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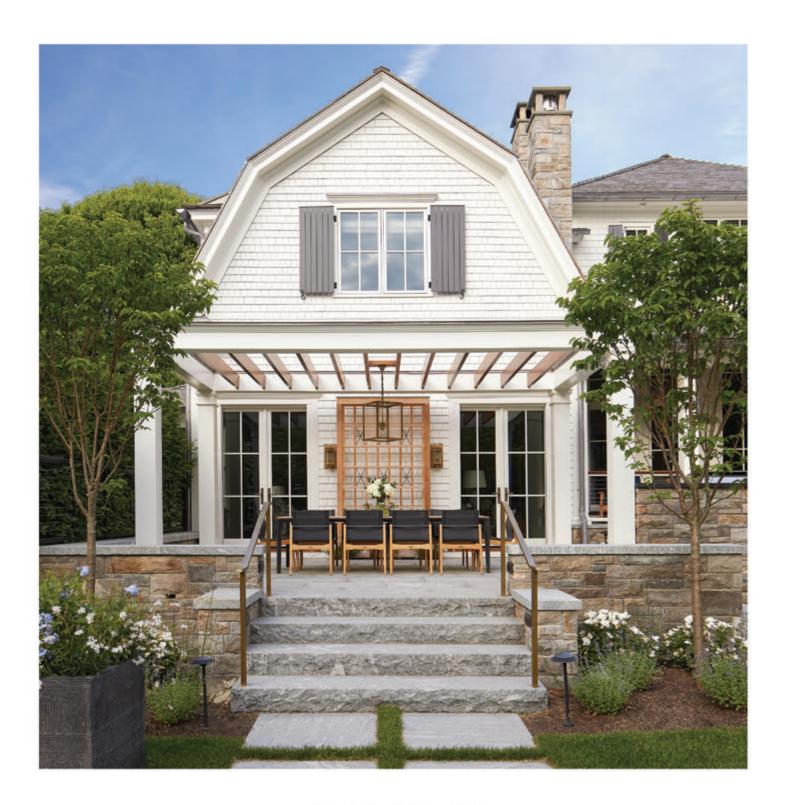














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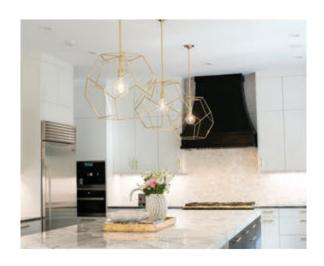
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EDITOR'S LETTER



e just love shooting the designers for the designer issue cover. It's always fun to give these talented designers a chance to get together, in an informal setting and catch up with each other. Especially during these challenging times.

We asked the designers to describe their personal "obsessions" this year. We received some interesting responses that should reignite your creative juices and take a look at the trending styles and materials that are finding their way into our homes.

Overcoming challenges and coming up with creative solutions are a large part of these designers jobs and some of their answers were funny to make light of the supply situation, to patriotic in speaking about buying American, to coming up with ingenious storage and organization solution. Be sure to read each of these wonderful stories as the information contained in each of them may just touch upon your design challenge. They all did a great job and stepped up to the challenge. We appreciate their efforts.

Next issue, the architects get their chance to wow you. The stories coming in for this are beyond the "wow factor" and we look forward to sharing them with you in November.

Enjoy the beautiful change of seasons, fall has always been my favorite with the Indian summer days and the miraculous changes in the landscape.

