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A waterfront home on
Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

TEXT BY
Tiffany Chu
PHOTOS BY
Eric Roth

PROJECT
My Beautiful Launderette
ARCHITECT
30E Design, 30edesign.com
LOCATION
Boston, Massachusetts

Happy Hamper

Often, we cleanse our duds in a wasteland of half-forgotten detergent bottles and dryer-sheet-detritus. But one creative couple in Boston's South End have reimagined their laundry room as a sanctuary.



According to architect Anne Barrett of the Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, firm 30E Design, the vision for revamping a laundry room in an 1849 Boston brownstone began with her favorite question: "What would James Turrell do?" The back-of-house space was originally a cold, dank hallway with a dingy aluminum vent linking the basement and first floor. Now anchored by a glowing borosilicate chute—illuminated by a bundle of fiber-optic cables—this laundry room is more of an art installation than a hub for domestic chores.

The residents wanted the space to be as beautiful as it is functional. Barrett's challenge was to create a minimalist design to conceal the water heater, cables, Miele washer and dryer, and storage space, all of which are now tucked away behind lacquered cabinets and chiseled limestone. The sleek new laundry room forms a graceful passageway that serves as a transitional space from the main part of the house to the garden out back. >

30E Design transformed a hallway in a Boston brownstone from a "dumping ground for all the plumbing and utilities with an existing metal ductwork laundry chute" into a modern space that houses the laundry, furnace, and boiler.



The focal point of the sleek, white space is a glowing laundry chute (left) illuminated from within by fiber-optic cables. The Pyrex tube was produced by a manufacturer of laboratory vacuum equipment and was sand-blasted from the inside to contain the

light. The architect worked carefully to create ample storage for myriad uses, since the space doubles as a wet bar for entertaining due to its proximity to a garden terrace. The cabinetry cleverly conceals everything, including a custom drying rack (above).

“We were given the brief to treat the project as an art installation. We took the approach of ‘What would James Turrell do if he were to design a laundry room?’” —Anne Barrett, architect



The top of the luminous chute sits beneath the residents' first-floor sink; they can toss garments from their main bathroom through the diffuse tube, and into a basket below. “Life is messy,” one resident says, “but we never have dirty clothes around. The laundry chute is a big deal in our lives because it makes the mess from upstairs vanish.”

After occupying the house for over a decade, the residents knew exactly how to transform the space so it catered to their habits—and part of that meant that it does double-duty when they entertain. “When we’re not doing laundry,” says one, “this becomes a kitchenette—we can store glasses here, have drinks, a bucket of ice, and an hors d’oeuvres prep space for a garden party.”

For these clients, at least, Barrett says, “the laundry room is the new kitchen.” □