

reverential renovation

The student preserves the teacher's
vision in this Minneapolis home

BY MASON RIDDLE | PHOTOS BY ALEX STEINBERG

Home renovations are never easy, especially when the house in question was designed by a venerated architect. How to bring a mid-century home into the twenty-first century while respecting its pedigree? This was the question that faced Nancy and Bob Feldman when they purchased a 1963 split-entry home designed by James Stageberg.

Architect Stageberg is respected for his highly articulated, modernist homes defined by flat roofs, clean lines, banks of windows, and a hint of California style. He also taught at the University of Minnesota's School of Architecture for 40 years, training many of the Twin Cities top architects, including Dale Mulfinger and Tom Meyer.

The Feldmans were taken by his original vision. "The house had that sleek, modern feel, and I knew immediately that it had the quality of materials and design we had been looking for," explained Nancy. "I didn't know what it was, but as soon as I went in I knew this was it. We made an offer the same day."

Nancy, CEO of UCare Minnesota, and Bob, a recently retired electronics engineer, had lived only three blocks away for 17 years but had never noticed the Stageberg house. They had been looking for a new home with more space for hosting friends, colleagues, and overnight visits from their grown daughter. Both avid exercisers, they wanted to remain in their Longfellow neighborhood with its access to running and biking paths.

Even before they closed on the house, the Feldmans hired Tim Fuller, a principal of SALA architects and a former Stageberg student, to address a list of updates to their newfound love. Since architect and homeowners alike appreciated Stageberg's vision, they agreed to preserve the original design and materials wherever possible.

Original, high-quality materials include cedar exterior siding and redwood used in the interior window frames and in the tongue-and-groove ceiling spanning the living room, dining room, and kitchen. Floor-to-ceiling fireplaces in both levels inject texture and a bold sculptural presence into the minimal environment. The two-sided fireplace partially dividing the living room from the dining room was a design plus.





Architect Tim Fuller added built-in maple cabinetry in the living room to match the kitchen woodwork at the opposite end of the house, creating visual brackets for Stageberg's original vault.



Stageberg's original roofline comprises two parallel vaults with transom windows punctuating each end. The living room, dining room, and kitchen were located under one vault; three bedrooms and two baths were within the other.

"While the intent was to respect Stageberg's design, we did make fairly dramatic changes, particularly to the bedrooms and kitchen," says Fuller. On the upper level, two smaller bedrooms and a full bath were combined into a luxurious owner's bedroom suite. The expanded space added a walk-in closet and preserved floor-to-ceiling windows. An L-shaped cutout in the wall separating the sleeping chamber from the closet admits light from the original transom windows and mimics their shape. Original redwood window frames and trim-bands and oak flooring were refurbished to a fine sheen.

The original master bedroom became an office, its adjacent three-quarter bath converted to a powder room and a new linen closet. An illuminated display case replaced the original linen closet—one of Nancy's favorite changes. Visible from the kitchen and the entryway, it showcases the Feldmans' travel mementos such as stone fossils from Morocco.

On the lower level, Fuller added a spacious laundry and storage area to the utility room. A new slate path runs from the stairs to the rear outer wall, separating the updated playroom from the utility room while creating continuity with slate floors in the entryway above. Slate leads to the redone lower-level bathroom as well, contrasting with white subway-tile walls.

The project team chose such materials to align with Stageberg's original design. "This is not a true minimalist house, nor does it have a minimalist palette," Fuller says. "We decided to work with this palette of rich woods and materials."

Sara Whicher, a SALA intern architect and Fuller's assistant on the project, worked closely with the Feldmans to select finishing materials. The results of their efforts show: the powder room's floor-to-ceiling, multi-colored slate wall and oak flooring echo the adjacent entry; the kitchen's dark granite countertops contrast with cabinets of maple. An island with a sink, a dishwasher, and stools for three replaced the partial floor-to-ceiling wall that had divided the kitchen and dining room.

Interior designer Lucy Penfield, formerly of Min-



neapolis design firm GunkelmanFlesher, reinforced the home's warm, earth-toned colors. She also helped the Feldmans select clean-lined furniture compatible with a 1960s aesthetic but very much of the twenty-first century. "Lucy gave us great advice about using natural materials," says Nancy.

As homage to his teacher's original design, Fuller chose to suspend the cabinetry in the bathrooms, kitchen, and living room. "I am certain it was James's intention to have the roof appear to float," Fuller explains, referring to the transom windows. "I thought suspending the cabinets would increase that sense of openness and flow of light."

Fuller's re-design not only respects the original, it also highlights the home's subtle but fabulous details. "This house is an example of how original designs can be significantly reworked without destroying the original integrity of the house. In this case, it made a huge difference that it was so well-designed to begin with," says Fuller. "This house has some real intelligence and character, it was an absolute treat and a pleasure to work with it." **MH**

MASON RIDDLE WRITES ON THE ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN, AND THE VISUAL ARTS FOR LOCAL AND NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS.

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OPPOSITE PAGE The maple used in the island and cabinetry lightens the room and gives it a sleek, contemporary look. THIS PAGE, ABOVE Multi-colored slate and a rustic vessel sink give this powder room drama. RIGHT A cutout that mimics the shape of the transom windows lends light and distinction to the spacious master suite.

