



COTSWOLD *Charm*

A landmark Cotswold country house is transformed into a light-filled home that is warm, welcoming, and inviting.

written by ellen olson, photography by spacecrafting



“The community is lucky to have stewards like the Grossmans to transform and care for this landmark house.”

—SANDY LAMENDOLA, ASID,
TWIST INTERIOR DESIGN



project credits:
 · residential design: charlie & co design
 · builder: l. cramer
 · interior design: twist interior design
 · landscape architect: yardscapes

When Andy and Suzanna Grossman first laid eyes on the Cotswold Country home on Lake of the Isles, they knew it was something special. It had significant old-world charm and grand, sweeping spaces. They asked Charlie Simmons, Founding Principal & Designer, Charlie & Co Design, to tour the home with them, so they fully understood the possibilities and challenges. “Our vision was to retain the charm and character of the house but bring it into the 21st century,” said Andy. “We knew that home offered the potential for phenomenal views if the house could be opened up to the lake.” The home is one of Charlie’s favorites on Lake of the Isles; given that few of these historic homes are left in the area, he was eager to have a chance to transform the architectural treasure.

“The first order of business was to flood the house with light,” said Charlie. “Many of the original features of the home were intact: the small original windows that had been fitted with storm windows, the original flooring which had turned very dark, and small closed-off rooms. We envisioned a space that was light and bright.”

Charlie and his work colleague/design partner, Doug Tang, focused on creating a more open floor plan, while honoring the home’s architecture. They widened the openings into the family room and the living room from the front entry. They kept the elliptical shape of the original feature, which echoes the curvature of the distinctive roofline. Curved architectural details are found throughout the home. They have been reimagined and reinvented with a contemporary flair. “You don’t want to turn your back on the DNA of the home,” said Charlie. “Homes are living things that change and evolve over time.”

A wall between the kitchen and the former dining room, now a family room, was removed, and another archway was created. “We changed the orientation of the kitchen and removed a concrete planter at the front of the house, so we could drop the windows in the family room down to the floor,” said Charlie. “That opened up spectacular views to Lake of the Isles.”

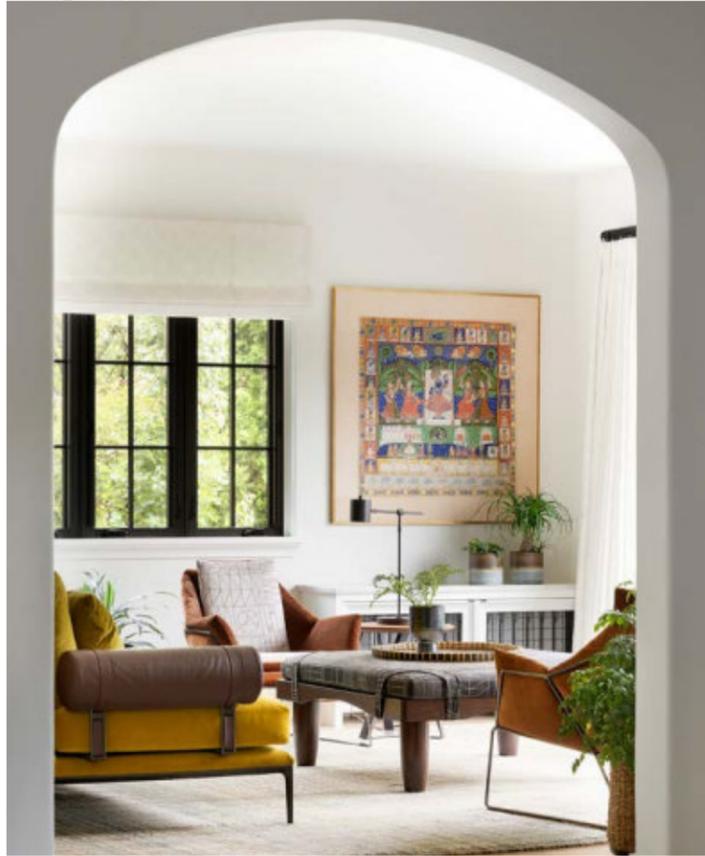
The kitchen is fitted with clean, modern, rift-cut oak cabinets and soapstone countertops. “Soapstone is a quietly elegant and organic material that has a lot of depth to it,” said Sandy LaMendola of Twist Interior Design. “On the other side of the kitchen, Charlie & Co designed a built-in banquette that follows the serpentine space. Together we collaborated on creating a comfortable location for reading for extended periods of time.” The turquoise upholstery and Pierre Frey fabric with a graffiti-like pattern, along with the light fixture have a mid-century modern vibe. The table features a gold toned base, and has an industrial strength top. It can be moved, as needed.

