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JUDITH LARSON
GARDINER & LARSON HOMES

A photograph of a modern house at dusk. The house features a blue shingled roof with multiple gables and a prominent stone chimney on the right. The exterior walls are light-colored, and the windows are large, showing a warm interior glow. The entrance is framed by two stone pillars and has a small stone-paved porch. The house is surrounded by trees and landscaping, including a large evergreen on the left and a smaller one on the right. The sky is a deep blue, and the overall atmosphere is serene and modern.

FROM VISIONARY ROOTS TO MODERN REVIVAL

WRITTEN BY DANIELLE PORTER

The reimagined façade trades angular skylights for elegant gables and dormers, pairing modern restraint with welcoming warmth and symmetry.



Tucked into the rolling hills of New Canaan, CT, a striking contemporary residence has come full circle, reborn through the eyes of its original designer, Judith Larson of Gardiner & Larson Homes. What began in the 1990s as an experimental building rooted in sacred geometry and passive solar ideals has evolved into a fully modernized home, reshaped for today's lifestyle without losing sight of its unique origins.

The story of this home begins with Ruth Finch, a spirited heiress to the Jell-O fortune, who commissioned Judith to design a custom home on a parcel she had carved from her sprawling 1880s estate. While the original main house was a romantic display of shingled architecture, overhanging eaves and wraparound porches, Finch preferred simplicity, shunning what she called “too much frou-frou” in favor of clean lines and low-maintenance living.

Inspired by her travels to Egypt and a fascination with pyramids and sacred geometry, Finch requested a home that embraced passive solar energy and unconventional form. The resulting structure was bold in both vision and execution, including a massive oval skylight to cap-



ture solar heat. While it served its purpose, it also left furnishings bleached and the interiors uncomfortably hot in summer.

Two decades later, with the home in need of an overhaul, the new owners discovered Judith's name on the original plans and reached out to her. What started as a modest kitchen and bath refresh quickly grew into a whole-home transformation. "We ended up doing everything," Judith recalls. "New roof, windows, siding, floors, mechanical systems—right down to the studs in many places."

Builder John Farnham of Premier Remodeling and Renovations, LLC, worked alongside Judith to reimagine the structure, removing the problematic skylights and replacing them with peaked cross gables and dormers. The change not only improved energy performance but also added usable space to the upper floor, which now includes three bedrooms, bathrooms and flexible loft areas for reading, yoga or exercise.

The kitchen became a centerpiece of the redesign, outfitted with sleek German cabinetry in a mix of back-painted taupe glass and laminated woodgrain. Underfoot, wide-plank white oak floors, sealed with a nontoxic finish, ground the space in warmth and durability.

Among the few original elements retained is a whimsical copper balcony railing, now aged to a soft patina, crafted by a local sculptor. It's a subtle nod to the home's storied past, seamlessly integrated into a space that now feels entirely of the present. ♦

Resources: **Builder:** Gardiner & Larson Homes.; Judith Larson, Principal Designer; New Canaan, CT; 203.972.1409; gardinerlarsonhomes.com. **Photographer:** Daniel Milstein.



At the heart of the home, layered volumes and curated textures frame the original copper balcony, now a sculptural focal point with history and soul.

Anchored by sculptural sofas and sleek cabinetry, the expansive great room balances softness and structure with European modernity and natural light.

