

BY COURT SQUIRES
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID MICHAEL HOWARTH

MODERN SIMPLICITY

Contemporary convenience in a Mainland retreat

With May's arrival, Shore lovers rush to dip their toes in the proverbial waters of early

summer, making the hike to various points between Atlantic City and Cape May. Unknowingly, many bypass the local homestead of a high-profile, yet private family that settled into Linwood with views of the coast.

Initially, their Frank Lloyd Wright-esque residence was shrouded in dark colors, paneling and brick until the homeowners decided to lighten it up, both figuratively and literally. Today, it is a gleaming synthesis of modern and contemporary styles that serve as a beacon for three grown children who often return home for holidays and special occasions.

The homeowners — who had a goal of replacing their traditional interiors with a modern, industrial feel — found inspiration from ads for Domus Design Collection (DDC) in New York City, which

The orange artwork that hangs in the family room is a mixed media piece of computer-generated photography of the Mediterranean Sea outside of Tel Aviv.

RIGHT Carmen Vona designed the oak and mirror accent piece in the foyer. Lights line the top of the piece, but the light switch was stealthily hidden underneath the black glass ledge.



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To keep with the simplistic Asian style of the master suite, Vona created clean line details with floating maple accent shelves and a wenge wood accent wall that supports a 42-inch plasma television.

specializes in clean lines and crisp styles. Carmen Vona of Carmana Designs, Ltd., in Philadelphia was called in to orchestrate the redesign and help create a more streamlined look with minimal details yet broad appeal. Eventually, what started as a piece of work became a work of art. Bit by bit, remnants of old styles were ushered out, and the house was transformed to fit the needs of a busy couple who bustles about the country on professional and personal tours of duty.

The pinnacle of the future-forward redesign is the central gathering area, a space that was reinvented and rebuilt, with nothing remaining but the Mexican tile radiant-heated floor. The focal point, Vona says, is a large swath of space that extended into an area off the patio. It now resembles the type of open “great rooms” that are popping up in new construction all over New Jersey.

To make way for an open gathering space, the nondescript communal area that led to the patio was reprised into an edgy wet bar, and plastic laminate almond cabinets in the television area were replaced with brushed stainless steel cabinetry and customized woodwork. Three sets of double doors were changed to large double windows, and a wall that originally separated the room was replaced with a tower of floating glass shelves for a visual flow between the zones.

“The problem was I had nothing to hold up the pole,” says Vona, who designed the glass shelf system. “The poles are in sections. The weight is all to one side, but the top header holds the whole thing in place. It clips on to the ceiling in the opposite direction the weight wants to go.”

Now, creamy-colored walls are offset by glimmers of stainless steel and cool blue hues, and icy sea shades are intermittently punctuated by splashes of orange — echoed in an outdoor koi pond. Eye-catching orange pendant lights top the extended entertainment area, and the space has all the accoutrements of a great party, including a wine refrigerator and wet bar.

A 50-inch plasma television hangs above a black Absolute granite fireplace, and to keep the room clean and cord-free, all electronics are wired into one access area custom-made by Carmana Designs, Ltd. They work in conjunction with each other in various ways. For example, when you turn on the television, the lights automatically dim.



TOP RIGHT The light maple cabinetry carries over from the bedroom to the kitchen. A customized elongated counter creates buffet-style dining options for family events. The island separates the two preparation areas of the kitchen, one housing appliances and the other providing additional counter space.



BOTTOM The dramatic Black Absolute granite of the island is echoed on the fireplace surround of the high-tech family room.

“The electronics that drive the system in the media room are housed behind the brushed stainless steel cabinet, and they can access the entire system with a Marantz smart remote,” says Phil Becker, who owns Overtures LLC in Ocean View, N.J. “We gave them state-of-the-art equipment that is very simple to use.”

These types of electronic enhancements are highlighted in the master bedroom as well, although Vona styled the private quarters with a simplified Asian feel courtesy of an accent wall made of quartered wenge wood. The maple wood furnishings built around the television and next to the bed were designed as doppelgangers to the low, sleek Scandinavian-style of Poliform furniture.

The master suite was designed to look like a boutique hotel. It is enhanced by a simple, sturdy teak bench, custom made for the bathroom, that blends well with its ultramodern style. Taupe and gray dapple the floor in mosaic tile, and a polished gray Silestone countertop completes the look. Neff cabinetry gives the dressing area a utilitarian feel, while dual vanities and a bidet add a touch of luxury.



"It's definitely a retreat. There's a spa-type quality to it," says Mickey Applegate of Applegate Designs in Egg Harbor Township.

Applegate installed several Grohe devices in the gray polished porcelain shower including faucets, a rainhead showerhead, a slide bar and six body sprays, and the space can also be used as a steam shower. Luxury touches found in the bathroom mimic indulgences in the rest of the home.


The light look of maple wood carries over from the bedroom, past the customized walk-in closets, down the hallway and into a kitchen outfitted with maple cabinetry and brushed stainless steel drawer pulls

designed by Vona. A granite backsplash adds visual intrigue behind an elongated island topped with white Corian® that serves as a buffet when relatives gather. Making the most of the space, a breakfast nook peeks from behind a prep sink, and the functionality of the room is assured by Dacor cooking appliances, a Sub-Zero refrigerator, an ASKO dishwasher and a much-used ice maker.

With a spa feel reverberating throughout, the home's outdoor areas are refreshed seasonally with new flora. During early spring, the landscape is filled with ivy, birds of paradise, birch logs and chicks and hens. James Sarappa of James Andrew Designs LLC in Egg Harbor Township

recreates the look year round. He expects to use plenty of bright oranges and reds for the summer with bursts of hibiscus and lantana popping off the yard's canvas.

"It's minimalista," Sarappa says. "We focus on texture and chunk and the scale of containers. I introduced a more zen look, clean and (with) fine lines. It's all tall and grand."

Modern, useful and simplistic at every turn, the home's bold, new look and free-flowing floor plan has made it a place for both serenity — and escape. 

Floral arrangements provided by The Secret Garden of Linwood.

ABOVE This simply styled master bedroom minimizes clutter and accentuates space by keeping all accessories and footwear outside of the room in custom-made closets. Neutral pillows from The Finishing Touch in Northfield and cobalt blue pillows from SoHo draw attention to the bed.

RIGHT The master bathroom features a bevy of luxuries including a step-in shower with six body sprays, dual vanities and a bidet.

