

September 2005

TRADITIONAL HOME

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ranch redressing

to soft and warm — and celebrates the great Northwest.

BY ELIOT NUSBAUM PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN GRANÉN PRODUCED BY LINDA HUMPHREY



Inspired by design ideas from the Pacific Rim, Ginny and John Meisenbach's Seattle home reaches out gracefully into the environment of the Northwest—but also invites it in.

a Washington home goes from hard and cold



It was either **blow up or blow out.**



After a year and a half of weighing the options, Ginny and John Meisenbach chose to blow out and renovate the ranch house they bought in Bellevue, Washington. Thanks to interior designer Doug Rasar, architect Patrick Brennan, landscape architect David Pfeiffer, and Ginny herself, the result is a fresh, open, and comfortable home with amazing indoor and outdoor spaces overlooking Lake Washington.

That the Meisenbachs even considered tearing down the midcentury-era place and starting anew is testament to some of the unfortunate remodeling the house had undergone through the years. "It was pretty contemporary and cold," says Ginny, "but we didn't feel good about tearing it down; it would have been such a waste. We felt it was a perfectly good house—structurally it was sound; it had survived an earthquake—and there were a lot of things about it we liked."

While the bones of the house were good, the hard-edged approach to the interior design did little to brighten the home or take advantage of the mild Washington weather. The house itself was painted battleship gray. It had gray wall-to-wall carpeting, a shiny stone fireplace with stainless steel doors in the living room, black granite floors in the sunroom, and shiny automobile paint on the walls in the family room—rather dreary and depressing choices for the often gray, rainy environment.

Right: A chandelier designed by Doug Rasar and a glass sculpture by Dale Chihuly on the table define and give character to the dining area.

Above: Landscaping was used to soften the home's front approach.

Left: The view from the living room toward the dining area.

Top left: Ginny enjoys a moment with the Meisenbach dogs.



everything about the Northwest, where things stay green year-round

The French limestone fireplace, painted wood ceiling, and cased beams add to the traditional mood of the renovation. An Oushak rug and white cotton duck slipcovers help make the living room a casual, comfortable space.

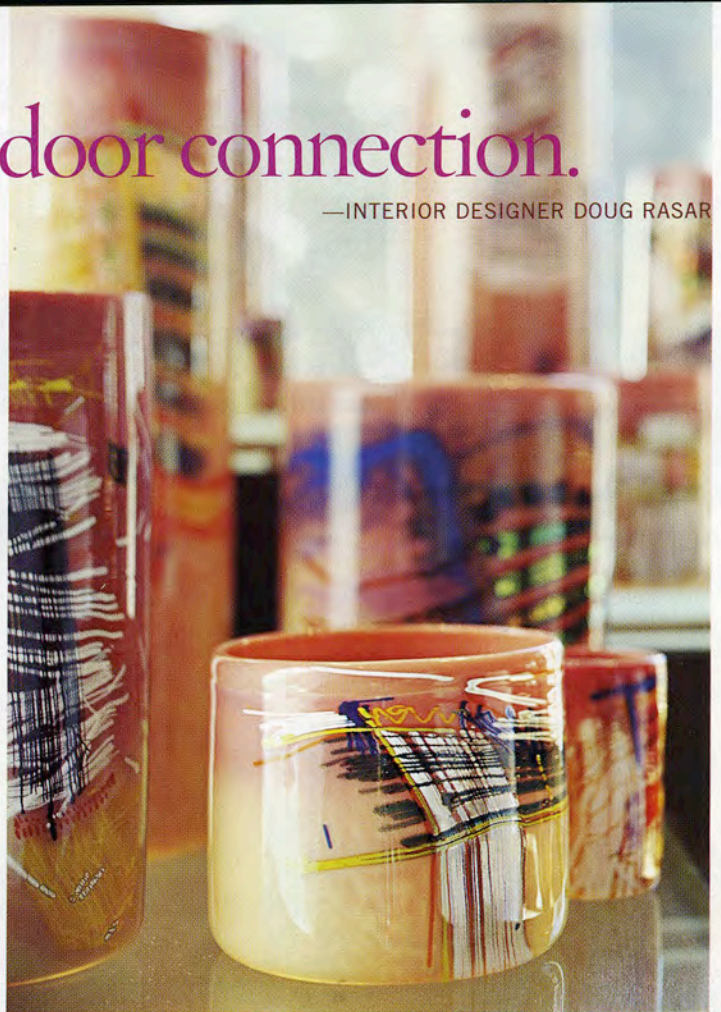
Opposite top: A close-up of some of the Chihuly glass that the Meisenbachs have collected.