Enjoy,

Matthew J. Kolk

Editor in chief





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WHAT'S NEW WHAT'S NEXT



Emperor's Labyrinthe

Displaying a captivating, detailed pattern of an old Chinese maze garden, the Emperor's Labyrinthe is a marvelous work of art and a riveting background setting. mindtheg.com



Hula Hoop Pillow

Drusus Tabor pillows are crafted entirely by hand in NYC. Beginning with beautiful illustrations, each design is block printed with low-impact textile ink on linen, the result is rich in character and texture. studiofournyc.com



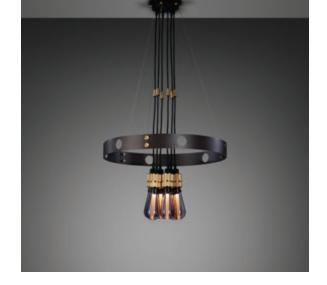
The Studio

The artist's studio is a private space full of mystery, a room reserved for free thinking, experimentation and expression.

mindtheq.com



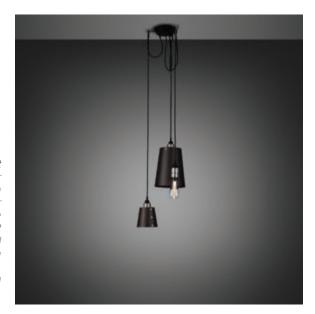
made up of Smoked Bronze, Steel, or Brass pendants, each with their own customizing hook, and matte rubber detailing. The light comes complete with a mix of shades - 1 large and 2 small, made from 2mm rolled steel and finished in Stone or Graphite powder coating and 3 bare bulbs. busterandpunch.com



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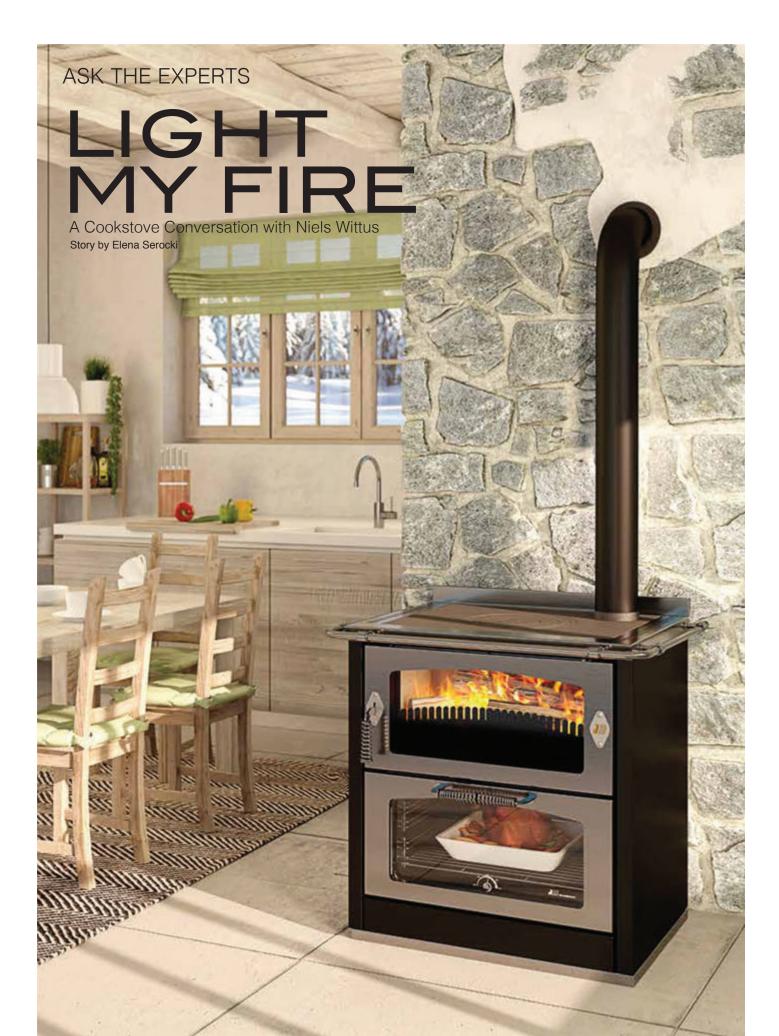






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What is the function of a wood-burning cookstove in the home?

