



# Sleek Stylings

A couple builds their modern dream home in Belmont. BY RACHEL BOWIE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC ROTH

When Giles and Maud Guerin first moved from Paris to Boston five years ago, they settled on Beacon Street, unable to imagine life anywhere outside of the city. But a mere six months after unpacking their boxes, the Guerins were ready for a change. They began exploring neighboring suburban towns and quickly discovered that there were many options beyond downtown.

"We realized that one of the top advantages to being in Boston is that you can live outside the city and still have the benefits of being there," Giles says.

The couple, along with their two young sons, temporarily relocated to Cambridge, renting a Tudor-style house. Within two years, they decided the time was right to buy. Maud began an extensive search to find the right place for her family, and it wasn't long before she came across the perfect spot: a small Colonial in Belmont. But although the location was right, the style of the house was not. Maud remembered reading about the work of Stephen Chung, architect and design principal at a South End firm called Urbanica. "His work was exciting," Maud says. "We wanted [Stephen] to build our dream house."

The Guerins met with Chung and his design team to discuss the ideas they had for their future home. "Maud kept talking about a country home made of wood," Chung remembers. "She wanted something that would weather naturally and be very comfortable. At the same time, she wanted her home to be unique: open and full of light, but also private; a living, breathing house for a family."







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A specialist in contemporary design, Chung began plans for the project, but quickly realized it was a bigger job than he had anticipated. His original intention had been to renovate and update, but due to the limitations of the Colonial home, Chung decided it was best to start from scratch. Working closely with his design partner, Kamran Zahedi, and, of course, Maud herself, he made plans to begin construction on the home in the spring of 2005. The timing couldn't have been better—Maud was pregnant with her third child, due the following spring.

“There was a slight time pressure there,” Giles says with a laugh. “But we were up for the challenge.”

Prior to construction, Maud worked closely with Stephen to design a home built around convenience—she wanted to live comfortably, and also needed to find a way to accommodate the demands of daily life with her kids.

“It was very important to Maud that she be able to see the whole house from everywhere,” Giles says. “She could see every part of the yard if she wanted to, with all the windows and openings. When I'm reading here, I can see her in the kitchen or I can see who is arriving. It gives an impression of space.”

The end result is what Chung calls a “relaxed” French modern. He worked with Maud to collect a combination of contemporary furniture and authentic antique pieces to fill the home. One example is a beautiful antique Chinese table in the dining room with red acrylic chairs from Kartell. The sink in Maud's bathroom off the master suite is especially unique—from the Italian company Agape, it is a single piece of bent wood lined with glass to keep the water in. “There is always a bit of playfulness in the choices,” Chung says. “Small details that make you smile.”

One of those details is found in the dining room—a holographic light by Ingo Maurer appears and disappears depending on your location in the room. “Maud sees lights as sculptures and a chance to make little statements,” Chung says.

And having a voice is important to Maud in her home. Her favorite room is not what you would expect: The downstairs bathroom features chalkboard walls so that anyone who goes in can leave a message. “It's a funny idea for the kids to leave a note,” she laughs. “I remember when I was little, I used to think it was cool to leave messages. We can save and erase what we want, but the idea is to stay young forever.”

THIS PAGE (FROM LEFT): Plenty of light and warm wood furnishings make for a relaxing repose, not to mention a good hiding place; red accents welcome visitors to the sizable kitchen. OPPOSITE PAGE (FROM TOP LEFT): The home's super-modern exterior adds a cool flair to Belmont; homeowners Maud and Giles Guerin settle in with their two sons.









The home's exterior is also unique—Chung designed the house with a mirror covering the entire front side to reflect the beautiful trees around the site. Maud and Giles immediately loved the suggestion. “The mirror gives the impression of a garden inside the house,” Maud says.

Maud spent extra time working with Stephen on the details of the home—the garage has direct access to the kitchen so that groceries can easily be carried inside. Another feature is found in the boys' bedroom. They currently share the room, but Maud had Chung design it so that the room could easily be updated should a time come when each wants his own space.

“So far the boys want to be in the same room,” Giles says. “We didn't know if that would last, so we planned a way to separate the rooms if we need to. We put in two doors and two windows. For now, they want to be a family, but if that changes, we can handle it.”

Maud and Giles even found a way to treat themselves. Off the master suite, they built his and hers private decks to lounge on while enjoying a bit of personal space. Most important, the Guerins paid careful attention to how their family would evolve in the years to come. The four-story home includes an au-pair suite on the ground level, with a private entrance.

“We don't have an au pair right now,” Giles says. “But in case we ever do, she could watch the kids and still have a separate entrance, a bathroom, and everything she needs. Also, the kids can have some privacy when they get older too.”

The home took exactly a year to complete, thanks to the help of Kendall Rosenberger, the Guerins' contractor. “Many contractors balk when they hear about unconventional details,” Chung says. “Kendall is so knowledgeable about construction that he was always able to come up with solutions to all of my curious requests.”

And the Guerins are thrilled with their finished home. “It's just beyond our dreams,” Maud says. ♦

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THIS PAGE: A sleek bathroom epitomizes minimalist yet wholly livable chic; architect and design principal Stephen Chung in front of the mirror that covers the front side of the home. OPPOSITE PAGE: Pretty pink makes its way into the home's clean, white bedroom.