

The background of the cover is an abstract painting. It features a dominant blue color palette, with various shades of blue and teal. There are expressive, gestural strokes in red, yellow, and white. A prominent red stroke runs horizontally across the middle, with a yellow stroke just below it. Several thin, curved lines in purple, yellow, and white sweep across the composition, adding a sense of movement and dynamism. The overall texture appears to be that of a thick, impasto paint application.

élan

CELEBRATING THE ARTS | MARCH 2018



HOME REMODELING

Let the Sun Shine In

SUNROOMS COMPLEMENT A RANGE OF ARCHITECTURAL STYLES | BY JOHN BYRD

“Sunrooms remain a popular way to add living space to a home in our community,” says Sonny Nazemian, founder and CEO of Michael Nash Kitchen and Homes. “Northern Virginia’s temperate climate assures a degree of affordable comfort, but the bigger draw may be the visual linkage to the outside that a sunroom can uniquely provide. There’s an aesthetic dimension that inspires garden spaces with focal points and a whole host of indoor-outdoor play spaces that seem to naturally evolve.”

Of course, one must be on top of building code issues. Fairfax County introduced a model energy code several years ago and the rules on how much “glazing” can be added to a home are complicated,

and still being debated. “Experience really counts in this arena,” Nazemian adds.

Since forming his company more than 25 years ago, Nazemian estimates that he has built 12 to 15 sunrooms per year, many of which have won national honors from the likes of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry, the National Association of Home Builders and (on a dozen occasions) the coveted Chrysalis award which is sponsored annually by Qualified Remodeled Magazine.

“What’s fascinating to me is the diversity of homeowner requirements,” he adds. “Properly designed and planned, a sunroom can complement an enormous range of architectural styles.”

“Sunrooms are an immensely popular way to add living space. Our temperate climate assures a degree of affordable comfort—but the bigger draw may be the visual linkage to the outside.”

—Sonny Nazemian



VAULTED CEILING BRINGS IN GARDEN SETTING

The Sherrys had occupied their home in Annandale for more than forty years. “We’re the original owners,” Barbara Sherry recalls. “But I had come to realize that we were not using our back deck much and that our dining room was too small. Also, I wanted a better view of our backyard.”

Enlarging the dining room had always been a priority for Barbara, but set-back requirements suggested that the feasibility of any large-scale modification seemed uncertain. Nonetheless, the Sherrys sought advice from Nazemian, who had previously remodeled their kitchen.

“Once we assessed the site issues, several possibilities became clear,” Nazemian says. “A sunroom off the back integrated into a reconfigured open floor plan would meet a lot of the Sherrys’ goals. We could eliminate interior walls between the living room and dining room and open up sightlines. We also saw that a vaulted ceiling would make the rear elevation feel substantially larger.”

The core problem was the rear elevation, which

served as a bearing wall for the entire second floor. To make the footprint expansion feasible, designers would have to insinuate a horizontal support beam balanced on vertical supports between the first and second floor.

Since the home’s primary living area was several feet above grade, excavating a foundation for the new wing presented an opportunity. “Engineering necessities can yield a space-planning bonus,” Nazemian notes. “By enlarging the foundation, we created a cavity under the addition that now houses the HVAC system needed for cooling and heating the new space.”

The larger challenge was forming a new interior that would accommodate a 12-ft. x 40-ft. sunroom with a 15-ft. ceiling, and 30 feet of running window walls crowned by glass-facing arches. “The structural issue was daunting,” Nazemian recalls. “To eliminate the rear bearing wall without relying on a middle post, the support beam would have to span 30-ft. from one side of the room to the other.”

To accomplish this, Nazemian specified an industrial-grade I-beam attached to similarly calibrated vertical beams. The vertical supports were concealed behind opposite walls on either side of the open space.

Page 43: To keep the new space “open,” the remodeler employed an industrial-grade I-beam that spans 30 feet between walls that conceal vertical posts. “As one enters the house from the front,” Barbara Sherry says, “your eye moves...into an expanding horizon. It’s very effective dramatically.”