Adding a cookstove to the home has benefits beyond the standard woodburning stove. A wood-burning cookstove has dual functions: it has the ability to cook and bake, and it is also an efficient secondary source for home heating. A classic kitchen stove like the de Manincor Domino Maxi from Wittus covers all the bases. This stove is a powerful heat source that utilizes the steel cooktop and oven below. The Domina is a smaller, more decorative version that has legs and a whimsical backsplash; it can be placed in a living area of the home and perform the same heating and cooking functions.

Does it matter what a cookstove looks like?

The overall aesthetic of a cookstove plays a very important role in the home. Contemporary cookstoves are







beautifully designed and can add a final touch in a designer's scenario. Bright colors are a current trend in home accents. The ceramic Cookin Stack from La Castellamonte, Italy, is available in whimsical tile colors. Blending style with color speaks for itself when it comes to adding interest to a room.

Are contemporary cookstoves good for the environment?

Cookstoves have come a long way since the times of open fire pits. Modern cookstoves are fully closed units that are highly efficient and utilize preheated secondary airflow that passes over the flame and burns off any remaining gas. This process reduces carbon monoxide to a minimum, and the second flame operates at maximum efficiency. The new cookstoves produce cleaner smoke and lower levels of air pollution. The process also contributes to reduced wood consumption. Wittus has efficient wood-burning cookstoves that include the Lugo from Czech Republic, the Klassic, USA, and the de Manincor and Cookin Stack from Italy.

How long do cookstoves last?

A wood-burning cookstove is as good as its firekeeper. There is no time limit for how long it can last. If the stove is cared for, cleaned and well tended to, it can last a lifetime. Remember that a stove is a piece of "warm furniture," as we like to say at Wittus. It's an investment that will warm your home, your heart and your stomach.

What are the benefits of a wood-burning cookstove in the home?

The benefits are endless when it comes to having a wood-burning cookstove in the home. As we mentioned above, it is not only a cooking tool, but a home heater as well. If the power goes out during a storm, the cookstove is there to light the way. Preparing a meal or making a simple cup of tea on a wood-burning stove is always a joy. These well-designed, efficient cookstoves are available at Wittus.

Cookstoves can be found at many price levels, depending on the complexity of the unit. Some stoves are for camping, while others are for the home. Wittus offers stoves for the home starting at \$5,200 (Lugo), and going up to \$16,000 (Klassic).

Resource:

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s public relations manager for Kitchen Magic, Linda Fennessy has helped the company win numerous design, service and achievement awards over the 17 years she has worked there. Her versatility, knowledge and creative design skills infuse personality and style into the Kitchen Magic brand. "Home remodeling and decor in general are my passion," she says. "I believe that beautiful surroundings make your life happier."

What is kitchen refacing? Why choose this option over new cabinets?

The cabinet refacing process starts with removing and discarding the existing doors and drawers. The cabinet frames are then laminated in the new color and material (laminate or wood), and then all new doors, drawers and hardware are installed to match.

The process uses 75% of the existing kitchen (the cabinet boxes), which is more environmentally friendly than replacing cabinets. It takes less than one tree to reface an average kitchen. This means 75% less material goes to the landfill, and fewer resources are needed to remodel the kitchen.

Cabinet refacing takes less than a week to complete and costs up to 50% less than replacement cabinets. Since 80% of what you see in the kitchen is cabinets, updating the color and style is highly transformative to the entire space.

Can you change the size of your cabinets when you reface?

Yes, you can change the size of the cabinet box. Many homeowners remove the soffit, taking advantage of unused space, and increase storage space. Before we reface the cabinet boxes, we add extension boxes, bringing the cabinet to the ceiling. Then both boxes are laminated to appear as one. The new doors are heightened to match the new cabinet box height. The box can also be reduced in height and width if the homeowner wants to change the layout.

What upgrades can you add on when updating your kitchen by refacing?

