

"You don't want people to walk into an addition and say 'This is an addition.'"

—Doug Walter



Before



After

Even small additions yield big results. This 1933 Tudor Revival cottage had a cramped kitchen and tight back stair. Bumping just five feet toward the driveway, Doug Walter Architects was able to transform a plain kitchen into an airy, sun-filled showplace. DWA matched exactly the original rooflines, roof tile, and brickwork. The latter came from salvaging old brick from a demolished wall and a detached garage (slated for demolition). Matching roof tile was purchased from a nearby vintage home that was being demolished. The gable roof forms mimic the main roof, with a small gable used to highlight the back entry. Black-clad SDL Pella windows resemble the original steel sash. The oversized window in the addition is the new, south-facing window over the kitchen sink.

In Addition

There's more than one approach
to designs that fit.

STACEY FREED SENIOR EDITOR

When Doug Walter says, "I channel dead architects to try to figure out their original intent," it gives the listener a clear picture of how the former restoration architect might approach the design of an addition. On the other hand, architect Mark McInturff says his additions fit "by contrast rather than by a literal copying or cloning." As different as these approaches may be, both architects must satisfy the needs of clients and be sensitive to neighboring structures.



After



Before



Before

SEAMLESS CONNECTIONS

When the staff at Doug Walter Architects plan an addition, they immerse themselves in the study of the period of the house they'll be working on. In its Denver market, the firm is known for creating seamless and sensitive additions.

Everything starts with the floor plan. "You need to have the right connection to the original house," says Walter, who stresses the importance of added rooms being in proportion to the main house. "If you're working on a 1,000-square-foot Tudor cottage, and all the rooms are small, you don't want to add a 25 by 25 family room on the back that has no relation to the rest of the house." You also don't want to add on a big, beautiful addition and "leave the original house shabby. Work with clients to earmark the budget so you can tie things together or update HVAC, electrical, or plumbing. You don't want people to walk into an addition and say 'This is an addition.'"

This suburban Washington, D.C., home already had an addition — a "brown wood box" (shown lower left) says architect Mark McInturff — pushing the Cape Cod style on its way to something else. Virtually invisible from the street, the addition opens the house to the existing pool and garden. "The white surfaces are as if we pulled the ceiling and walls to the outside," McInturff says.

"There are interesting things to do ... that I think are respectful — in an abstract use of respectful."

—Mark McInturff

Photos, opposite page: before photo, Doug Walter, after photo, Jim Blecha Photography Inc. This page: before photos, David Morgensen; after photo, Julia Heine

In Addition



Adding a new second story doesn't have to mean saying goodbye to the architectural charm of the original home. All DWA's design cues were taken from the existing home and other bungalows in the immediate neighborhood from the same period. They wanted to minimize the height of the remodeled house so it wouldn't overwhelm. For all intents and purposes, this is a new home, Walter says. Every major system — electrical, heating, plumbing, windows, roof — was replaced. "It is now ready for the next 80 years. DWA preserved what was best about the bungalow and added a whole new level of living to it. Two, actually, if you count the dramatic improvements we made to the basement level."

Yet Walter is not a strict restorationist and sees room for reinvention to accommodate modern lifestyles in older homes. "You can open up vistas that weren't there with bigger windows, skylights in bedrooms, or a pass-through in the kitchen," he says. "Raised or coffered ceilings, particularly in '50s houses like a ranch with an 8-foot ceiling, work well. It's nice to raise up the ceiling in a family room or living room and show some beams, have a strong emphasis on what wasn't there before." He cautions that while skylights are good design elements, they shouldn't be put on the front of the house: "You don't want technology to show too much." And he suggests that remodelers be specific with tradespeople about where to put plumbing vents, flues, range hood exhausts, and satellite dishes to avoid the roof "looking like a porcupine."

THE BIG THREE

The way Walter makes an addition seamless is by focusing on what he calls the big three: roof, mass, and materials.

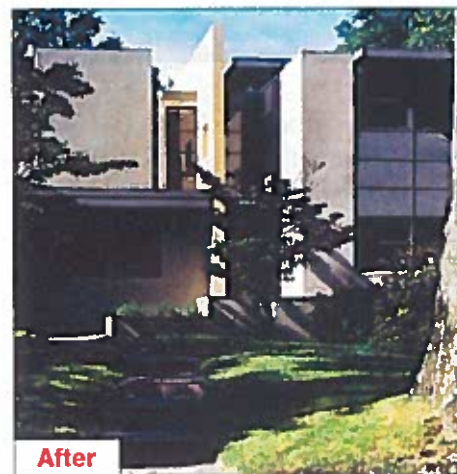
"Nothing announces a bad addition louder than a roof that doesn't match the existing house in type, pitch, details, or materials. You can spot these a block away; often two blocks," wrote Walter in a 1990 article in *THE JOURNAL OF LIGHT*

CONSTRUCTION. "The roofline of a second story addition should be the same pitch as the roof below, the same material, the same style — gable, hipped, shed, flat, gambrel, or mansard — even if it means compromising the plan." He cites as a classic bad example the shed roof hung off a ledger on the back of a house.

