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# MODERN MUSE

A fun-loving couple creates a **contemporary haven** where they can **relax with their family** and **entertain the whole neighborhood**

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BY MALIA MCKINNON FRAME | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JANE BEILES

The family room's sophisticated palette of gray, black and white is punctuated by colorful artwork. A patio with TV, fireplace and a putting green is just outside the French doors.





ABOVE: Nightingale brightened what was a dark dining room with graphic Kelly Wearstler wallpaper and Dwell Studio green malachite linen fabric on chair backs. The futuristic chandelier, vintage bamboo console table and mohair bench make this room a showstopper.

OPPOSITE PAGE: In the foyer the collage made from old art textbooks was found in a Hamptons gallery.

Steph and Brad Jordan were living comfortably in Rowayton with no intention of moving; that is, until their neighbors began an extensive renovation on their house. The couple's interest was piqued, so the Jordans approached the neighbors and ended up buying their newly appointed home. "We loved our old house, but this place is located on a quieter street in a cul-de-sac," says Steph. "It's party central for the kids, who can run free from house to house."

When the Jordans and their boys (who were four and six at the time) moved in six years ago, the house was a clean slate of white, but Steph was ready for some color. During that period, she had met Rowayton-based designer Julie Nightingale; the women got to know each other during a shooting weekend for their GRITS (Girls Raised in the South) group. "We immediately bonded because we were the only good shots," laughs Steph. Good aim generated a close friendship, and Julie came on board to help Steph imprint her personality on the house. "She wanted a bright space that mixed modern elements with the traditional architecture, so my goal was to tie it all together," says Julie. After months of work, the result was

"I loved the opportunity to decorate for the Jordans, and then **come back a few years later to make adjustments as their family changed.** This home is an inviting place because it's a **reflection of Steph's energetic personality."**

—JULIE NIGHTINGALE



a vibrant, colorful home that suited a young, active family. Steph explains that the partnership was successful because, "Julie is so good at editing, but she also lets you leave your mark on a project."

The Jordans lived happily in their cheerful space, but as years passed their tastes evolved and they wanted to change things up. A year ago, Julie jumped into action again, this time with the task of brightening family spaces on the first floor, including a dark dining room. She began the project by opening up the dining room wall and creating a hallway with a window that leads from the front to the back of the house; it improved flow and let in the light. Another to-do item was swapping out Steph's bright, colorful palette for a cooler, neutral one. "The second time around was all about streamlining and restraining, so we calmed down the color and used it only in specific areas," says Julie. All the trim in the house was repainted a high-gloss white, and the floors were stained a high-gloss ebony. "These updates provided a clean, modern framework for the interiors and created a nice contrast with the traditional exterior," she says. Most important, she wanted to capture the essence of her friend's

personality. "Steph has an infectious spirit that livens up a room, and I wanted the interiors to reflect that."

The designer breathed new life into the home by rearranging some existing furniture, as well as scouring local stores for vintage pieces that add interest and complexity. Artwork, wallpaper and lighting amp up the glam and fun factor. In the dining room, for example, a wild Kelly Wearstler black-and-white wallpaper gives the room a graphic, punchy edge. It's paired with a funky Lindsey Adelman chandelier and dining chairs covered in a rich Dwell Studio green malachite linen.

"Redoing the living room was also exciting because we were challenged to make it less formal and more bohemian," says Julie. Two 1970s chrome chairs in the style of Mies van der Rohe command their own sitting area, while across the room a pair of armless black mohair slipper chairs offset a white linen sofa. Julie chose two metal gold-matte side table cubes by Milo Baughman and a 1970s iconic coffee table by Karl Springer to anchor the room. A black-and-white Moroccan carpet adds texture and layers, but "the artwork really



Vintage pieces make this living space modern and fun; the neon sign and black-and-white painting are by local artist Mary Jo McGonagle.

brings it home,” says Julie. She’s referring to a neon-green installation that says “Living the Dream” in cursive by Steph’s friend and local artist Mary Jo McGonagle. “You have to have a sense of humor, and Mary Jo’s work is so tongue-in-cheek,” says Steph.

The pristine white kitchen was modestly updated. “We added another oven, but the kitchen had been done in such a clean, classic way with gray quartz countertops and white subway tiles that we didn’t change much.” Over the island, the designer chose modern mirror ball reflective pendants by Tom Dixon. Four sleek swivel barstools in white leather complement the cool vibe of the home, and a spindly Serge Mouille chandelier floats over the dining table next to a built-in breakfast bar with sliding doors concealing cereal, a coffee maker and snacks. Steph was obsessed with Warren Platner’s chic gray leather and steel chairs, so they were added around the dining table. Nearby, a desk and dry bar were installed, making the kitchen feel more spacious.