You can take advantage of almost any upgrades that you would with new cabinets, such as

- Transforming a cabinet to drawers, or changing a bank of drawers to a cabinet.
- Adding interior cabinet storage solutions, such as spice rollouts, pot drawers and shelf rollouts.
- Adding more cabinets, such as a pantry, an island, glass fronts and shelving.
- Increasing the cabinet height or length.

The result is a complete remodel, with refreshed color and style, and additional cabinets to match your island or pantry.

What is the timeline from start to finish when refacing kitchen cabinets?

Cabinet refacing projects can be accomplished in as little as a week and usually in about three days. Removing the doors and drawers can be done quickly. Laminating the existing frames, while labor-





intensive, is done by highly trained installers who are true craftsmen. The new doors and drawers in the new color and style are installed and, finally, new hardware completes the transformation.

With cabinet refacing, the savings are typically reinvested in other parts of the kitchen remodel, such as upgrading to stone countertops, changing the backsplash, adding an island or getting new appliances. These renovations are made after the refacing is complete and add to the timeline.

Can you please explain, in detail, the benefits of refacing cabinets?

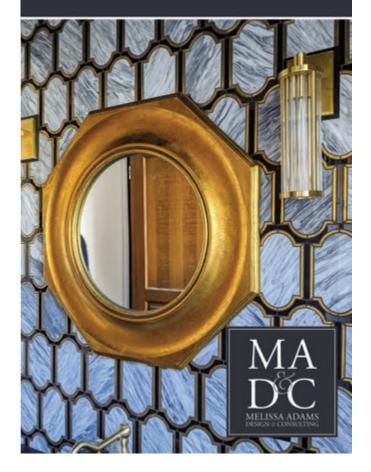
There is a lot of value in the existing cabinet boxes that are repurposed in refacing. Many homeowners don't realize the benefits and think that painting is a better option, but the results are not the same quality as when the doors and drawers are replaced. You're not stuck with the existing style, and new maintenance-free vinyl doors are more conducive to the kitchen environment than wood. Cabinet doors and drawers take a beating over time, and those are replaced with refacing.

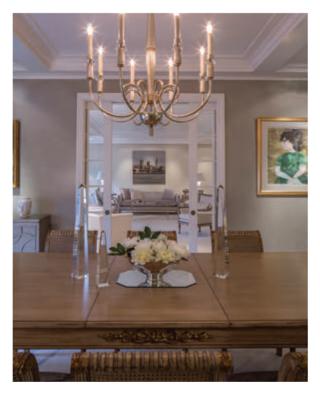
Other refacing companies have devalued the process. Refacing a kitchen is actually an enhanced skill and takes true craftsmanship to do well. It is a permanent remodeling solution that will last for years if done correctly. The main benefits are:



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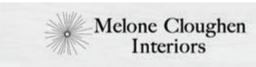
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- You can save up to 50% the cost of replacing cabinets.
- The job is completed in less than a week (under five days).
- Refacing uses 75% of your existing cabinetry for a positive environmental footprint.
- You can choose a hybrid solution: refacing some, replacing some and adding a pantry or an island.
- Refacing lets you remove the soffit and add cabinet extensions for a floor-to-ceiling design.

Does adding color help give a new look to the cabinets?

Many homeowners are now remodeling the kitchen in new flat colors. For instance, white, gray and blue are becoming very popular. Wood grains are taking a backseat to these fresh and new colors. Solid-color kitchens will visually enlarge the space, making it look cleaner and brighter than busy wood patterns. With so many homeowners adding color to their kitchen cabinets, simpler, neutral color countertops are becoming more popular to help balance the color palette.

Whites are still the top choice for cabinets, and colorful cabinets remain in the top five. These create a transitional-style kitchen that is a mix of traditional and modern. The transitional strategy uses cooler tones and straight lines with minimal details. This unadorned palette allows homeowners to flex their design muscles through the use of color and personalized items within the design. For example, choose an octagonal or herringbone tile backsplash or oversized stove hood in a contrasting color to make that one bold statement!

