



THE 900-SQUARE-FOOT addition that interior designer Andra Birkerts and her husband, Harris Footer, built onto their historic home includes a master suite (LEFT) with casement windows offering views into the garden and a partially enclosed porch (ABOVE) that they use year-round. Where the main house meets the addition's corridor (BELOW), original barn-board was left exposed.



Suite Success

A Modern addition yields extra space while respecting the historical character of a Victorian-era cottage

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Interior designer Andra Birkerts and her husband, Harris Footer, loved the quirky charm of their 1890s cottage in Wellesley, Massachusetts, but as their two daughters became teenagers, the 2,300-square-foot house started feeling snug. “We liked the cozy quarters,” says Birkerts, “but the house lacked some privacy.”

They decided to add a master suite, enlisting the help of architect Heather Weiss of studiohw in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to design a Modern space that would relate to, but not mimic, the original structure, which is clad in charcoal stucco. Connecting interiors with the

outdoors and a focus on natural light were critical components of the project, as was leaving ample space on the property for gardens.

To satisfy those requirements in a dense suburban neighborhood just outside the town's historic district, Weiss situated the 900-square-foot addition behind the house. A 25-foot-long corridor connects it to the existing house and effectively divides the yard into two distinct “rooms.” One, bound by the freestanding garage and the house's southern facade, serves as a courtyard with space for dining. The other is a woody landscape with a kitchen garden beyond.

At the intersection of old and new spaces, the design team

DESIGN FOCUS



IN THE MASTER bath (ABOVE), Birkerts used bright touches, such as a citrine vanity, to enliven an otherwise muted palette. A frosted-glass partition separates the tub and shower (RIGHT) in the 7-by-18-foot master bath. Large windows allow in natural light. The deck wall (BELOW), is clad in lead-coated copper, creating a visual connection between the house's original stucco walls and the addition's cedar planks.



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replaced an existing window, leaving views intact. Next to it, a door opens to an 8-by-15-foot mahogany deck. Opposite, another door opens to what Birkerts calls a “sleeping porch,” a similarly sized outdoor room partially enclosed by gray-stained cedar planking. Here, Birkerts and Footer, who works with her at Andra Birkerts Design, also in Wellesley, installed a fireplace, allowing them to use the space year-round.

Weiss used lead-coated copper cladding, whose color and patina relate to the original house, for the exterior of the corridor. “It’s warmer than most metals and has a lot of visual interest,” she says. To keep the addition in proportion with the house, she made the ceiling height 19 feet. “It’s pretty simple in form,” she says, “almost a barn-like structure.”

Less straightforward was engineering the glazing that pops out of the bedroom’s northwest corner. Using casement windows, which aren’t typically ganged in the way the design team prescribed, required special reinforcement. The result, says Weiss, “feels like you’re out in the garden.”

Mother Nature brought other challenges. “Almost the moment we started digging, the snow started falling,” says Birkerts, who brought on Gaboury² Building of North Attleborough, Massachusetts, for construction. The “good-natured” crew worked through an extraordinarily snowy winter, frequently starting the day with a hefty warm-up of shoveling.

Inside, Birkerts used deep, muted colors and natural materials that reflect the mood and whimsy of the original house. Plush textures, subtle patterns, and pops of citrine and rust complement the lavender-gray walls and ceiling.

While Birkerts’s expertise is interiors, Footer’s passion is the garden. The pair painstakingly hand-selected large repurposed slabs of Maine granite to create the framework of the outdoor space. Working with Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design of Stoneham, Massachusetts, and Sculptured Earth, a landscape construction company in Charlestown, Massachusetts, Footer realized his vision. Now, says Birkerts, their home “feels like a special place as soon as you come through the gate.” ■