

JIM BRAUDE: THE GAMBLING PROBLEM WE ALREADY HAVE // ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK'S PIPER KERMAN

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YOUR HOME

Family Rooms

WHERE
STYLE AND
FUNCTION
PLAY
NICELY

PLUS HOW TO KID- AND PET-PROOF
YOUR FURNITURE, WALLS & MORE



The living room, a family gathering place complete with player piano, occupies a corner that formerly held the kitchen.

YOUR HOME > FAMILY FRIENDLY

Getting Together

WITH PLENTY OF HOUSE BUT THE WRONG SETUP, BROOKLINERS GO FOR A MORE LIVABLE FLOOR PLAN.

BY MARNI ELYSE KATZ

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SEAN LITCHFIELD



Many families call on an architect to carve out or add more space. Not the case for the Glasses. The family—Amy, a partner at a strategy management consulting firm, Jeff, the CEO of a wireless technology company, and their three kids, ages 16, 14, and 11—had more than enough room in its 6,000-square-foot circa 1890 Arts and Crafts-style town house in a leafy Brookline neighborhood. But life felt disjointed. The kitchen was small, dark, and dated, and the kids didn't have a place to study. When the Glasses called Cambridge-based architect Maryann Thompson, they told her they loved the house but wanted to make it more livable.

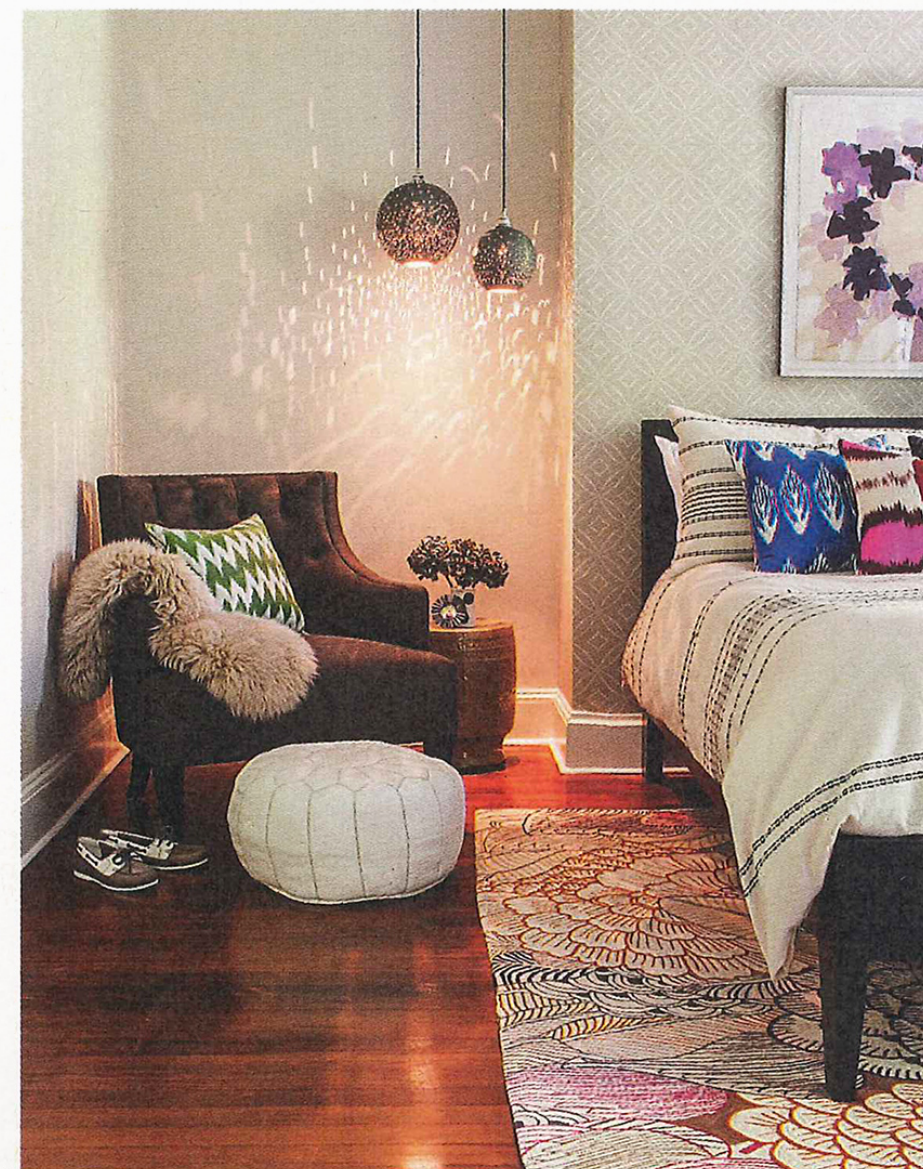
Part of the problem was that when the couple moved in, back in 1996, the home was a two-family. Six years later, they purchased the downstairs unit and combined them, restoring a staircase, uncovering fireplaces, and establishing a master suite. Two years ago, they were ready for a big redo, including a much-needed kitchen renovation. Around the same time, they had purchased a second home in New Hampshire with a kitchen that was central to the floor plan. They noticed how much better the family dynamic was there. "We interacted differently there," Amy says. "We cooked while the kids did their homework. Everybody gathered; it was so much more enjoyable."