Resource:

Linda Fennessy Kitchen Magic 610.217.0964 Kitchenmagic.com

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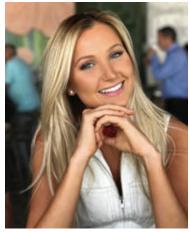


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hat is the overall California Closets process? What should a client expect when working with you?

The process begins with a consultation with each new client. This is an opportunity for me, as a designer, to see the space, take precise measurements and get to know my client more personally. I love using this time to learn more about my client's unique lifestyle, tastes and specific needs. This part of the process is the most important to me, as I believe that the better I know my clients, the better I can design for them.

Once I get a good idea of what it is my clients are looking for, I like to sit down with them and create the custom space of their dreams. At this stage, I can produce a 3D rendering of their design and provide a real-time quote for the project. Before leaving, I make sure to thoroughly explain the next steps for installation and clarify any questions my client may have for me. It's so important to me to make each client feel comfortable with the entire process from start to finish. I treat every project as if it were my own space. I care about more than just creating a beautiful space— I care about how my clients feel, and I believe this is palpable to each client who works with me.

What's the first thing you do when you assess a new space



you're designing? For example, how do you design the floor plan to best utilize and maximize the square footage?

First I ask the clients what they're envisioning for the space. Sometimes my clients have a clear idea of inspiration and, in those cases, I'll work within the parameters to bring their vision to life while implementing my expertise and working around the limitations of the floor plans. Other times, my clients have no idea what they need, so they will lean on me to navigate the process. In this case, I'll work to understand what is and isn't currently working for them, and learn how they live daily to determine what will be the most beneficial use of the space. In any case, I like to give my clients options and explain how each space can be utilized and maximized to its fullest.

How do you decide where and how to embellish and accessorize with color, lighting, showcases, ladders, etc.?

I love incorporating color and lighting into my designs when I'm given the right opportunity! I must get to know my clients so I can advise when and where to add embellishments and accessories. I never want to design something that won't age well. For example, color is great to use in kids' rooms, but if your kids are growing and changing their favorite color each week, I'd probably advise against something extreme. Instead, I'll design something transitional and encourage my clients to add color to the space with items such as pillows that can be switched out as needed and still work well with what I design. On the other hand, if I notice my client has a beautiful col-



lection of autographed baseballs hidden away in his dark office, I may suggest adding lighting and glass shelving to a project so he can feature these classic pieces that also add character to the space.

How do you plan ahead to build in opportunities to change, morph and grow a project as one's needs and lifestyles change?

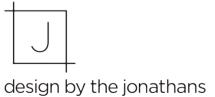
I may sound like a broken record, but I can't emphasize enough the importance of getting to know my clients! I'm always able to help my clients plan ahead and even raise awareness of upcoming changes they may have not anticipated themselves. If I know my client is planning for a family soon, I'll make sure to design a space that can grow with their child. If I'm designing for a young mom with active toddlers, I'll design a unit with safety in mind, such as round knobs over sharp corners, and locked shelves over removable ones.

I also think it's good to get an idea of the property. If clients are buying a home as an investment property, I'll





