



(ABOVE) THIS OUTDOOR SPACE IS AN ENGAGING VISUAL. TO ADD LEVITY TO THE CONCRETE WALLS AND NEWLY-BUILT WOOD DECK, ELIN PLACED BRIGHTLY-COLORED FURNISHINGS THROUGHOUT THE SPACE. MEANWHILE, TWO CREATIVE LIGHTING OPTIONS SET THE AMBIANCE EVEN FURTHER. SOLAR-POWERED MINI CHINESE LANTERNS ARE DRAPED OVER THE POLES AND RECESSED LIGHTING IS SET IN THE OVERHANG. "THE RECESSED LIGHTING IS ON DIMMERS SO WE CAN CREATE THE MOOD IN THE EVENINGS," ELIN SAYS.

A Breath of Fresh Air

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 Styling by ELIN WALTERS

A designer breathes new life into the exterior of her own Midcentury Modern home that long ago lost its historical identity.

(TOP) WEIGHING HER LOVE OF MIDCENTURY MODERN AGAINST HER APPRECIATION FOR A CONTEMPORARY LOOK, ELIN WALTERS DECIDED TO PAINT THE BRICK ON THE EXTERIOR. "WE DEBATED IT, BUT IN THE END DECIDED THAT WE SIMPLY LIKED IT BETTER PAINTED," ELIN SAYS. "I KNOW THAT MIDCENTURY MODERN PURISTS WOULD CHALLENGE US ON THAT ONE AND AS A DESIGNER ADVISING OTHERS, I ENCOURAGE THINKING HARD ABOUT ALTERING ORIGINAL ELEMENTS IN A HOUSE."

AFTER FIRST SEEING THE MIDCENTURY MODERN HOME her family would purchase, the thoughts of owner and interior designer at Exactly Designs, Elin Walters, were: "Oh boy, this needs a lot of work but we can do it!" The residence, located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, had a color scheme that she describes as "atrocious" (burgundy, green and blue), dispiriting landscaping, an eyesore chain link fence around the backyard and a clunky porch.

Perhaps most tragically, the home had lost its historical identity. "It strayed from its roots," Elin says, "and didn't have any visual appeal or interest ... or fun." She came up with an artful design that included redoing the porch and landscaping, adding an addition and constructing a deck and outdoor living space. The home now blends architecturally with the rest of the Midcentury Modern neighborhood, but has an intriguing color scheme and landscaping details that make it truly stand apart.

CURB APPEAL

Seeking a color palette that would create contrast and sophistication, Elin and her husband settled on gray for the exterior of the home—along with a surprising accent of orange, which she used for the door and a fun stripe above the gutters. "Orange is our favorite color, and although we didn't want to overdo it, we thought a few pops would add some energy," she says. They demolished the existing wood porch and rebuilt it with concrete and metal, while also removing the disorganized landscaping and replacing it with built-in cement board planters.

One of the more distinctive elements of the home's new exterior are ten extruded metal tubes (five projecting on each side of the porch roof) that extend the porch's reach and mimic a similar extension out back. Elin found particular satisfaction in restoring the large picture windows in the front of the house. "Restoring the windows and the glass front door brings our home back to its original form," she says. "It's the true midcentury fashion aesthetic to take the outdoors in."



TWO SHINY ALUMINUM POSTS ARE JOINED BY EXTRUDED METAL TUBING AS A RAILING ON THE NEW PORCH. THE CEILING PANELS, A SANDWICH OF TWO LAYERS OF ALUMINUM OVER PVC, VIRTUALLY DISAPPEAR ABOVE THE POURED CONCRETE FLOOR. "THE ORIGINAL PORCH ALSO HAD TWO PARTIAL LOUVERED WALLS; WE INCLUDED UPDATED VERSIONS OF THOSE, ADDING BOTH TO THE PRIVACY AND THE DESIGN AESTHETIC," ELIN SHARES.



(ABOVE) THE NEWLY-BUILT DECK CONNECTS THE GARAGE (THE WALL ON THE LEFT) AND THE ADDITION TO THE HOUSE (THE WALL ON THE RIGHT).

