

# New England HOME

Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

## Gather 'Round

*EMBRACE THE  
SEASON IN STYLE*



A modern dining room with a dark wood table, blue chairs, and a large window with a floral painting. The room features a dark wood dining table with a light blue upholstered bench and two blue upholstered chairs. A large window with grey curtains is in the background, and a large floral painting is on the wall. A dark wood console table with a plant and other decor is behind the table. A modern pendant light hangs above the table.

# forever young

A face-lift superimposes a fresh new look on the classic bones of a suburban Boston home.

*Text by Paula M. Bodah | Photography by Michael J. Lee*

Designer Dee Elms replaced the half-wall and heavy columns that separated the dining and living rooms with glass panels. Says project manager Dan Stone of JW Construction, "It was a more traditional house, and she brought a lot of contemporary ideas. It was a fun project to do."



A classic coffered ceiling makes the perfect companion to the living room's streamlined furniture. Other modern touches include the artwork by Martin Kline above the fireplace and Lindsey Adelman's striking Branching Bubbles chandelier. With three teenagers and three dogs, owners Kim and John Toomey are happy that Elms covered the sofas and chairs with easy-care indoor-outdoor fabric.



**LEFT:** Black, in the painted railing and textured wallpaper, adds drama to the foyer, where a vintage glass chandelier sparkles above. **RIGHT:** A coat of paint and gold hardware bring new life to the kitchen cabinets. The existing twin islands were freshened up with Calacatta marble on top and sides.

**I**n the bustle of raising three young children, Kim and John Toomey were fine with their Lexington, Massachusetts, home. But as the kids became teenagers and Mom and Dad had a moment to catch their breath, they realized the house they'd occupied for

eight years could use a bit of a refresh. "We did a renovation when we first moved in, moving walls and updating the kitchen," Kim says. "But it always felt like we didn't really make it personal, adding the aesthetic touches a designer can add."





Boston-based designer Dee Elms had worked with the couple on the city condo they bought in anticipation of their empty-nest years, so it was an easy decision to turn to her again for their primary home. “I said, ‘It’s time for you to get over here to warm this place up and make it us,’” Kim recalls.

Architecturally the house didn’t need major changes, although everyone agreed the half-wall and beefy columns separating the living and dining rooms felt clunky and outdated. Working with Dan Stone of JW Construction, Elms swapped them out for a pair of metal-framed panels of glass. “They’re sort of like sideways transoms,” Elms explains, “and they delineate the space but in a subtle way and with a contemporary vibe.”

From the foyer’s paneling to the living room’s coffered ceiling to the barrel ceiling in the family room, the house



**CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT:** The handsome piano room sports a linen-textured wallpaper in a subtle stripe that complements the glossy black window and door casings. Elms played up the architectural details of Kim’s study with Benjamin Moore’s Evening Dove, a soft charcoal blue. A tiny powder room makes a big statement with Innovations Oil + Water wallpaper and a monolithic stone sink set against a tiled wall.



boasts plenty of traditional architectural details that lend a gracious touch. Elms’s palette of black and palest gray/white plays up the classic details while imbuing them with a contemporary freshness.

To further the youthful new look, she replaced fussy fireplace surrounds with sleek travertine and brought in furniture with a clean, elegant look. And every room is treated to a knockout light fixture: a sparkly vintage glass starburst in the foyer, Lindsey Adelman’s dramatic Branching Bubbles chandelier in the living room, and Christopher Boots’s striking Abacus pendant in the dining room. “I’m obsessed with this light,” Elms says about the sculptural piece, which features clumps of uncut-quartz crystal suspended from a horizontal brass bar.

Artwork, chosen with help from Boston’s



The subtle, watery colors in the fireplace surround inspired the pastel hues for Kim and John's bedroom. "It looks like waves on the sea in an old Winslow Homer painting," Elms says. Soft pink wool drapes against pale blue walls and an upholstered cloud-gray headboard give the room a serene, dreamy look. Circa Lighting table lamps with burnished-brass shades add dimension.

S3 Contemporary, adds color to almost every room. A vivid oil by Connecticut artist Ted Gahl enlivens the family room, Ori Gersht's large floral photo makes an arresting addition to the dining room, and a graffiti-like lithograph by Melissa Meyer is a bright echo of the pastel hues that give Kim

and John's bedroom its serene feel. Then there's Kim's favorite: Emily Mae Smith's whimsical screen print that hangs in the kitchen. "The house wouldn't be complete without the art," she says.

It wouldn't have been complete without the input of her three teens, either.

Although once in a while she says, "I had to make an executive decision," she welcomed their opinions. "It was definitely a family project." As grown-up as the place looks, it holds lots of family-friendly features, like the indoor-outdoor fabric on the white living room sofas, and the benches at the

dining table that encourage kids to linger for after-dinner conversation.

When they embarked on this project, Kim says, "I said, let's make it special, make it fabulous, make it us."

Mission accomplished.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For details, see Resources.

**INTERIOR DESIGN:**  
Dee Elms, Elms Interior Design

**BUILDER:**  
Jon Wardwell, Dan Stone,  
JW Construction