Throughout the home, the design team looked for ways to share and borrow light from space to space. All of the windows were replaced, and repair work was done where leaking had occurred. Where possible, windows were enlarged to invite more natural light into the home. The home was completely renovated, although the original wood floor was preserved. Where necessary, the floor was patched and matched, and the final finish was lightened and whitened from the original. The light floors, along with the creamy white walls, become the backdrop for art and other architectural elements in the home.

Color was added throughout the home through furnishings, draperies, and upholstery choices. “Things blend, but don’t match,” said Sandy. “That way the rooms feel more natural, organic, and not overly composed.” Some furniture pieces were reupholstered to give them new life and help minimize some of the supply chain challenges that surfaced during the project. “My focus was to be sure that the house ended up feeling welcoming, warm, and inviting,” said Suzanna. “I wanted it to mirror its lovely park surrounding and maintain a casual, relaxed elegance.”

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Creating a 4-season screened-in porch where the homeowners could read, relax, and enjoy views of the garden, was a priority. The wall at the end of the living room was opened up and French doors added. The screened-in porch, formerly a sun porch, was fortified with steel columns. A barrel-vaulted roof adds interior interest and hides the recessed infrared heating lamps. The team at L. Cramer built glass inserts so the room can be used through most of the year.

In the 1930s, a previous owner had connected the carriage house to the main house via a second-story bridge. While the idea was clever and ahead of its time, the angle at which the bridge and carriage house lie was awkward relative to the home. Ultimately, after several discussions about how to solve the problem, Charlie came up with the concept of creating a circular library at the top of the stairs. The room is accessed by a couple of steps and an opening fitted with French doors and sidelight. “We put a curved soffit in the ceiling and added a custom, curved built-in bookcase,” said Charlie. “Soft diffused light cascades down the stairs, and is another example of how we created borrowed and shared light throughout the home.”

“Our hats off to Charlie and Doug for a brilliant solution which turned the weakest architectural element into perhaps one of the home’s strongest,” added Andy. Sandy chose the light fixture and furnishings that give it a 1920’s vibe. The library opens to a media room with windows on two walls. Here mid-century-inspired furnishings keep the room fresh and livable. “We were able to take over these underutilized spaces and create enclaves that are pivotal to Andy and Suzanna’s enjoyment of the home,” said Sandy. Beyond the media room is a laundry room and exercise room. The outdoor space created under the skyway span, with the inlaid wood ceiling and columns matching the front entry columns, creates a welcoming, warm and exciting outdoor space.

“This was a serious project which required the highest level of creativity, execution, and communication,” said Andy. “Sandy and Charlie are hard-working, serious, and professional. Despite the complexity of the effort, we came in without unexpected cost problems and met a very ambitious construction schedule. L. Cramer worked seamlessly with the design team and was unbelievably responsive and did the highest quality work.” Both Andy and Suzanna agree, “We had fun and got exactly what we expected!” Their dog, Bart, has found his perches, which give him several vistas where he can see everything going on in the house at one time. “Nothing more a dog with short legs loves than to have long lanes to sprint and stay fit!” remarked Andy.

“This house has beautiful bones and architecturally was brought to life beyond its original expression,” said Sandy. “The house is a 360-degree experience, and the design team, along with Andy and Suzanna, were thoughtful about every view.” Despite being situated on a public park, the home offers a good deal of privacy to the homeowners. “This is a new gem for a new generation,” she added. “The community is lucky to have stewards like the Grossmans to transform and care for this landmark house. Our clients committed to all the parts that make the home beautiful.”

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