



MADE OVER



# Eastern Energy

PEG HAMMERSCHMIDT PAIRS A PASSION FOR THE CONTEMPORARY WITH AN ASIAN-INSPIRED AESTHETIC

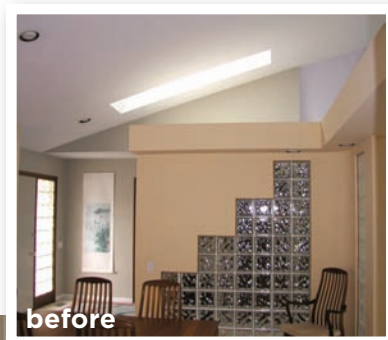
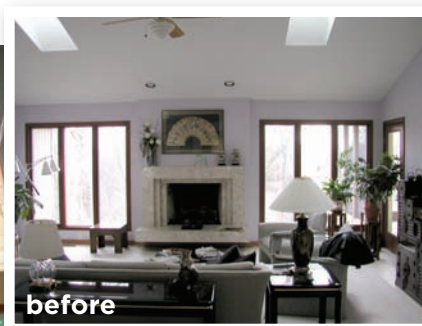
By *Margaret Bauer* Photography by *Sam Fentress*

Our couple had found the perfect home—the perfect home for the year 1992, that is. Its location, at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac in Des Peres, was excellent, its size just right. The wife, a local apparel executive, loved its classic red-brick construction and spacious interior. But aesthetically, the place needed a lot of work.

Says the husband, an attorney: “When we bought it, it was 15 years old and looked it. But we felt that the bones of the house were pretty good. So we just wanted to make it more of our own personal taste level—a style that’s suited to what we like.”

For a high-powered couple interested in entertaining at home, the interior’s closed-off setup just wasn’t going to

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cut it. Nor would its blah color scheme (mainly off-white, gray and beige, with a yellow accent wall that wouldn't have looked out of place in a McDonald's), off-the-rack particleboard cabinetry, synthetic countertops or that oh-so-kitschy glass-block entryway.

The couple understood the home's potential, but they needed an expert to realize their vision. While paging through magazines for inspiration, they came across the home of interior designer Peg Hammerschmidt, who'd just moved to St. Louis from L.A. The owner of Hammer & Schmidt Design, she had a stellar design aesthetic, combining modern and traditional elements that matched their aspirations. "We saw that and we said, 'Yeah! That's our vision, too,'" says the husband.

The first priority, says Ms. Hammerschmidt, was fixing the home's flow. That meant demolishing the walls that boxed off the kitchen, then chucking the glass blocks in the entryway and replacing them with a contemporary wooden screen of her own design. The screen was custom-fabricated by St. Louis' Classic Woodworking, the firm that designed the bulletproof altar for Pope John Paul II's visit to St. Louis.

Whereas the home's original flow path isolated the kitchen, the new design put the area on display, adding a granite bar where guests could gather. "Typically the guests will be out here, so that if we're cooking, we're not bumping into everybody, but we're still part of the action. The kitchen before just felt tiny," says the husband. The



ABOVE: THE LIVING ROOM, RE-ENVISIONED AS AN OPEN, LIGHT-FILLED SPACE. RIGHT: THE MODERNIZED DINING ROOM, COMPLETE WITH TRICKY-TO-HANG (BUT OH-SO-WORTH-IT) FLOS LIGHTING.





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original cabinetry was replaced with an Italian kitchen from Bontempi Cucine, with brushed-aluminum pulls, soft-close drawers and a stainless-steel wall shelf over the sink.

The countertops were custom-fabricated from Brazilian White Diamonds granite—one of the first pieces the couple saw upon setting foot into the store. The wife recalls: “We walked in, thought we’d spend all day looking, and [the husband] goes, ‘That’s it!’” Though the couple did due diligence to be sure, that initial impression turned out to be the best.

Another goal was to create ways to display the wife’s collection of Asian art and artifacts, purchased during frequent business trips to the East. Achieving balance was key: “We didn’t say to Peg, ‘We want it to look like you’re in Tokyo or something,’” says the husband. Instead, Ms. Hammerschmidt looked for ways to create contemporary, open styling that complemented, rather than competed with, the artwork and furnishings.

“[The wife] had picked up the sofa she had in mind for years, so there were some key pieces we started with,” says Ms. Hammerschmidt. The home’s existent flooring was replaced with Italian porcelain tiles, designed to resemble limestone while remaining much more impervious to wine spills and scuffs. Over the top went plush, tasteful carpets, custom-designed by Ms. Hammerschmidt and fabricated in California. On the couch went the designer’s signature puff pillow, which she’s commissioned High Sierra Fur to create in a different color for each of her clients.

A set of Asian scrolls provided the inspiration for the guest bathroom’s design. Says Ms. Hammerschmidt: “[The wife] showed me these rolled-up scrolls, saying, ‘I’ve had these for years, and I don’t know what to do with them.’ I had them framed and thought, ‘Let’s start picking up some of that.’” A lacewood vanity, an Absolute Black granite countertop and hand-blown glass lighting nicely did the trick.



LEFT: EACH WALL OF THE REDESIGNED KITCHEN WAS PAINTED A SUBTLY DIFFERENT COLOR, HIGHLIGHTING ITS HEIGHT AND PULLING GUESTS’ EYES THROUGH THE SPACE.

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In addition to some of the home's more organic elements, a sleek, tech-oriented element has taken root here. The fireplace's boring gray marble has been replaced by a modern, brushed-steel surround; the old ceiling fan has been replaced by a mahogany-bladed Minka Aire. Repurposed aluminum grills now hide both the entertainment system's speakers and the home's ventilation ducts. "The contractors gave me a hard time on that, because they're not cold-air returns; you'd plug 'em in on a desk to cover cords and things," says Ms. Hammerschmidt.

The ceiling was torn out and redone to accommodate new lighting, including a set of Flos Fuscia lights, featuring a design similar to Harman Kardon's clear speakers for Apple, over the dining room table. "The electrician wanted to kill me—could you imagine trying to level all those lights?" says the designer. Working in concert with the lighting, each wall of the home features a subtly different shade of paint—quite a task for the painter, but a treat for the home's inhabitants.

Ms. Hammerschmidt says a combination of Internet-based sourcing and the increased availability of unique materials here in town allowed her to create the kind of space the couple wanted, with few compromises. "I think the Internet has been a big influence on people, especially here in St. Louis," she says. "Now you can go online, go check this out, so everybody's more open to things. It's refreshing."

RIGHT: THE GUEST BATHROOM'S CUSTOM-DESIGNED CABINETRY, HAND-BLOWN GLASS LIGHTING AND ORIGINAL ARTWORK ARE A STUDY IN MODERN SUBTLETY.



## 6 DESIGNER TIPS

When you decide to update your space, here are a few tips:

### 1. Figure out lifestyle priorities.

How do you want movement to flow? Today's lifestyle often no longer calls for isolated, formal dining and living spaces.

**2. Design for yourself, not for the next person.** You need to enjoy your life and your home every day.

An environment that works and that makes you happy will keep you in the home much longer.

**3. Make a budget.** Take a realistic look at what you can spend. Then do research. Just the appliances you want can really add up!

**4. Determine a design direction.** Scan magazines and websites for designs you love, things that make

you say, "That's me!"

**5. Don't believe everything you see on TV.** It's not as easy—and never costs as little—as a half-hour TV show would have you believe.

**6. Never let a contractor be your designer.** Just because they sell a product doesn't mean they're a good source for design tips. Establish your own master plan.