented the look with Silestone Eternal Calcutta Gold Polished Quartz on the island and surrounding counters. Pendant lights are by Arteriors, the dining table is by Made Goods, and counter stools are by Sunpan.

**ABOVE:** To create a custom and furniture-like feel in the kitchen, Murphy created a wall of custom white oak cabinetry that removes any utilitarian feel; though functionality for the homeowner is still front and center.

and interiors of their previous home, the Lees implicitly trusted Murphy with heading up the design for their new house. “That deep relationship we formed with Michelle during the renovation process made her a natural choice,” Carrie says. “Michelle knew us and what we were trying to achieve; she knew we wanted to explore a more modern style.”

While their former house featured traditional architectural details like arched walkways and ornate





crown molding and trim, this home would skew more modern with clean, simple architecture and interiors. To create a home with a seamless, open floor plan, modern architecture and details, and above all—a retreat feel—the couple enlisted Murphy Garnow Design Group and Poythress Construction Company. “Our life feels chaotic with two kids, two dogs, two jobs as physicians; and we

just wanted our home to be simple but interesting,” Carrie explains. “Michelle made the interiors interesting and elegant within the palette of black, white, and gold, while staying away from other bold colors and patterns that might contribute to the noise and chaos we were trying to avoid.”

“It was soft modern–transitional for them,” says Murphy of the home’s design scheme. “The color palette



Murphy designed the lower level basement as a second place to hang out and entertain. She outfitted the space with a full bar featuring custom wood shelves by Bradley Woodcraft and tile by Traditions in Tile. Pillows covered in Schumacher fabric dot the Kravet sofa. **OPPOSITE:** Murphy designed the jewel box of a powder room with subtle but elegant wallpaper by Hygge & West. She accented with a sink by Absolute Stone, towel bar by Kohler, and mirror from Arteriors.



The homeowners felt a small home office in the kitchen would be more useful than a scullery. So Murphy designed the tiny workspace with a small white oak desk and a chair by OLY, accented with whimsical wallpaper by Beware the Moon. **OPPOSITE:** The delicate white resin flowers of the OLY chandelier pop with the black mica wallpaper by Vahallan as the backdrop. The juxtaposition of the two set the tone for the dramatic design of the dining room, which also features artwork by local artist Katie Porterfield.



gave them the modern look they really wanted, but we realized early on that Carrie actually wanted transitional when it came to the furnishings.” To appease her, Murphy incorporated the reclaimed wood beams in the living room, which provided a more rustic feel. “I think

in Carrie’s mind her ‘soft modern’ was actually more modern farmhouse.”

Murphy began her design for the home with simple but elegant white oak, which she used for the flooring, custom cabinetry, and accents throughout. “The white oak





floating shelves, for example, were added to help brighten the kitchen,” the designer says.

While her clients were on board with a more modern aesthetic, some cajoling was needed along the way to push them outside of their pre-dated traditional comfort

zones. Such was the case in the adjacent living room, where Murphy suggested bold graphic wallpaper in black-and-white inkblot by Porter Teleo on either side of the hearth. “When I pulled out the wallpaper and showed them where I wanted to put it, they were a teeny bit

Murphy's goal in designing the owner's suite was to create a relaxing retreat for the couple. An upholstered headboard swathed in a Kravet fabric provides a soft landing after a long day, while nightstands by Made Goods stand watch. An ottoman by Kravet and sconces by Regina Andrew round out the space. **OPPOSITE:** The herringbone-patterned floor in black semi-polished wood-look planks sets the tone for the owner's bathroom. Murphy complemented the statement with custom floating white oak vanities and a chandelier by Currey & Company.







hesitant, but then understood that that design element is what really makes that room come alive.”

The Lees also understood that Murphy knew them well enough to know exactly what they wanted and how to apply that aesthetic in a way that brought them joy. “Our first project for their previous home was all about getting to know one another, learning their idiosyncrasies,” Murphy says. “I like to find layers behind my clients and really tease out what they’re drawn to and love. I like to incorporate little homages to my clients in their homes.” In the small home office in the kitchen, Murphy added whimsical wallpaper by Beware the Moon

featuring black-and-white sketches of an ostrich with its head in the ground. “Carrie and Eugene are just so fun, so something playful like this wallpaper was such a great fit for them.”

Although at the outset the Lees weren’t exactly sure how to achieve a more modern aesthetic in their new home, they trusted Murphy to do the job. “Michelle really took my need for function and just made it more beautiful,” Carrie says. “There’s not a thing we would change about the design of the home. Even over a year later, there’s nothing we would change. Michelle completely understood what we wanted and brought it to life for us.” ♦