

NEUTRAL CORNER

HOMEOWNERS MAKE
THEIR WISH LIST A REALITY
IN THIS CRISP HINSDALE
ABODE USING A VARIETY
OF MATERIALS AND A
CONFLUENCE OF INSPIRATION.

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The entry features a Rode Bros. white-oak floor inset with four panels wrapped in leather. Interior designer Tracy Hickman placed a chandelier from Tower Lighting over a table with a limestone top that was fabricated by Sprovieri's Custom Counters. Holly Hunt's Great Plains drapery fabric frames the scene.



For homeowners and builders Bruce and Linda Ritter, design inspiration is everywhere. "Seeing and building so many houses, you make a list of things you want in your own home," Linda says. "We were coming from a very elegant Cape Cod-style, shingle-and-stone house, and we wanted something different for our next one." The couple's new space was informed by a melding of moments: a pleasant holiday spent at a friend's lakeside retreat and their time living in Northern California, among others.

To begin, the Ritters first put their ideas down on paper. "Prior to starting our building firm, Bruce was an art director in the advertising industry, and so he looks at things for proportion, materials, coloration and scale,"

Linda says. "He has a great eye for how something is going to look when it's finished, and his vision contributed a lot to the style of our home."

Unable to pass up a corner lot just blocks from Hinsdale's charming downtown, the duo sketched out the basic layout for the home they envisioned and took it to architect Richard Olsen to create the technical drawings. "It's a bit of a hybrid," Olsen says. A pair of gables flanks a dormer with a clerestory window that floods the great room with natural light. Vertical board-and-batten siding and painted common brick with copper elements lend a more casual feel to the home. "We're taking some of the cues from Shingle-style homes and introducing a combination of materials and finishes," Olsen explains.

The great room sofas, fabricated by Anees Upholstery, feature C&C Milano fabric from Holland & Sherry. Donghia chairs, in a textile from Cowtan & Tout, side a custom coffee table with a suede surface. A Watson Smith rug runs underfoot.



Above: O'Brien Harris fabricated the kitchen's custom white cabinetry and cerused quarter-sawn white-oak island for homeowners and builders Bruce and Linda Ritter. The range is from Abt.

Right: In the butler's pantry, Calacatta marble countertops fabricated by Sprovieri's Custom Counters and polished-nickel hardware from Katonah Architectural Hardware play off the custom cabinetry.

That mix continues into the front foyer, where, in the center of the room, the hand-scraped white-oak flooring is inset with a leather panel detailed with nailhead trim. "We wanted a 'wow' factor when you walked through the front door," says interior designer Tracy Hickman. "The leather was a way for us to break up all the wood on the first floor and do something different."

A frequent collaborator with the Ritters, Hickman was brought into the process early and was instrumental in creating the casual yet refined aesthetic that her clients envisioned. To create a sense of cohesiveness throughout the home, the designer developed a neutral color palette with materials and textures that repeat throughout. "Having a consistent theme helps fuse everything together," Bruce explains.



KITCHEN PHOTOS: TONY SOLURI.



Draperies in the dining room were fabricated by Mimsie O'Hara Fabric Designs using a material from Holly Hunt. A light fixture, also from Holly Hunt, illuminates an existing table and chairs by Barbara Barry from Baker, while a custom rug grounds the space.



An extension of the kitchen, the hearth room includes a pair of benches by Hickman covered in fabric from David Sutherland; they join a Christian Liaigre table that was refinished by Anees Upholstery. The pendant is from Tower Lighting and the custom chairs near the fireplace feature a Rogers & Goffigon fabric.

Throughout the first level, walls are clad with 8-inch horizontal tongue-and-groove paneling. "It gives the illusion that the house has a wider feel and makes those individual areas seem like one big space," Hickman explains. In the spacious great room—which has vaulted beamed ceilings and clerestory windows—the designer selected a linen drapery fabric with a subtle stripe that echoes the paneling's horizontal motif. She also incorporated linen in a darker shade on a pair of custom sofas, as well as in a lighter hue on a set of doors that hides a recessed cabinet housing a large television. "It's this layering of neutrals," Hickman says. "The design is really about texture and subtle valuations of color."

The quiet palette continues into the combination kitchen and hearth room, which was designed in collaboration by Hickman and the Ritters; kitchen designer Laura O'Brien of O'Brien Harris then brought their sketches to life. Two-inch white Calacatta marble countertops unify the white perimeter cabinetry with the island and butler's pantry, which are composed of cerused quarter-sawn white oak. This material was also used to frame both the refrigerator—hidden behind white cabinetry—and the range with oversize hood. "The trick was to make the kitchen look beautiful and exciting but also like it's still a working space," Linda says.

The long linear room—which includes a casual dining table with bench seating and a cozy area in front of the fireplace—has also become a favorite spot for guests to congregate during the couple's soirees. "During parties,



The exterior of the home presents a fusion of influences and includes board-and-batten siding, painted common brick, shutters and copper accents. Premier Service's Aaron Postma and Marilyn Maas created a structured yard that echoes the clean interiors.

there will be 12 people sandwiched into those benches," Linda says. "I like functional spaces, but I also want them to feel welcoming and warm. As much as you try to get people out of the kitchen, they tend to stay there anyway."

Outside, Premier Service vice president Aaron Postma and senior landscape designer Marilyn Maas were able to create defined spaces using a variety of plant materials, their placement and hardscape elements. "Although white is the predominant color, a touch of blue was added as an elegant accent," says Postma, who fashioned a soothing landscape that coordinates with the home's interior. "The clients wanted a very structured yard that matched the clean interiors, and so we used columnar hornbeam, boxwood hedging and clipped upright yew, in addition to a low-stylized front garden wall." Furthermore, the firm's landscape designer, Heather Spera, worked with the homeowners to select annuals with interesting foliage.

According to the Ritters, the house is everything they envisioned when they first sketched out its design—something they attribute to their team. "Our home is a portfolio that we take prospective customers through to show them our quality craftsmanship and detail," Bruce says. "It was exciting to have an opportunity to put more of ourselves into a space that reflects who we are and the way our tastes have evolved." ■



Above: A half-door covered with a small pergola, constructed by Tiburon Homes, leads to the detached garage.



Left: French doors open to create a seamless flow between the hearth room and an outdoor sitting area, which is furnished with a sofa and metal-framed chairs from Restoration Hardware. A built-in brick-and-granite fire table takes center stage.