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BEFORE + AFTER

A Rare Buckminster Fuller Geodesic Dome House Gets a Bright and Modern Makeover

Jess Cooney made the space more functional and beautiful

By Zoë Sessums

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This 1,373-square-foot waterfront dome home has soaring ceilings that flood the place with light and water views of Indian Lake.

Photo: Lisa Vollmer

The design possibilities for a geodesic dome are almost endless. The open floor plan means you can insert or remove walls almost anywhere—a dome home needs no interior framing. On the flip side, this means a major challenge in figuring out the spatial layout. Where do you even begin in a rounded vault?

"This was a very unique and very challenging project for us," says Jess Cooney, founder of the Berkshires-based Jess Cooney Interiors. Built in the 1980s on Lake Seneca in Becket, Massachusetts—perched on a peninsula with water on all three sides—the home is one of Buckminster Fuller's original geodesic dome houses. The home had issues with heating and electrical elements, and was dark wood-paneled throughout with wall-to-wall carpeting—i.e., dark and drab! The client (a couple from Boston who purchased this as their second home) hired Jess to give the entire place a fresh, clean makeover.

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Before: Despite all the windows, the dark paneling and dull carpets kept things a bit dim.

Photo: Courtesy of Jess Cooney Interiors



After: "We didn't change anything architecturally with the windows except adding one," says Jess. "We wanted to draw that out more—they were getting lost with the paneling."

Photo: Lisa Vollmer

Jess and her team did a gut renovation of the whole house, redesigned the master loft area and basement rooms, and worked on an extensive renovation of the kitchen, where they added a pantry and a three-quarter bathroom. "It took about a year, start to finish, for the full gut reno," says Jess. "There are five of us at the company, and we did everything from the design to the details to fully furnishing the whole house. We wanted it to be warm and Berkshirey." Emphasis on warm: The team convinced the owners to do stained wood flooring rather than tile. "We used a lot of bamboo with a gray wash and pale blues."



Before: For a homeowner who loves to be in the kitchen, this part of the house left a lot to be desired.

Photo: Courtesy of Jess Cooney Interiors



After: Clearly, the kitchen became one of Jess's favorite parts of the transformation. The white, blues, and grays make everything feel fresh and inviting. The pendants are by Simon Pearce.

Photo: Lisa Vollmer

Due to the home's construction and unique vaulted ceilings, radiant heat was crucial, so Jess added it throughout the house. To brighten the home, the paneling was taken down. Jess also wanted to add usable space in the mudroom, master loft, walk-in closet, kitchen, and pantry area, along with incorporating open space for family gatherings and space for friends and family to come, stay, and be a little tucked away.

"There was a wood stove already, so we took that and built a floor-to-ceiling fireplace to match the scale and brought in some limestone, which grounded the space and added a focal point," says Jess. "We found vintage pieces from 1stdibs and locally—those we recovered and refurbished. We brought in custom-made tables from a local furniture maker. Since you see everything from every angle, it was important to keep it serene."

"The kitchen was the biggest challenge, since it was hard to find a flat wall to put anything against," says Jess. "We expanded the mudroom out and took some space from the bathroom to carve out a pantry—where we put the fridge, microwave, and additional shelves. The pantry was key to making the kitchen feel spacious."



After: "There's not such a big footprint," says Jess, "but I think we made it really *feel* like such a big space."

Photo: Lisa Vollmer



After: The counter stools are [Selamat](#), upholstered in [Brentano fabric](#). The handpicked details tie everything together.

Photo: Lisa Vollmer

The functionality of the kitchen is Jess's favorite part. "It's beautiful and serene but functions well. It was the main challenge, but the solution and pantry really transformed the place. The client cooks a lot when she comes there, so she wanted two sinks, two ovens, a microwave, and a full-sized fridge, which was a tall order considering the layout and the desire to keep things from being cluttered. But we made it work and made it beautiful."