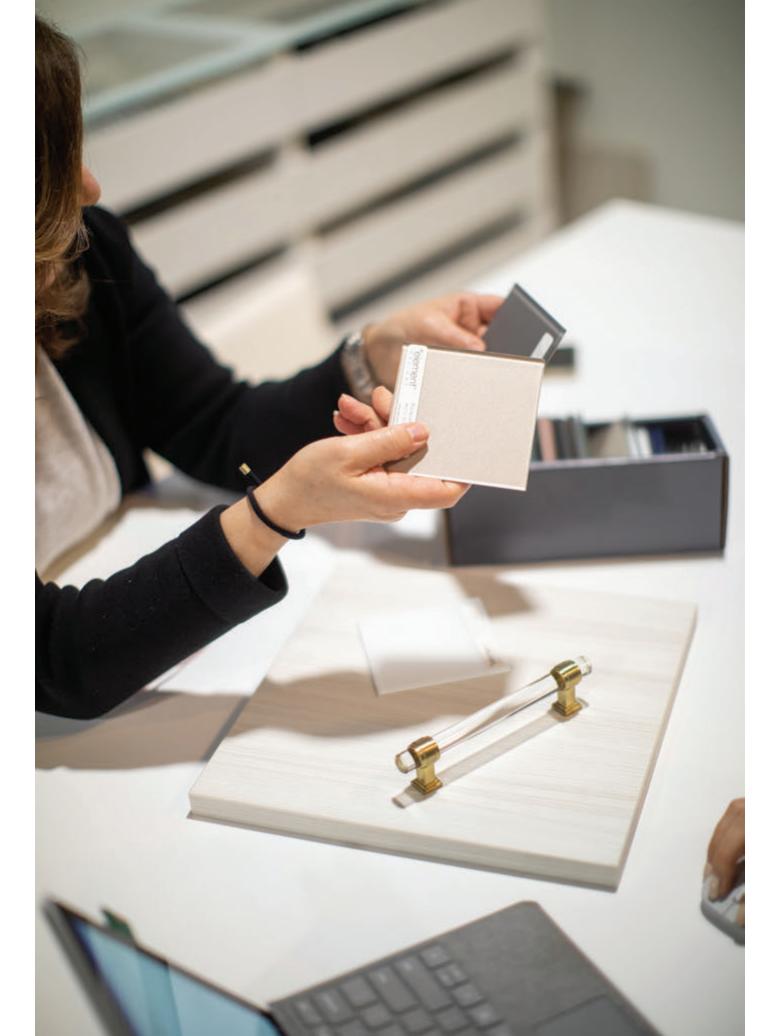
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advise them towards a design that is versatile for any potential buyer. Recently, I had a client who wanted to turn her guest bedroom into a new space and remove the existing reach-in closet. As exciting as that was for me to design, I learned that she and her husband were planning to live there for a year and then sell. I explained to her that if she were to remove a closet with doors in this guest bedroom, her two-bedroom apartment would quickly turn into a one-bedroom, and that may affect resale value. Instead, we were able to design something that worked for her needs while maintaining the integrity of the second bedroom. It's all about listening carefully and providing my clients with options and realistic expectations.

What's your No. I design tip that can be applied to nearly every space?

Know your personal style! Your home is such an intimate and sentimental space, so it's important to create something that makes you happy every time you walk in. The design has a very powerful influence on your mood, whether you are cognizant of it or not. If you are living—and now even working—in your home every day, it really is worth your while to invest in making it a functional and beautiful sanctuary for yourself and your loved ones.

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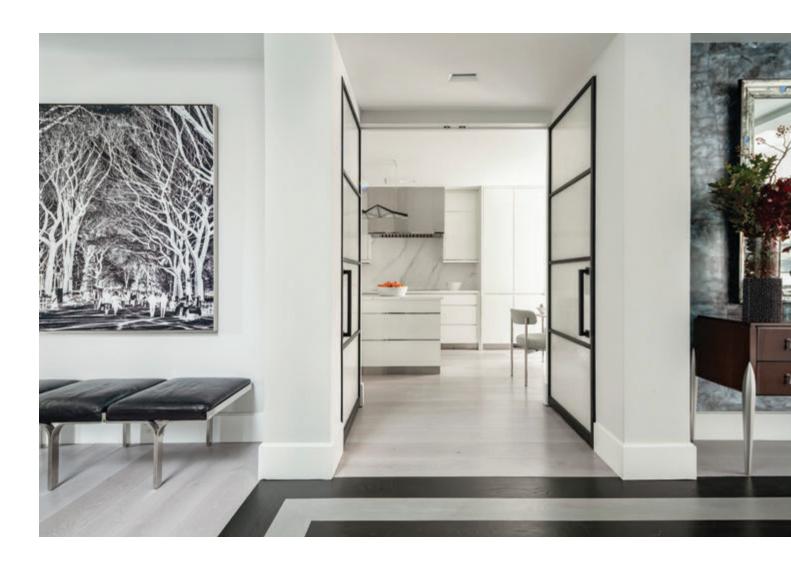