By contrast, the Brookline kitchen was in the corner of the house, and the TV was on the second floor (thus, so were the kids), which often left the first floor deserted. The Glasses and Thompson agreed on a drastic change: Relocate the kitchen to the center of the house and reorder the rooms around it. It wasn't just an aesthetic upgrade they were after. Rather, Amy says, "we wanted to change the way we lived."

Thompson centralized the kitchen and designed from there. A pantry went behind it, leading to a new family room. Now, when the kids are enacting their own version of the Food Network's *Cupcake Wars*, they can easily call in Amy and Jeff, who might be watching TV, for taste testing. And when Amy's preparing a meal, she no longer feels isolated. Thompson also added a modernist-style deck off the family room. The original kitchen, which had windows with stained-glass panels,



The house (above) was once a two-family. Starting on facing page, clockwise from left: Amy Glass enjoys the new kitchen's central location; her kids got a place to study one floor up; the family room where the Glasses watch television is now just beyond the kitchen.



In their lounge-like office, the three Glass kids can study on comfy love seats (facing page) or at one of two desks (above left); the 16-year-old daughter got a bedroom makeover (above right) for her birthday, for which designer Kate Maloney Albani chose Moroccan-style pendants, geometric wallpaper, and a floral rug.

became the living room.

With the layout set, the couple hired interior designer Kate Maloney Albani to decorate. They wanted fresh, updated furnishings that would balance the home's traditional architecture. More important, they wanted rooms that were pulled together but practical. "I don't want to be stressed when the kids take drinks into the room or the puppy jumps on the couch," says Amy. And while she wasn't looking to make any bold design statements, she did want to push beyond her usual safe stylistic boundaries.

For the living room, where the family often gathers around a prized player piano (a birthday gift for Amy from Jeff), Cambridge-based Maloney Albani chose a warm taupe for the trim and covered the floor with a lush Tibetan-style

rug from Yayla in Cambridge. The neutral palette shows off the stained glass and the blue velvet sofa. Other pieces, including a custom one-arm chaise, are done in subdued tones but have interesting silhouettes. Julie Mussafer, owner of Jules Place in the South End, helped choose art throughout the home, including an abstract painting in the living room that boasts colors that play off the sofa.

Thompson reworked the second floor, too, establishing offices for Amy and Jeff, plus a communal kids' office. Maloney Albani gave that space a lounge-like feel with facing curved love seats from Twelve Chairs in the South End. They're big enough to seat two, which was important, because the kids often work on school projects with friends. The coffee table provides a solid work top for poster making and such, and the patterned rug from Company C is highly durable. There's no TV, but you might find the Glasses' son watching *South Park* on his computer here if one of his sisters is watching TV in the family room.

On the other side of the kids' room, Maloney Albani set up desks for the two teens, each with

industrial-style light fixtures and vintage photographs that reflect their interests. Turns out, they seldom sit there. Instead, Amy says, the older kids like to sprawl out on the love seats with their laptops.

The kids' bedrooms are another flight up. With lots of stairs to climb and a (purposefully) weak Wi-Fi signal, mostly they're used for sleep. Maloney Albani worked with the 16-year-old daughter, who got to make over her room for her birthday, to choose a color scheme as well as age- (and cost-) appropriate furnishings. To achieve a bohemian vibe, Maloney Albani covered an accent wall with tone-on-tone geometric wallpaper and the floor with a floral rug, and she hung Moroccan-inspired pendant lights that cast pretty shadows. Amy splurged on artwork by Sara Cole to hang above the bed, declaring it irresistible.

Everybody's happier these days, moving in and out of rooms, spending time together and, when they want, apart. "We walk around telling each other how much we love our house," says Amy. "That's a pretty great outcome." ■

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