

After



Homeowners Jay and Cindy rarely entered their cheerless living room before a vibrant remodel gave it new life.

# All Fired Up

A fireplace gets a facelift—and lights up a wall of color.

JUST BECAUSE A ROOM has a fireplace doesn't mean the space will be warm and inviting. Homeowners Jay and Cindy found they never used the living room in their home on White Bear Lake. "It was kind of cold and without character," says Cindy. Jay agrees: "The room was really dark and boring."

They called in Mark Gunstad of McMonigal Architects to help them figure out how they could make the room more appealing. "Their goals were to open the space, make the fireplace a focal point, and provide places to display their art," says Gunstad, who gave the room some punch by creating a wall of color.

With the help of Andy Braden of Braden Construction, Gunstad worked around the existing fireplace, building out from the original wall 14 inches to make recesses for the pottery and art pieces the couple collected on their travels around the world. In one of the niches, Gunstad installed a window

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created for the Anderson Windows art glass series by local artist Michael Pilla of Monarch Studios. A thick cherrywood mantel tops the fireplace and serves as a decorative ledge. Surrounded by colorful slate tiles, which appear blue or purple depending on the light, the fireplace itself has become a striking complement to the art collection.

Directly across the room from the fireplace, Gunstad vaulted the ceiling over a dining area and converted a three-season porch to a more open four-season porch—now sunlight and a beautiful lake view add to the room's charm.

With the addition of a hardwood floor, strategically placed recessed lighting that highlights the niches, and tasteful cherrywood accents, the once-drab drawing room now serves as a gathering place for Jay and Cindy's guests.

"We use the room a lot more than we did before," says Cindy. "It's perfect for formal entertaining." ■

by JACQUELYN B. FLETCHER Photograph by ALEX STEINBERG