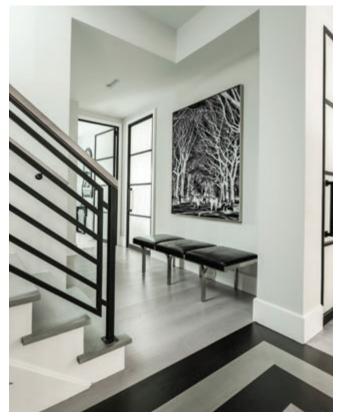




everal years ago, a retired couple from Colorado with a very special connection to New York City decided it was time to purchase a pied-à-terre in Manhattan. The couple had met in New York and their kids now resided there, so it seemed like the perfect place to live part-time to enjoy city life and connect with family. They found the ideal apartment in a twostory penthouse in a prewar co-op on the Upper East Side's historic Park Avenue. The expansive 3,200-square-foot home had everything they were looking for: ample wall space for hanging their extensive art collection, three bedrooms with a den that converts into a fourth, a grand living room, four bathrooms, an outdoor terrace that runs the entire length of the apartment, and an elevator that opens into the apartment's entryway for added security.







A Long-Standing Relationship

The owners' first order of business was to hire Cindy Rinfret, the principal designer of Rinfret, Ltd., based in Greenwich, CT, to design their new home. With a list of high-profile clients from around the world, Cindy is known for her unique blend of city chic, international savoir faire and traditional country style. She has received extensive media coverage, won multiple awards and been recognized by the Andrew Martin Interior Design Review as one of the world's leading interior designers. She is also the author of two books on classic "Greenwich Style," published by Rizzoli.

The clients had worked with Cindy on three previous projects in their hometown of Vail, including the ultramodern ski-in, ski-out house that is their primary residence. "We can read each other's minds," Cindy explains of the relationship. "They gave me the color palette and described the feeling they wanted to create, and I took it from there. They were completely trusting. We were all on the same page, so it was a seamless collaborative process."

New York Glamour from a Bygone Era

The gracious apartment had been converted from two original units to one, and had already been renovated. One of its most appealing features was its unusually high, lofty ceilings—a rare











find in Manhattan-which make the rooms appear even larger than they actually are. The existing floor in the entryway, an inlaid pattern in black and white with a hint of art deco design, set the tone for the decor of the whole apartment.

"My clients wanted the home to capture the prewar glamour of the 1930s, but with a timeless, modern feel," Cindy says of the design scheme. "My goal was to balance the architecture with the interior design to create a seamless look throughout the entire apartment." She accomplished this with a stunning color palette of blues, steel grays, creams and beiges, choosing sculptural furniture, and mixing textures and finishes. "I combined matte with shiny, stone with polished chrome and glass, and silks with leather, velvets and damasks." The result was a gorgeous and sexy blend of New York art deco and Hollywood Regency, evoking the opulent Great Gatsby vibe.

A Room-by-Room Tour

Entering the residence from the elevator, a visitor encounters the magnificent foyer, which serves as the jumping-off point for the apartment. To complement the art deco-style floor, Cindy added a gorgeous custom-colored de Gournay wallcovering called Laique, specified by Rinfret, Ltd., and a stunning mirror with a silver frame. When the living room comes into view, the visitor is overwhelmed by its scope and grandeur, a throwback to a different time and era. This is the hub of the

apartment, the room for friends and family to gather, where the owners installed a custom-made entertainment cabinet to welcome guests. With no details overlooked, the cabinet's lacquered wooden doors decorated with shiny silver open up to mirrored interior, offering a view of wine glasses and liquor bottles waiting for the party to begin.

