



# Artful Lodgers

A design team conjures a dream house that checks all the boxes for their collector clients.

WRITTEN BY ANH-MINH LE  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW GIAMMARCO

**Architecture:** Colin Brandt, Brandt Design Group **Interior Design:** Colleen Knowles, Colleen Knowles Interior Design  
**Home Builder:** Christopher Gregerson, Gregerson Custom Homes **Landscape Architecture:** Lisa Port, Banyon Tree Design Studio





The pivot door crafted from sapele wood welcomes guests into the entry. Colors in the clients' Tom Brennan painting—which hangs above an apothecary cabinet they inherited—appear in a custom rug by Driscoll Robbins Fine Carpets.

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nterior designer Colleen Knowles doesn't rely on snapshots to show the true nature and scale of a piece. As a result, she found herself deep in her clients' storage unit, inspecting their beloved art and furnishings to ascertain how to move forward with their new

Mercer Island home. It was filled with a lifetime of personal treasures, but one item in particular caught her eye: A midcentury walnut dining table with an acid-etched copper top by famed local furniture maker Harry Lunstead.

"The clients and I knew early on that this table would be the centerpiece of the design," recalls Knowles of the family heirloom she instantly recognized as Lunstead's work. "They consider it a special piece, and I agree." (The table is so cherished, in fact, that when they decided it should be larger to better suit the current home, the husband and his brother undertook the modifications themselves.)

The homeowners, an empty-nester couple, had purchased the parcel of land in the same community where they had raised their two sons. While they were still looking at properties, they invited architect Colin Brandt to join them on site visits to ensure that the type of residence they desired—intended to be their forever home—could indeed be built on the selected lot. In addition to lifestyle considerations, such as having the primary rooms on the main floor and creating spaces that accommodate guests, the priorities included showcasing the clients' art collection and emphasizing the waterfront vistas.

From the street, the structure, which is situated on a slope, presents as low-slung, compact and elegant. "It's an angular house, so the owners wanted to introduce soft and sinuous elements," says Brandt, who collaborated with landscape designer Lisa Port for the entry sequence, including its welcoming, undulating walkway. We wanted to provide a gracious approach, as opposed to just a straight stair down to the front door. It's more of an experience as you enter the house, and it gives visitors time to enjoy the space," she says. Concrete steps and retaining walls address the steep grade, with river rocks and a swath of grass adding texture. Port also placed native shrubs and trees—among them huckleberry, maple and Hinoki cypress, a species from Japan—all of which advance her goal of enhancing the architecture.

The contours of the walkway are echoed just inside the entry. Here, a curved wall punctuated by black-stained elm slats guides the eye to a living and dining space, which is lined with bi-fold glass doors and clerestory windows, providing the illusion that the home is floating above Lake Washington and the lush treetops swaying in the breeze. The rooms are designed to harmonize with the panorama. "There's not one thing that grabs your eye," says Knowles of the interiors. "Instead, it's a series of cohesive, special moments. Everywhere you look is delightful."

The staircase linking the home's two levels provides uninterrupted surfaces to display large-scale art. According to Knowles, the hand-embroidered Turkish ceremonial robe, another family heirloom, was quite a feat to hang, requiring multiple efforts by builder Christopher Gregerson, who worked in tandem with installer Tim Purtill of Atomic Art Services.

With an otherwise neutral palette established, Knowles drew on hues in the art for hits of color, like the deep-blue swivel chairs in the living room. The composition of the Lunstead table also informed design decisions in the open-plan kitchen, dining and living areas. Cases in point: A fireplace surround with metallic veining and bronze-toned accents in light fixtures and furniture legs.

The kitchen plays a prominent role in the house and needed to function for two (when it's only the homeowners) as well as for dozens (when they host gatherings), plus connect to the exterior. To that end, Brandt proposed an over-counter window that slides aside to join the kitchen with an alfresco eating area on the deck. The Calacatta Laza quartz countertop that runs between the spaces provides a seamless indoor-outdoor living experience.

Brandt incorporated the outdoors to phenomenal effect elsewhere, too. While house hunting, the clients encountered a home with expansive skylights that evoked a greenhouse feel. It left a lasting impression, and they requested something similar for their own abode. The architect obliged with a 4-by-14-foot skylight running the length of the primary bathroom.

By starting with the couple's art and keepsakes, the design team created a bespoke dwelling that, although new, has a sense of history. "This project is so specific to the clients," Brandt says. "They were involved throughout the process. When it was done, they really felt like it was their house. They moved in and they were instantly at home." ■



Custom swivel chairs can face the view or living room, which features a Patricia Edwards sofa, Robert James Collection coffee table, armchair from Dowel Furniture and rug by Driscoll Robbins Fine Carpets. The fireplace surround is Dekton from Cosentino.







**Above:** Architect Colin Brandt designed the kitchen with Abodian cabinets, Calacatta Laza quartz countertops and a custom hood. Lawson-Fenning stools are situated at the island. Glass-and-metal Sonneman pendants suspend overhead.

**Opposite:** The clients' Harry Lunstead walnut-and-copper table, a family heirloom, takes pride of place in the dining room. It is paired with Costantini Pietro chairs and illuminated by a Hammerton Studio chandelier that designer Colleen Knowles likens to an art piece.





Indoors meets outdoors thanks to a sliding Weather Shield window and a countertop that extends from the kitchen to the exterior bar. The deck is made with Apollo Composite Decking and is furnished with Vondom stools, Brown Jordan armchairs and an Emissary side table.

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—COLLEEN KNOWLES





**Right:** The powder room's curved wall and "pinched corner," as Knowles describes it, gives way to a custom suspended mirror and freestanding concrete sink tucked into marble from Ann Sacks. The sconce is by Tracy Glover Studio.

**Opposite:** In the primary bedroom, a custom bed is dressed in Legacy Home linens and joined by a Jaipur Living ottoman and Cerno light fixture. The mixed-media artwork is by Markian Olynyk.

