



Designer (and *Western Living* Designer of the Year) Juli Hodgson was brought onboard with graduate architect Allan Peters to make the space work for the family of six. It started with the introduction of a quiet entranceway, with sparkling Bocci lights overhead, a cozy den on one side and Johnson's home office on the other. A gallery-like library, lined with built-in bookcases and outfitted with white leather reading chairs, is now the much-needed transition zone between the more intimate rooms in the front home and the open-concept space in the back.

What now is a great room of kitchen, dining area and living space was once seven rooms, including a master bedroom and two bathrooms. With the walls knocked out, Hodgson and Peters had to come up with a creative way to provide support without resorting to bulky, unattractive pillars.

The inspiration came from one of Dixon and Johnson's favourite paintings by the late artist David Bierk. The still life is framed with steel panels—and there was the solution. I-beams of hot-rolled steel (the black carbon surface a result of the heated rolling process) are the stand-in, and introduce a motif seen throughout the house: as bookshelf accents in the library, on risers on the stairway and as supports for the Christian Woo-designed, 21-foot dining room table.

Small windows were knocked out and replaced with over 40 feet of bifold doors, allowing the room to open out to the surrounding patios in summer—an effect enhanced by the use of basalt floors inside and out. Peters's clever suggestion of using planters instead of railings on the terraced patio leading down to the backyard keeps sightlines clear to the putting green—complete with sand trap—as well as tennis and basketball courts in the gardens below.

Before the renovations were begun, landscape designers Paul Sangha and Claire Kennedy were

brought in to rethink the entire property, including planting over 80 new trees throughout the property and designing a kitted-out outdoor kitchen pavilion next to the pool. To shorten the distance to the change room, Hodgson designed a spa on the lower level that opens out to the pool. Adjacent to the fitness room (featuring, among other pieces, a state-of-the-art Power Plate machine), the cool blue-tiled spa has a steam room, double shower and infrared sauna.

Dixon had started the renovation partnership with Hodgson with a warning. "I told her: No white walls," laughs Dixon. Hodgson, who's best known for her bright and airy modern (and very white) spaces, took it in stride. "Yes, my favourite colour is white," she laughs, "but we made it work."

As Hodgson promised, white is almost absent from the finished home. A main-floor powder room is a striking mix of chocolate brown walls and glowing onyx sink. The main living areas are warmed with a putty-grey paint on the walls and sparkling pewter-coloured glass tiles in the kitchen. Solid walnut cabinetry gives the media room on the lower level a grounded feel.

There's also a playful side to the colour. Johnson's business is gold mining, so Hodgson found ways to acknowledge it in the design. At the side entrance, a spectacular Italian chandelier, layered in 18-karat gold leaf, hangs down two storeys. And in the spa, accent tiles are topped in white gold leaf. In the media room downstairs, there's sparkle of a different sort. As a farewell gift, a contractor gave the family a disco ball, now hung with pride over the dedicated dance floor.

And finally, that bubbling stream: French doors in Dixon's study open over a waterfall to capture the sound, while a stairway meanders right down to the creek itself. What was once a neglected feature is now a perfect complement to the natural, airy, magical space that Peters and Hodgson have created. *wl* See SOURCES.

A Platner table and six red-cushioned chairs provides a more intimate gathering spot (opposite). A Warhol painting hangs prominently in Christine Dixon's study (top). The Christian Woo-designed table is supported by steel I-beams (centre), the inspiration for which comes from the David Bierk painting behind it. A massive five-metre Corian counter in the kitchen (bottom) hosts an annual *Iron Chef* competition hosted by Clive Johnson. Last year's theme? Champagne.



**DESIGNER TIPS**

**Start with the Art**

If an artwork is challenging enough to excite a gallery, it might cause trouble in your family room. Bringing artwork home has always been a quandary. Here's how to invite authentic paintings, photographs and sculptures into a room.

**GIVE IT ELBOW ROOM** Stylist Steven Schelling suggests white walls and minimal furniture for a gallery effect. "For a more homey feel, investigate all the shades of grey and brown. Dark walls can make a small space feel larger."

**MATCHING IS FOR SOCKS** Don't let

a colour scheme dictate what art you buy. Nearly everything else in the room is more likely to fall out of fashion.

**LET IT SPEAK FOR ITSELF** If you have to tell visitors how much it cost, you just lost its value. (Besides, A-listers will recognize quality and offer a knowing nod.)

**LIGHT IT RIGHT** Hire a lighting expert. Says designer Juli Hodgson, "There's nothing worse than art with hot spots."

**BE HONEST** Consider how you actually live in a given room. Ask, first, what wall you always gaze at. And then ask why your favourite photograph isn't looking back at you.