In the adjoining family room that runs along the back of the home, Julie designed a space that’s modern and elegant, but also durable enough to stand up to this active family of four and their rotating door of guests. Two 1970s vintage white swivel chairs and a custom gray sectional by Homenature provide adequate seating for many and are upholstered in performance fabrics. “Brad is very tall and loves comfortable furniture, and Steph is tiny and can perch anywhere, so every room is a balance where they can both feel at home,” says Julie.

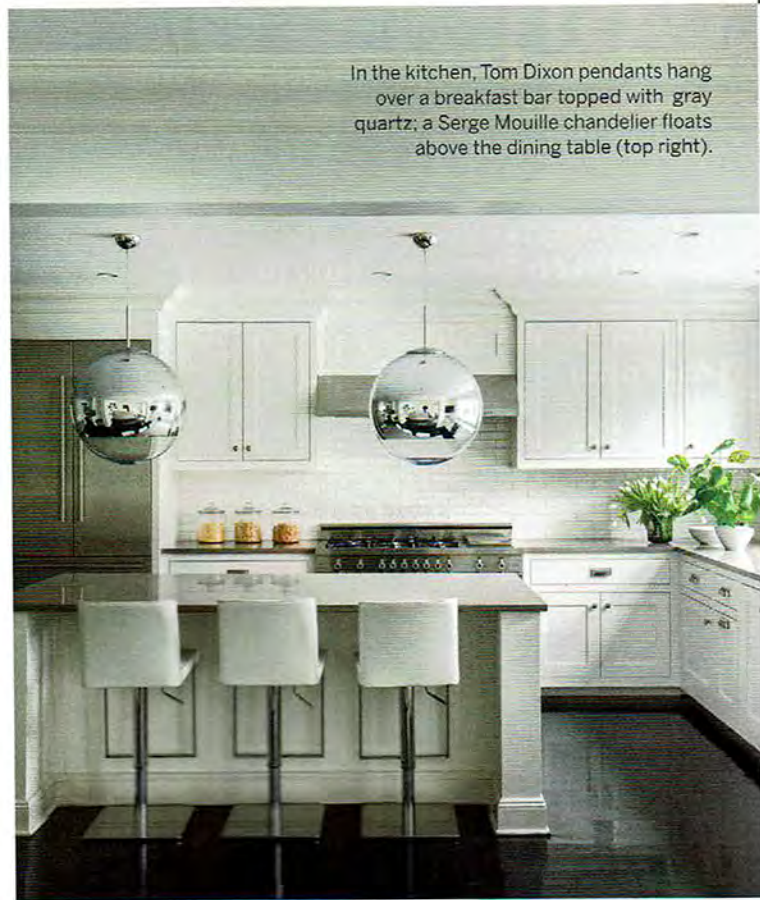
“It was such a pleasure to work with Julie because she is so good at editing, but at the same time she lets you **leave your own mark on a project.**”

—STEPH JORDAN





In the kitchen, Tom Dixon pendants hang over a breakfast bar topped with gray quartz; a Serge Mouille chandelier floats above the dining table (top right).



A black silk carpet softens the room and effectively hides any wear and tear, while an elegantly curved floor lamp adds some height and visual interest.

Most significant in this room is the wall of full-height French doors that bathes the area in light to reveal a beautiful view of the backyard, perhaps the couple's favorite area of all. "The real reason we needed a space for outdoor entertaining is that everyone ends up here," says Steph. "We're the central house—everyone just walks by and comes in," she says. Julie created two sitting areas outside that are sizeable enough for a crowd. "My husband's dream was to have a TV outside so he could watch Michigan play on a Saturday and practice his putting at the same time," says Steph. Brad's dream was realized when Julie installed a putting green just beyond the patio.

Looking back on the project, the designer fondly reflects, "I loved the opportunity to decorate for the Jordans, and then come back a few years later to tweak and make adjustments as their family changed." The women's friendship and months of hard work have yielded a stunning home that's still young and fun, but also amped up in sophistication, as well as the unexpected. Both designer and client are thrilled with the results, as is everyone else in the neighborhood. Says Julie, "This home is an inviting place because it's a direct reflection of Steph's personality—youthful, energetic, welcoming and always the life of the party." ■