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The family room, featuring a vaulted ceiling and wall of windows, is decorated in warm, textured neutrals.



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Shazalynn Cavin-Winfrey sits in her foyer beside a portrait of herself and her children.

ODE TO NAPA

Shazalynn Cavin-Winfrey harkens back to her Western roots in an inspired redesign of her Alexandria home

BY JULIE SANDERS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY LYDIA CUTTER

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Designer Shazalynn Cavin-Winfrey is not from around here. This fact is clear not only from her slight Southwestern twang but also from the fresh, inventive design sensibility she's brought to her Alexandria, Virginia, home.

Nestled on a street of traditional houses, it stands out as an inviting stucco structure that's at home in its surroundings yet maintains its originality. The house tells the story of the designer's desire to connect with her roots in West Texas and New Mexico, and of her direct inspiration: a trip to Napa Valley that gave her a sense of the architecture she wanted.

But before the trip to Napa, before the vision of home, Cavin-Winfrey and her husband bought the house with the goal of lightly renovating and flipping it. A "rambler gone bad" as she describes it, the house was a mishmash of designs and

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The foyer opens to a study that doubles as a space for entertaining.



The front facade evokes the architecture of Napa Valley.



In the kitchen, counter-height upholstered benches provide comfortable seating for after-school snacks.

periods. According to Cavin-Winfrey, they bought it for the light. "We're from out West and light is really important to us. You just don't get the same light in structures here. This house had 11 skylights!"

The skylights remain—but they may be the only vestiges of the home's previous incarnation. At about the time the couple moved in with their two young children, the real estate market tanked and they realized they "were there for the long haul." They made some minor upgrades and then proceeded to fall in love with the neighborhood and the property. Six years later, they embarked on the renovation that would transform the 3,500-square-foot house into the dream home Cavin-Winfrey had always wanted.

Today, a roomy entryway leads to the living room—the only space as yet unfinished in the house. The foyer originally led straight back to the kitchen, but Cavin-Winfrey closed off that opening to create privacy for the back of the house.

The foyer also opens onto the study. "This was a badly designed kit room with a glass ceiling and a glass wall facing the front yard," Cavin-Winfrey recalls. "We never used it." They replaced the glass with a real ceiling and a wall of framed windows, adding open shelving between the study and the living room to admit light. A custom elm table accommodates spillovers when the couple entertains; it's also the spot where the designer works and her kids study. "It's a multi-functional space," she says. "I preach to my clients about 100 percent utilization. This is not a huge house but every square inch is used." For example, pocket doors have been installed throughout to gain usable space.

A spacious master suite on the ground floor offers the couple a calm, neutral retreat. Cavin-Winfrey designed under-sink cabinetry out of rustic reclaimed wood for the bath, juxtaposed with traditional cabinets and Moonstone marble countertops and floors. The space is "a mix of sleek and organic that's characteristic of who we are," she says. "Our humble roots coupled with our urban setting."

The family room, with its vaulted ceiling and near floor-to-ceiling windows, overlooks a backyard that will soon house a swimming pool and patio. A soft, neutral palette makes the room inviting while grasscloth on walls and ceiling adds texture.

Formerly a chef with a degree from the Culinary Institute of America, Cavin-Winfrey had strong opinions on the design of her kitchen, down to the use of a separate refrigerator for dairy, which "leaches flavor from other foods," she explains. The kitchen was reconfigured from a smaller galley kitchen and powder room; it balances modern and traditional elements with clean-lined, Wood-Mode cabinetry in a gray striae finish and an amber glaze that keeps the gray from feeling bleak. Countertops and an integrated sink of luminous Mother of Pearl granite complement the look. An adjacent butler's pantry includes a laundry closet, beverage refrigerator and full bath. The entry from the garage is now a mudroom containing a closet and an organized wall of drawers to hold wrapping paper and crafts.

The stairwell separates the kitchen from the dining room (formerly the home's fifth bedroom), where three custom glass tables flank windows lined with banquettes, restaurant-style; Cavin-Winfrey pushes them together for

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The dining room provides restaurant-style seating that caters to family and company alike.



The spacious master bedroom is a refuge for relaxing.



Built-in toe-to-toe beds are built along one wall to conserve space in the cozy guest room.

entertaining. Pickled oak floors throughout keep things light yet elegant.

Upstairs, the couple's children, nine and 11, enjoy the run of the place, with playful bedrooms and a gathering space with a TV. Two small baths have been converted into one large one, with organic slate walls and indestructible Corian counters.

The compact guestroom is another highlight, boasting beds built-in foot to foot along one wall with storage drawers underneath. Vibrant, colorful fabric in a whimsical pattern by Cowtan & Tout on both walls and windows lends the room its singular, cozy aspect.

"The house is sort of identical to the structures in Napa," says Cavin-Winfrey. "Even down to the parapet wall I designed to add visual interest on the front [façade]." She adds, "It's been a long road but I'm finally in love with my house."

Lydia Cutter is a McLean, Virginia-based photographer.

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