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mix of painted and natural wood within each room helps the entire space flow. The clean lines of the Shaker-style cabinets complement the simplicity of this contemporary look. As Kaplan explains, Shaker "is technically an old design, but it is perfect for a more modern interior." Repeating architectural elements in unexpected ways also adds to the cohesiveness. For example, Kaplan designed the living room built-ins herself, with the cabinet doors echoing the irregular X pattern of the custom-made rug.

Find an Anchor

Focal points create visual interest in a space. While on a trip to Miami, Kaplan spotted a focal point she thought would fit the couple's design sense perfectly. The exotic painting of a rhinoceros by a 1930s French painter became the centerpiece of the study, and Kaplan designed the room around it. She picked up on hints of orange in the animal and carried them over into the vivid furniture and mahogany cabinets. Relying on a single piece to anchor a room is not for the faint-hearted, but it brings a space to life.

Create a Surprise

After two years of hard work and collaboration, Kaplan succeeded in fulfilling her clients' vision of a sophisticated contemporary interior space. The exterior of the home still projects a traditional aesthetic. "You can look at it from the outside and see another beautiful, grand Victorian Newton home," she says. "However, once you step through the front door into the foyer, you are looking at something that feels much more akin to a Soho loft." *Jill Litner Kaplan Interiors, 381 Highland Street, West Newton, 617-558-7751, jilllitnerkaplan.com.*



JOINING FORCES
GAIL RICE, ANTHONY PARTIACI,
PIERRE MATTA

Home Shopping Network

Design collaborative spreads along Needham Street.

Gail Rice is working to realize her vision of a design collaborative on Needham Street, creating a full range of home design services and products with the cooperation of other independent stores.

When Rice opened the 6,000-square-foot showroom of Resource Design in early 2010, she understood the economic times demanded a creative response. So, she partnered with Pierre Matta, whose handcrafted furniture and cabinets grace the showroom. Rice also began reaching out to nearby stores, seeking opportunities for collaboration that would benefit the stores—and attract more clients.

One might think the connections would have been obvious: a client redoing a kitchen might start in Resource Design's showroom, look at appliances next door at Poirier, shop for fixtures at Splash, and consider floor coverings and backsplash options at Ideal Tile. Although the stores share a common parking lot, they had not worked to collaborate before. Now they do.

And the network continues to evolve, extending outward and inward. Some of Rice's partners are located beyond Needham Street and outside of Newton, while her own showroom has become a gallery of other vendors' appliances and wares. "It's a concept that's working," says Rice. "Especially in this roller-coaster economy, it's beneficial for us to share and refer customers." *Resource Design, 244 Needham Street, 617-877-1892, resourcedesignco.com. Pierre Matta Handcrafted Furniture and Cabinetry, 244 Needham Street, 508-658-1522, pierrematta.com. ROBIN REGENSBURG*

TURNING TRADITIONAL INTO MODERN

ACHIEVE A CONTEMPORARY LOOK IN YOUR HOME—EVEN IF YOUR BUDGET IS MORE BARGAIN BASEMENT THAN BACK BAY.

Mix up eras. "Modern" can mean a contemporary abstract piece created last month in a South End studio; it can also refer to a mid-century classic. A Knoll table from the 1960s found on Craigslist can be combined with a piece of Room & Board furniture to give a room more personality and interest.

Spend carefully. Especially with modern design, it is not necessary to use all high-

priced merchandise. Blend the high with the low. Invest money in the most important piece in a room, such as a sofa, and hunt for more inexpensive accessories to complement it.

Less is more. Simplify space with fewer objects and pieces of furniture. A sleeker and more modern look means getting rid of unnecessary accessories and focusing on a handful of unique pieces that express who you are.

Look for clean lines. Find furniture with simple and sleek edges and lines. Buy a couch with straight arms, rather than softer rounded ones. Stay away from items that scream "ornate."

Go big. Hanging contemporary, large-scale artwork, even in a small space, can give the room a great modern sensation. Splurge on French abstract pieces or browse the shelves of IKEA.



Contemporary Creation

How a local designer transformed a former Victorian barn into a chic, modern space in West Newton Hill. **BY TIFFANY SMITH**

As interior designer Jill Litner Kaplan puts it, “designers are there to help people solve problems.” The design challenge may be as simple as organizing a bookcase or more complex, like designing an entire house. When Kaplan took on one such project in West Newton Hill, she faced a conundrum: how to take a large, gutted space that had once been the barn of a late-nineteenth-century Victorian estate and style it to fit the modern sensibilities of a Back Bay family with two children and one on the way.

“In our very first meeting, the couple said they wanted a house with clean lines, that was comfortable and warm,” says Kaplan. And she set about creating a contemporary space in an unlikely place.

Embrace Color

As this house exhibits, modern design does not have to be exclusively neutral and monotone. These homeowners love color (especially green) and one of Kaplan’s challenges involved translating their desired atmosphere into a working color palette. Neutrals form the basis of the home’s design, but then she layered them with intense colors and textured fabrics, brightening the space and making it come alive.

Use Striking Architecture

One of the most prominent aspects of this design is the use of unique cabinetry throughout the home. The