



Mick Hales



Duo Dickinson

BEFORE: Misplaced entries both confuse visitors and make a home look dowdy.

AFTER: A simple renovation gives a whole new look.

'Remodel Your House'

Madison architect Duo Dickinson shows upside of 'Staying Put'

By Donna Doherty
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NEW HAVEN — Madison architect Duo Dickinson has written seven books now, each inspired by the feedback from clients, both wealthy and not, and the waves of the economy going back to the recession of the early 1980s.

Obviously, there's been plenty of fodder for his latest book, fittingly called "Staying Put — Remodel Your House to Get the Home You Want," for which there will be a book launch party Tuesday from 6 to 8 p.m., benefiting AIDS Project New Haven at 116 Crown restaurant on Crown Street.

"I didn't want just a party," said Dickinson, a devoted philanthropist. "I wanted to make a difference in a group that needs this. And 116 Crown Street is one of the most fun places in America."

Typically, owner John Ginnetti has even come up with a special drink, "Don't Move and No One Will Get Hurt."

He'll also sign at 7 p.m. Nov. 17 at R.J. Julia Booksellers in Madison.

Dickinson has seen the building industry through it all: the small house, the McMansions, affordable housing, spiraling building costs and getting value for your money.

"It's such a central part of everyone's lives to have some control over where they live," says Dickinson, who is a frequent contributor to the New Haven Register.



The book, says Dickinson, "tries to give people a real perspective about what you can and can't know."

"This book (Taunton Press, \$24.95) was going to be about housing renovation. The vast majority in the building boom were relegated to buying crappy houses, because that's all they could afford."

"We got all the way through it, and the book was canceled. But then Peter Chapman, the best editor there is of architectural books, said this is too good an idea to give up on."

Like the tips in the book, the project was reinvented in a more economical version. To save costs, the book, scheduled for a Nov. 15 release, was reconfigured as a softcover, but there is no sacrifice in quality.

The heavy stock complements the more than 200 color photos of before-and-after remodeling projects, as well as quick-tip sidebars, all of which were designed for the website exclu-



Duo Dickinson

sively created for it, www.stayingput.com, where there are additional text and schematics.

Dickinson shows readers "how to get the home you want from the house you have," acknowledging a range of affordability.

"This book takes a really awful situation of the third year of a housing recession down to 300,000 starts as opposed to 3 million, and addresses it. What's gurgled up is the renovation and remodeling side, which has come back," he said.

"If it follows the pattern of the other recessions, my thought is that people are sick and tired of accepting houses they hate as their fate. What the book tries to show are 70 specific projects in five separate categories, ranging from budgets of \$5,000 to \$400,000."

The book starts with the premise that, OK, the economy stinks and you're stuck in this house that you hate. Home-owners no longer have the lux-

ury to buy a "starter home" and move on.

"Now that money is in tight supply and houses have lost their value just sitting there, you feel more threatened, and that's why I feel this book is more necessary than ever, because there's never been a time in my lifetime that people feel like they'll never leave their home," said Dickinson.

The book is geared "toward people that are under house arrest. They basically can't get out. They have reverse home invasion. The home has invaded their lives. Their lives can't go on because the house is getting in the way."

He cites kitchens where you can't cook, drainage problems, lack of closet space, misplaced doorways that confuse visitors and "look crappy."

He recommends using an architect and a general contractor whom you've vetted appropriately. And he has strong ideas about green and sustain-



Mike Hales

A sleek, modern banister makes a stairway come to life.

IF YOU GO

- **Event:** AIDS Project New Haven benefit book signing with Duo Dickinson, author of "Staying Put"
- **When:** 6-8 p.m. Tuesday
- **Where:** 116 Crown restaurant, 116 Crown St., New Haven
- **Admission:** \$100
- **Info:** 203-624-0947, ext. 241

ability — it needs to make sense. "We've come up with a 'new movement' of sustainability that makes people buy bamboo flooring from 5,000 miles away. It's so absurd," he said.

You may not like your home, but it's yours, he said. "This book basically says, when staying put isn't making lemonade out of lemons, it's finding out who you are. Your home should be a reflection of you."

Contact Donna Doherty at 203-789-5672. Follow us on Twitter @NHReg-Buzz. To receive breaking news first, simply text the word NHNEWS to 22700. *Msg & Data Rates May Apply. Text HELP for help. Text STOP to cancel.