Inset - BEFORE: Annandale interior

Above: On the east side, a double French door provides access to a flagstone patio with a water feature. Gravel-covered trails link several garden focal points.

Inset: The addition’s west side links to a new Trex-clad grilling deck. Since the home’s primary living area is several feet above grade, the designer excavated a cavity under the sunroom to house an adjunct HVAC system.

Opposite: The sunroom’s interior combines colors and textures that accentuate a visual continuum. Wood patterned tile flooring provides an earthy offset to white trimmed divided light windows; bronze-hued leaf-shaped ceiling fans present an appropriate design motif.



"We're spotlighting an unusually wide and open area that incorporates almost half of the rear elevation," Nazemian says. "The lack of visible support is the defining effect of new space." Or, as Barbara observes: "As you enter the house your eye moves out and up into an expanding horizon. It almost like an optical illusion—and pretty stunning."

Meanwhile, with double French doors and side lights on opposite elevations, the addition offers ready access to a pair of well-articulated outdoor places: a new Trex-clad grilling deck on the west side and a flagstone patio with water feature on the east. From there, pebble-strewn trails meander past forsythia, hosta and old growth holly trees.

Back inside, natural light abounds in all directions. Saffron-hued walls complement pearl-stained crown molding and off-white trimwork. For added visual cohesion, the original oak flooring have been replaced with maple. A Casablanca fan overhead softly stirs the air.

"My family just loves the improvements," Barbara says. "There's an abundance of quiet sitting places, yet the sunroom also supports easy interactions and large parties. We're pleased at how well the changes suit our current needs."

SUNROOM SEGUES TO OUTDOOR SPACES

Sanjay and Deepika had occupied their Colonial-style home in Vienna for 14 years before talk of change began to percolate. "The house backs into a lovely wooded setting, so the lack of views was a wasted opportunity," Sanjay recalls. "We recognized early-on how new square footage might address these possibilities... but didn't know what was feasible."

A chance encounter with Sonny Nazemian, however, unleashed a series of inspired ideas, such as:

- A Trex-surfaced decking system that would accommodate traffic between the old family room and the new sunroom;
- Eye-catching deck design would be elaborated in contrasting beige and redwood slats that would be installed in alternating diagonal and parallel lines;
- A flared three-way staircase would link the deck to a ground-level flagstone patio;
- A second-level master bedroom balcony would be above the sunroom;
- Custom-designed benches and planters on both levels would define gathering zones.

"The Fairfax County model energy code determines how much 'glazing' can be added to a home. Experience counts in this arena. But what's really fascinating is the diversity of owner requirements. Properly designed and planned, a sunroom can complement an enormous range of architectural styles."

—Sonny Nazemian





Above: A flared three-way staircase links the deck to a ground-level flagstone patio; and the deck's benches and planters are custom-designed to support Deepika's love of flowers.

Opposite: Duotone slats installed in alternating diagonal and parallel lines lend visual interest to the new deck immediately accessible from the sunroom.



Of course, again, nothing gets built in Fairfax County that's not in strict code-compliance. "In this case, the backyard was mostly fill dirt," Nazemian recalls, "which lacked the density needed to support a structure of this size."

Following soil tests, the project team realized that they would need to excavate down fully nine feet to properly secure the new addition. Since a traditional basement would be cost-prohibitive, Nazemian specified "footings" linked to a retaining wall built at the far end of the new footprint. The plan saved 40 percent on the cost of adding a full basement.

Other engineering feats were, likewise, deftly executed:

- A horizontal I-beam was mounted on vertical supports and concealed in the sunroom walls that provided the under-girding needed for the master bedroom balcony. The ceiling's slope even allowed rainwater drainage.
- The 1243-ft. x 20-ft. flagstone patio, while flat to the ground, was secured by a concrete foundation.

More importantly, the upper deck fulfills a long unrequited owner vision. "It's very private," Sanjay says. "My wife and I can sit quietly and enjoy a cup of coffee or tea, or even practice yoga. The kids love it, too. The open air and beautiful view bring a great new pleasure into our lives."