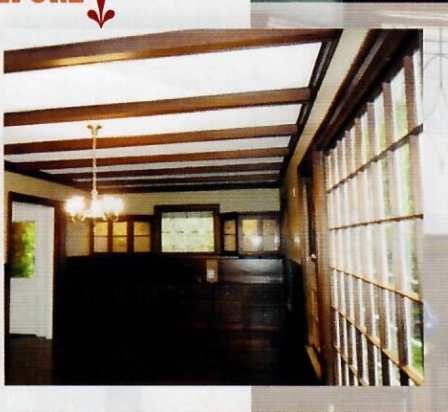


"I had fun putting together colors that were appropriate to the house," says Farmer. In the living room, she took her cues from original features, like the brick mantel and wood trim (inset). A pair of Duane Modern chairs is covered in a Rogers & Goffigon fabric. The brass-and-alabaster pendant is by Urban Archaeology. Two Vaughan lamps flank a custom sofa upholstered in a Rose Tarlow Melrose House fabric.





BEFORE ↓



RIGHT: The dining room (inset) was largely left intact, but Farmer updated it with a Phillip Jeffries horsehair wall-covering on the walls and a metallic paper on the ceiling, in between the beams. Around a Keith Fritz table, dining chairs are covered in a textured linen jute from Holland & Sherry.





It's great to see that so many lovely features of this 1880s Shingle Style home are still intact.

NINA FARMER: My clients, a young family with a toddler and another baby on the way, came *this* close to buying a classic brick Colonial, which had been so overly renovated that it had lost its soul. When they walked into this house, they were instantly smitten. The former owners, who had raised their children here, clearly loved their home and preserved its period details. The house still had a telephone closet—a tiny booth where one would make and take calls. When my clients saw it—with family names, phone numbers, and drawings all over the walls like graffiti—they were sold.

KATHLEEN HACKETT: **The previous owners never succumbed to any 1970s and '80s decor trends?**

Mostly they did not. The closest they came was in the kitchen, where the walls were painted what I call “Beacon Hill Red,” after Boston’s historic district, and the floors were stained in the checkerboard pattern that was ubiquitous in the '80s.

About that kitchen: It's less Beacon Hill and more like a Nancy Meyers film now.

And we didn't knock down a single wall or tear out a cabinet, appliance, or countertop! Because my clients were expecting a child when they bought the house, they didn't want to do any major renovating. Not that the house needed anything more than a cosmetic lift. Instead of an overhaul, I went low-impact: new paint, fixtures, lighting, floor stain, window treatments. To add depth, I repainted the white cabinets and trim in a complex gray: Farrow & Ball's Dimpse. A new pendant helped to enliven the space.

Were you never once tempted to paint all of that dark wood white?

I considered it—briefly. People think painting over heavy trim will lighten a space, but it's a move that can also compromise a room's character. The former owners had used slipcovered furnishings to achieve an airier look. My approach was to brighten things with color. The more colors you use, the more they go together, as counterintuitive as that sounds.

Ah, the transformative power of paint.

When it came to the kitchen, that is absolutely true. But elsewhere in the

house, the textile choices worked as paint so often does—both allow you to leave a room intact and give it a face-lift at the same time. I was thrilled that my clients wanted color. I used a rich, saturated palette—midnight blue, burnt umber, jade, aubergine—that complemented all of that glorious trim.

But you did clean up the walls, yes?

The goal throughout this house was to make what was already there shine—to make it all look a bit more crisp, a little more polished. I used wallpaper to achieve that, but also to give the neutral walls more texture. The dining room has a wall of windows, but it is still quite dark, so I chose a horsehair paper that seems to change color over the course of the day, from blue to green to silver, depending on the light. It's dynamic, and it makes the room more youthful. I put a metallic paper on the ceiling in between the beams, which helps to bounce light throughout the room.

I'm guessing that powder room wallpaper is a new addition?

Right. The walls had been painted that same Beacon Hill red, and the wainscoting was white. I kept the cute corner sink, painted the wainscoting a charcoal gray, and covered up the red with marbled paper. It lends verve without veering too far from the home's traditional leanings. So paint, wallpaper, and a vintage mirror transformed this room.

And you left the brick fireplaces as is?

Yes. They were integral to the personality of the house. Color made the brick work. In the family room, for example, I had a grass-cloth wallpaper custom-colored in a powdery blue and earthy brown to contrast with the orange tones in the brick. A midcentury sofa and Moroccan rug balance the room's traditional elements.

Any big lessons learned from this project?

Don't buy an old house if what you really desire is a brand-new one! Seriously, there's nothing more disheartening than walking through the door of a period home that's perfectly preserved on the exterior and finding a bland white box on the inside. There's no competing with good bones and original bells and whistles.

LEFT: Farmer lightly renovated the previous kitchen (inset), keeping the cabinetry, Viking range, and soapstone countertops. She repainted the cabinets in Farrow & Ball's cool-gray Dimpse and added an Urban Electric Co. pendant, which she had redone in Farrow & Ball's Stony Ground.