Bottom: A contemporary painting above the piano and another dramatic piece of Chihuly glass on a pedestal enliven a corner of the room.



invites a strong indoor-outdoor connection.

—INTERIOR DESIGNER DOUG RASAR





Right: Once used as a television room and closed off from the magnificent views, the family room now embraces the outdoors. Even the fireplace offers a peek at the world beyond. The family room opens onto a casual dining area in the sunroom, giving the Meisenbachs a chance to enjoy the view of the swimming pool.
Below: A terra-cotta tile makes an unusual backsplash in the kitchen. To open up space in the room, four refrigerated drawers replaced the refrigerator, which was moved to the pantry.

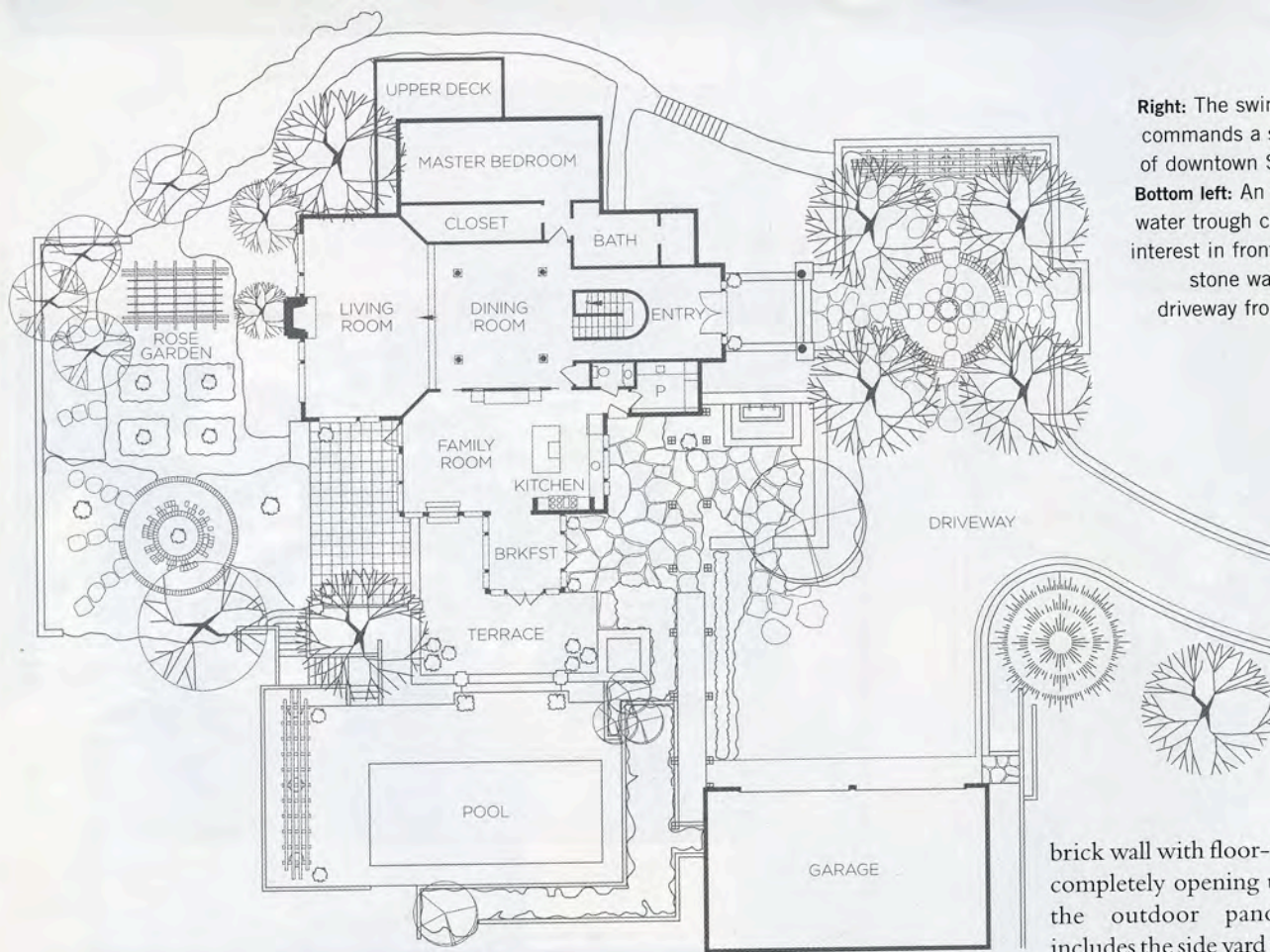


“Our main goal was to warm it up and make it more inviting,” says Ginny. Led by Rasar, the design team set about creating those kinds of spaces indoors as well as tying the indoor spaces visually with equally inviting outdoor areas—blurring the line between without changing the floor plan. They began with the entry. Opaque front doors were replaced with glass doors that offer a clear view of a new front garden, designed by Pfeiffer to temper the approach to the house. Square columns were replaced with round columns like those set around the pool in the rear, bringing continuity and softness to the design.

The entry leads into the dining area, defined by four round columns that also were once square. During the day, the dining area is flooded with natural light from a large skylight. At night, a custom-designed light fixture illuminates and anchors the space from above. The dining area acts as the hub of the house, with rooms veering off of it in each direction. The adjacent living room, once a cold, forbidding place, features expansive views of the lake and the Seattle skyline through windows flanking a new French limestone fireplace that truly heats up the space, both literally and visually. A pale palette and simple, white duck slipcovers complete the transformation into a bright, cheerful spot. Also, dark hardwood floors were extended into the room from the dining area for more visual warmth and to tie the open rooms together.

