

HARVARD GETS AN "F": Inside the Campus Turmoil

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PURPLE REIGN

A pair of empty-nesters honor the history of their South End living room while embracing color and their own unique style.

By Jaci Conry

The Problem

When Brian and Karen McMahon's kids flew the coop, the couple purchased an 1860 townhouse in the South End. The five-story home, however, had structural issues and lacked much of its original architectural detail. The other problem, Karen says, was now that the energy of raising three sons had filtered out of her household, she craved color for the first time in her life. "I wanted to bring some of that energy back," she says.

The Solution

The McMahons tapped Dave O'Malley and his team at BSA Construction to do a full gut renovation of the house. "The idea was to create details that were close to what might have been part of the original structure," O'Malley says. The moldings in the living room, for instance, emulate the carved plasterwork prominent during the home's construction, yet are actually made of curved rubber. The RH Baby & Child mirror was painted in Farrow & Ball's "Brinjal," giving it an ornate look. "The room's aesthetics had to have a sense of formality that would match the history," says Karen, who called for the walls, ceilings, and trim to be painted the same color. Art also plays a big role in the space, and memories are attached to everything: Furniture came from the couple's former home, and other pieces were inherited from Karen's parents. Roche Bobois's "Mah Jong" sofa, meanwhile, is a bridge between the home's history and its vibrant new life.

BUILDER: BSA CONSTRUCTION

