

BY SUSAN NYE PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATRINA MOJZESZ, TOP KAT PHOTOGRAPHY

STORYTELLING THROUGH DESIGN

AN ARTFUL UPDATE WITH STUDIO SAGE





The original structure was built in the 1980s. "We had the great fortune to partner with clients who approached the project with our same curiosity and intention to take this existing structure and give it new energy."
-Amanda Raymond, Principal Designer, Studio Sage.

Quartered cherry slab cabinets with a natural finish are the centerpiece of the kitchen. Panelized state-of-the-art appliances, a base pull-out spice unit, tray divider, and floating shelves make the space as functional as it is beautiful.





Above: A once-vaulted ceiling was closed off to create an office space, a must-have for today's work-from-home lifestyle. Rugs by Little River Oriental Rugs.

Below: A mesh-back mosaic shower wall selected by the homeowners is the perfect focal point in this custom shower.

Designing a home's interior, or even a single room, is a big responsibility. "Designers are storytellers," says Amanda Raymond, owner and principal designer at Studio Sage. "We tell our clients' stories—what they love, how they live." She adds, "All of us at Studio Sage share a passion for design and for our clients. We know that good design can do more than create beautiful surroundings; it can make life easier and better."

For a recent renovation in Sunapee, a high priority was set on family-friendly comfort and durability. "The family wanted a warm and welcoming space that was easy to maintain and fit their busy lives," Amanda says. A second home, the homeowner explains, "Our house was built in the 1980s and we were really ready for a change. The very awkward, original kitchen wasn't working for us. The bathrooms had never been updated plus we needed a powder room and a larger mudroom for all our gear. We wanted our house to match the beauty of the surrounding environment and the needs of our active family." Amanda adds, "Low maintenance

is a common thread in our practice. Our clients are on the mountain in winter and in the lake during the summer. I've yet to meet a homeowner with a strong desire to spend a lot of time fussing and maintaining their vacation home."

Communication Is Key

Good design starts and ends with dynamic, ongoing collaboration between the designer, the client, and the contractor. "Communication is key," says Amanda. GraceHill Construction served as general contractor on the project. "New build or remodel—creating a home for someone is a very intimate experience. The client



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brings us into their lives and shares details of their lifestyle.” Wary of buzzwords, Amanda asks lots of questions and uses lots of visuals to understand what the client actually means by Scandinavian ski house or lake retreat.

Renovation, addition, or new build, Amanda knows it is a very stressful time for the client. Thousands, sometimes hundreds of thousands, of dollars are involved. Especially with remodels, there are always surprises and too many are far from happy ones. Throughout COVID, price hikes and supply-chain issues have created constant nightmares for homeowners, designers, and contractors.

The majority of Studio Sage projects take somewhere between 9 and 18 months. From quick phone calls to longer on-site or Zoom meetings, frequent, at times almost daily, communications are an important part of the process. Good news or bad, Amanda earns her clients’ trust by staying in constant contact. “Design is a highly personal experience,” she says, “By spending time with our clients and understanding their lifestyle, we help them build a home they love and can live in—happily and comfortably.”

Balancing Form and Function

For this and all projects, Studio Sage strives to be experimental with different materials and then seamlessly integrate the various pieces into a cohesive design. For this lake house, clean, modern lines were dynamically paired with different textures, graphic shapes, and hints of bold color. Throughout the renovation, the team worked meticulously to balance form and function. The new flooring, countertops, cabinets, tile, fixtures, and furnishings had to be both beautiful and stand up to the wear and tear of an active family.

“Within our projects, we develop a hierarchy to focus on the spaces where our clients gather and spend most of their time,” says Amanda. As

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Slab doors and drawers on this custom vanity provide a sleek foundation for the hardware, a mix of brass and black metals.



with most, the kitchen is the heart of this Sunapee home. Studio Sage collaborated with Timeless Kitchens to create a beautiful, open space that combines a modern esthetic with lots of warm wood and state-of-the-art appliances in a family-friendly layout. The dated bathrooms were next on the list. A much-needed overhaul brought them into the 21st century. The remainder of the house was updated with fresh paint and new furnishings.

In addition to the natural beauty surrounding the house, Amanda and her team were delighted to discover the client's wonderful art collection. "Any collection, especially art, can bring magic to an interior. Art is deeply personal, and the family's collection is an integral part of their story," she says. In addition, Amanda brought in local artist Jay Aubertin to create two large sculptures for the fireplace. She adds, "Our job was to curate all of these pieces and integrate them into a beautifully renewed space." And the homeowners? They couldn't be happier with this artful update. **TW**

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