The family room underwent a more radical switch. Like the living room, this space was warmed up with a French limestone fireplace. But the most dramatic change was replacing a solid





Right: The swimming pool area commands a spectacular view of downtown Seattle's skyline. **Bottom left:** An antique Chinese water trough creates a point of interest in front of the stacked-stone wall separating the driveway from the courtyard.

brick wall with floor-to-ceiling glass, completely opening up the room to the outdoor panorama, which includes the side yard and pool as well



as Lake Washington and the city skyline. Even the fireplace is backed with glass, adding one more way to look out, but also allowing a warming glimpse of the fire from the outside.

Rasar's design for the interiors called for painting all of the trim a soft white and the walls a contrasting color. Likewise, he and Brennan collaborated on creating architecturally interesting ceiling treatments throughout the house, just the kind of detailing to breathe a little life and character into a room. Rasar also pulled together a collection of mostly Oushak rugs for the floors. "These are very old, pale rugs with wonderful colors," says the designer. "And their background color is the same soft white as the whole interior." Combined with the custom-designed slipcovered furniture that was mixed with older pieces owned by the Meisenbachs, the effect is charming.

The kitchen, which Ginny described as an especially cold, contemporary room, was completely gutted. It was opened up with a little legerdemain. Rasar made the refrigerator disappear—actually, he moved it to the pantry—and replaced it with four under-the-counter refrigerated drawers strategically located around the room. The most eye-catching addition to the kitchen, however, is purely decorative. An oversize terra-cotta architectural tile depicting an urn, salvaged from an old building in New York, fills the wall above the range. "Mixing the old and new gives the house character and personality," says Ginny, who is blown away with the results. "We're so happy we went through this. We're thrilled with the house, and we are enjoying it very much." ■

Interior designer: Doug Rasar **Architect:** Patrick Brennan
Landscape architect: David Pfeiffer

For more information, see sources on page 206.