Walter suggests thinking about the roof while you're drawing your plans. DWA dots in the existing roof on the floor plan to serve as a reminder of where all the ridges, hips, and valleys fall.

The planning stage is also the time to consider the building's massing — arranging the larger volumes of the house in relation to one another. "You don't want to overwhelm the house with the addition," Walter says. Typically, DWA makes the addition smaller than the original house or uses other means to minimize its impact, such as stepping the roof down. "We often hold the front of the second floor back from the first floor front wall," he says.

As for materials, Walter thinks that "match existing" should be everyone's mantra. Yet this can be difficult, especially with brickwork, for which you need to match color, size, and texture, as well as the composition, color, tooling, and joint size of the mortar. DWA goes to extremes



This house started as a flat-roofed modern box. Mark McInturf Architects doubled its size by building on top without changing the box internally. The lower façade had newer materials added to it. To avoid having an addition that looks like a house on top of a house, says McInturf, "it's nice to have vertical compositional elements connecting the upper and lower parts."

Photos: top before, Doug Walter; top after, Tim Murphy; Foto Imagery; bottom before, David Morgenson; bottom after, Julia Heine

In Addition

to salvage bricks during demolition.

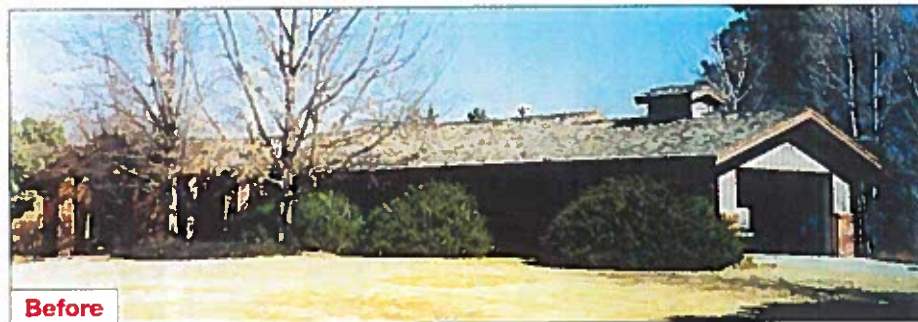
But if you can't reuse existing materials, use complementary ones. And if that doesn't work, as a last resort you can use materials that provide a contrast. Again, use caution in this approach, in particular if you're adding up top. "We call them 'gifts from the sky,'" Walter says. "Those second story additions that look like an alien spaceship set them down on unsuspecting bungalows or ranches."

CONTRAST AND DIALOGUE

For the most part, current housing stock ripe for remodeling in most of the U.S. is not architecturally designed. "Some of the newer houses since the 1960s are hard to define," Walter says. "Architectural historians haven't [yet named] the great suburban boom — Spanish Taco Bell modern, maybe, or neo-Tudoresque. It is cheaply done production housing with a fairly strong front façade and not much on the side. The back is weakest of all."

McInturff also considers the "big three," but, he says, "It doesn't mean you have to mimic the roofline, mass, or materials. There could be a healthy dialogue or contrast that could begin to add more life to both things."

Although McInturff Architects, Bethesda, Md., does work for clients all along the East Coast, many of the homes McInturff works on, particularly in the D.C.-metro area where the housing boom occurred post-World War II, are what he calls "prosaic." They are small homes with great value because of their proximity to the capital. His upmarket clientele is cosmopolitan and well-educated. "An awful lot are from other cultures and they don't understand why the housing stock is so traditional," McInturff says. So he has the freedom to explore textures and designs that might not be acceptable in other cities.



DWA designed additions for all four sides of this 1960s ranch in Greeley, Colo., matching original style and materials. The low landscape wall in front reinforces the horizontal emphasis of the home and captures underused front yard space.

Since every home does not necessarily have architectural character, McInturff works under the premise that his additions — which are contrasts — may be "the most appropriate and reasonable thing to do rather than extending something that's bad." Many architects talk about an addition being seamless, but "maybe 20% of the time that would be good," McInturff says. "And for the other 80% it doesn't make sense. Fitting an addition — as in copying something that doesn't have any quality — just doesn't make sense."

His approach to houses that are not "architectural," (i.e., homes that lack a distinct character or style, such as a Victorian or a Georgian), is to "make the house go into the background." McInturff says, "It becomes, in a way, secondary to what we're doing. We keep it simple in color or form, and what we [design] is bolder in color and form. If the house is more articulated, it's hard to make that go away. [The design of the addition] depends on the situation."

But, he adds, "It's not about beating your chest and shouting out and being rebellious. There are interesting things to do that satisfy both me and the clients that I think are respectful — in an abstract use of respectful." **R**



Mark McInturff Architects pushed up the roof in the back of this suburban Washington, D.C., home to add a large music room. "[This house] barely had a style," says McInturff. "Vaguely Frank Lloyd Wright, but really watered down. It's not like we're working with something precious. We felt relatively free to have our way with it."

Photos: top after, Philip Wegener Photography; top before, Doug Waller; bottom after, Julia Heine; bottom before, David Morgensen