BEFORE





The powder room retained its vintage corner sink but got a new look with Robert Crowder & Co. marbled wallpaper and a vintage Egon Hillebrand mirror. The original wainscoting was repainted in Farrow & Ball's Plummet.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
In the foyer, the staircase, built-in bench, and boiserie look fresh with a new coat of paint. Designer Nina Farmer. In the family room, which also serves as an office, Holland & Sherry grass cloth covers the walls; the trim, painted in Farrow & Ball's Hague Blue, complements a vintage sofa upholstered in an indigo Lee Jofa fabric; pedestal table by Restoration Hardware.



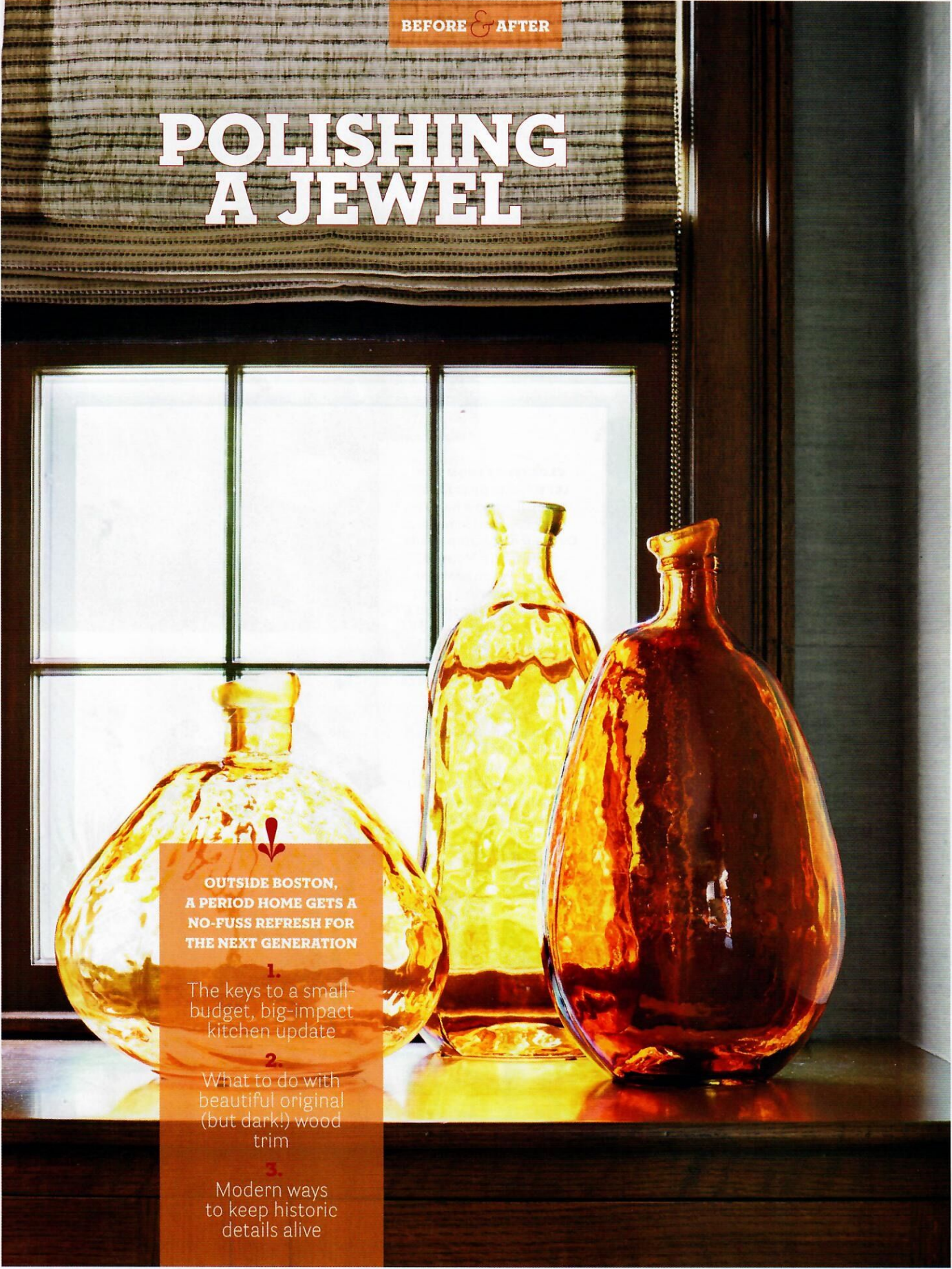


Farmer layered shades of gray with autumnal colors in the master bedroom. The walls, once red (inset), are now sheathed in Phillip Jeffries's soothing silk-and-abaca wallpaper. The custom Roman shades are in a Holland & Sherry print. A Circa Lighting ceiling fixture casts a warm glow reminiscent of the golden leaves on the river birch trees that line the property. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES



BEFORE & AFTER

POLISHING A JEWEL

A photograph of three ornate glass decanters on a windowsill. The decanter on the left is a rounded, bulbous shape with a textured, faceted surface. The middle one is taller and more slender, also with a textured surface. The one on the right is the largest, with a smooth, rounded body and a dark, rich amber color. They are set against a window with dark wood trim and a patterned curtain above. The lighting is warm, highlighting the glass's texture and color.

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