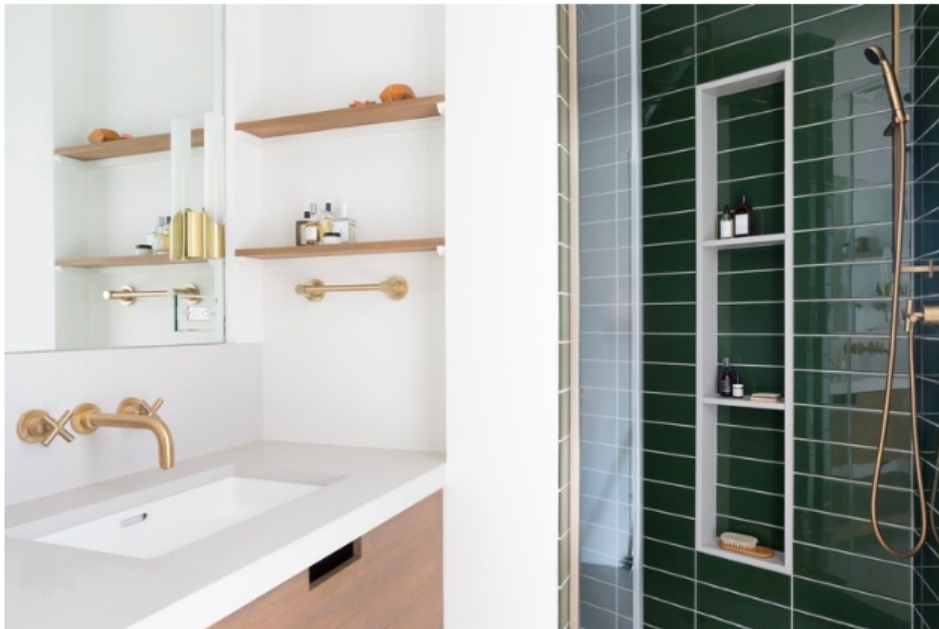
After: We're in love with these rich teal [Swiss cross tiles](#) in one of the bathrooms.

Photo: Lisa Vollmer



After: Jess added wood plank tiles so when the family is wet from swimming the floor isn't ruined. Also, they harbor radiant heat for the winter and are durable enough to withstand kids and dogs.

Photo: Lisa Vollmer



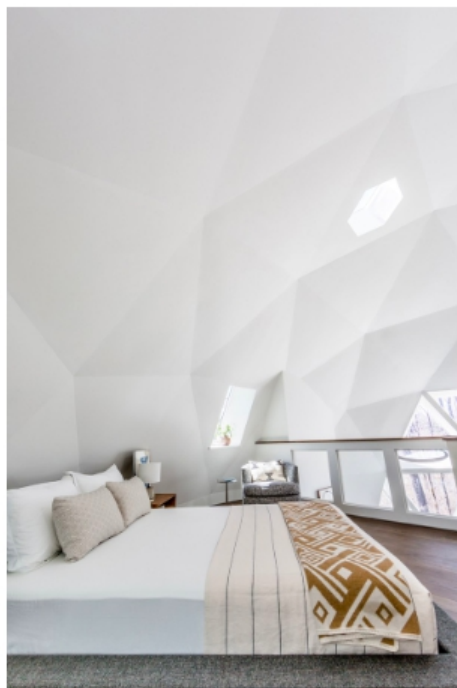
After: The master bathroom has so many details to steal: [chic faucets](#), [good lighting](#), and custom teak shelves.

[lisa vollmer photography](#)



__After:__ The beautiful dining table was made by a local furniture maker. The dining chairs are from 1stdibs (similar ones [here](#)). The light fixture is called the [Summer Pendant](#).

Photo: Lisa Vollmer



After: “Up in the loft we created a master suite,” says Jess. “It was fun to cut out the Sheetrock and add glass panels, so when you lie in bed you can look out at the lake. We also added a dressing room off the bathroom—the owners didn’t want to enclose the loft, so all that space was reconfigured.”

Photo: Lisa Vollmer