(RIGHT) TWO BERTOIA DIAMOND CHAIRS GIVEN TO THE FAMILY BY ELIN'S STEPSISTER ADD A LIGHTHEARTED, CHEERY NOTE TO THE DECK. "SHE HAD THEM IN HER GARAGE AND WASN'T GOING TO USE THEM," ELIN SAYS. "IRONICALLY, THEY WERE ALREADY TURQUOISE, WHICH MATCHES THE IKEA TABLE WE HAVE OUT THERE AS WELL."

(BOTTOM RIGHT) THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE HAS A LINE OF BOXWOOD, WHICH SOFTENS THE BRICK AND ADDS THE FRESHNESS OF GREEN. IT'S ALSO WONDERFULLY LOW MAINTENANCE. "I WISH I COULD SAY THAT I ENJOY GARDENING, BUT I REALLY DON'T!" ELIN SAYS. "ASIDE FROM PULLING A FEW WEEDS AND PLANTING A FEW COLORFUL ANNUALS IN THE SPRING AND SUMMER, THE LANDSCAPING IS VIRTUALLY MAINTENANCE-FREE, JUST THE WAY I LIKE IT."

DECK LIFE

When the family first purchased the home, the space between the garage and the house was a concrete pad and the rest of the yard was enclosed with an ugly chain-link fence. "In order to improve the home's usability, we added an addition and a deck," Elin says. "The deck connects the garage and our house and creates an outdoor living space." Elin's husband built the deck and used treated lumber that has since been stained a beautiful cedar color. The brainchild of Elin's stepfather, break up the concrete wall and soften the look. "We knew we wanted plants and green and toyed with a live wall," Elin says. "This was the solution." The planters have metal sleeves fabricated to slip over standard plastic hanging planters and, since the family decided to leave the metal unsealed, they've weathered over time, creating a beautiful rusty patina.





WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT UPDATES AND RENOVATIONS TO OUTDOOR AREAS? BE SURE TO CHECK OUT OUR EXTERIOR DESIGN & AND LANDSCAPING ISSUE, COMING SOON!



(TOP LEFT) A VARIETY OF LOW, ALL-SEASON EVERGREENS WERE CHOSEN FOR THE PLANTERS. "IT GIVES US GREEN NO MATTER THE SEASON, AND IN THE SPRING AND SUMMER WE ADD COLORFUL FLOWERS," ELIN SAYS. A LITTLE TREE WAS SELECTED BECAUSE IT REMINDS ELIN OF A BONSAI (ALBEIT A GIANT ONE). SHE SAYS, "FOR THE PLANTS, WE TRIED TO BRING IN A VARIETY OF HEIGHTS FOR VISUAL INTEREST, BUT NOT TOO MANY HIGH ONES BECAUSE WE DIDN'T WANT TO COVER UP THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE."

(TOP RIGHT) ELIN LEFT THE DIY HANGING PLANTER BOXES UNSEALED SO THEY WOULD AGE OVER TIME. AS SHE WATERS THE PLANTS IN THE SUMMER, SHE APPRECIATES THE ARTISTRY AND VARIANCE OF THE NATURAL RUSTING PROCESS. "EACH DAY IS A NEW ARTWORK!" SHE SAYS. SHE PLANTS THE BOXES EACH SEASON. IN THE SUMMER, SHE HAS VARIOUS CASCADING AND SPIKY PLANTS. IN THE WINTER, SHE FILLS THEM WITH EVERGREENS.

(BOTTOM) IN KEEPING WITH A MODERN THEME, THE PORCH ROOF CANTILEVERS OVER A CONCRETE POURED PATIO. THE FASCIA OF THE PORCH IS CLAD IN THE SAME JAMES HARDIE PANEL THAT COVERS THE FASCIA AND EXTERIOR WALLS OF THE ADDITION ON THE BACK OF THE HOUSE, MAKING THE DESIGN CONSISTENT THROUGHOUT THE RESIDENCE.



Two turquoise Bertoia Diamond chairs give a delightful pop of color and are perfect for enjoying a fire in the fireplace that Elin found on Houzz. "It was fully rusted with a gorgeous, simple form," Elin says. "The fireplace gave me the idea to let the hanging planters rust as well." The space has created a haven that the Walters find themselves retreating to in the spring, summer and fall evenings, both as a family and with guests.

Now the residence's exterior has a completely new identity, one that intersects its past heritage with a bold and modern interpretation. "People often tell us upon arriving for the first time at our house that 'of course I knew which one was yours as I pulled up'," Elin shares. "I love that." 🌿