Because the room is on the back side of the apartment rather than facing Park Avenue, the designer's challenge was to keep it light and airy. She accomplished this with the strategic use of a steel blue, cream and beige color palette, as evidenced in the custom carpet from J.D. Staron. Made-to-order sculptural furniture, including a sofa defined by its gentle wave; walnut accents; gray sheer weave curtains with blue banding; an intuitive blend of leathers, velvets and damasks; and a splash of glass and chrome all lend themselves to Hollywood glamour, but with a distinct New York feel.

Cindy went out of her way to create curved drapery rods for the window treatment—a challenging and tricky design maneuver-to give both height and glamour to the living room and to highlight its architecture. "I didn't want to cut corners and makes straight lines," she explains. "We created something that was simply timeless. The room could have been done in the 1930s or the 2020s."









The clients' preferred blue, silver and gray color palette and the Hollywood Regency theme extend into the master bedroom. A notable architectural feature is a niche into which the headboard was custom-made to fit. To highlight the wall, Cindy chose a hand-painted and embroidered de Gournay wallcovering called Silk Tree in a custom color, which easily becomes the focal point of the entire room. Sculptural chairs and custom hand-blown glass light fixtures by Tracey Glover, rather than table lamps, add the perfect complement.

Cindy chose stunning mirrors and an ultramodern polished chrome canopy bed for the guest bedroom. The lush fabric settee with Lucite arms at the



foot of the bed plays on the art deco theme. Here, too, the mixture of sheens and use of grays and blue pick up the color palette and Regency theme that run seamlessly through the apartment.

The dining room features a beautiful stone table with a walnut base and unusual leather-upholstered, see-through chairs with matching walnut frames. A modern pendant lamp fashioned in a leaf pattern and a rug composed of wool and silk complete the picture. Like all the rugs in the home, it is custom-colored, specified by Rinfret, Ltd., and produced by J.D. Staron. Overall, this room exemplifies the glamour of a bygone era through the use of a combination of materials and contrasting textures and finishes.





While the kitchen and several of the bathrooms were left in their original condition, Cindy took on the powder room with her characteristic bravado. She changed the floor, added a contemporary glass-and-chrome vanity, and chose a wonderful gray lacquered wallpaper. The iconic photograph of Atlas holding the world at Rockefeller Center perfectly captures the feel and glamour of the apartment.

The intimate breakfast nook is perhaps the sweetest touch in the home, giving the smallish kitchen a more expansive and stylish look. Cindy customized a small banquette and tastefully added a custom Tracy Glover blown-glass light fixture.

The Challenges of a Prewar Apartment

When asked about the particular challenges presented by this project and how they were overcome, Cindy notes the limitations of elevators in a prewar building. "Practically every item we specified had to be designed to fit into the building's small elevator, or needed to be assembled inside the apartment," she says. For example, the large J.D. Staron rug in the living room was actually constructed as two separate pieces.

An Overall Success

"My clients' goal was to display the amazing artwork they have collected over the years," Cindy says, "but they also wanted a great en-









tertaining space." Their desire for glamour was tempered by the need for what was also practical, because they did not want to do a lot of maintenance.

In the end, the clients were swept away by Cindy's work. "It's a real change from their country home," she says. "They come here and they feel transported. They adore everything we did. The clients love to come here and use the apartment as often as they can." Indeed, the homeowners relish the timeless and classic vibe that also feels entirely streamlined and modern, as they enjoy the company of friends and family.

Resources

Rinfret LTD Cindy Rinfret 39 Lewis Street Greenwich, CT 06830

202 Phipps Plaza Palm Beach, FL 33480 203.622-0000 rinfretltd.com

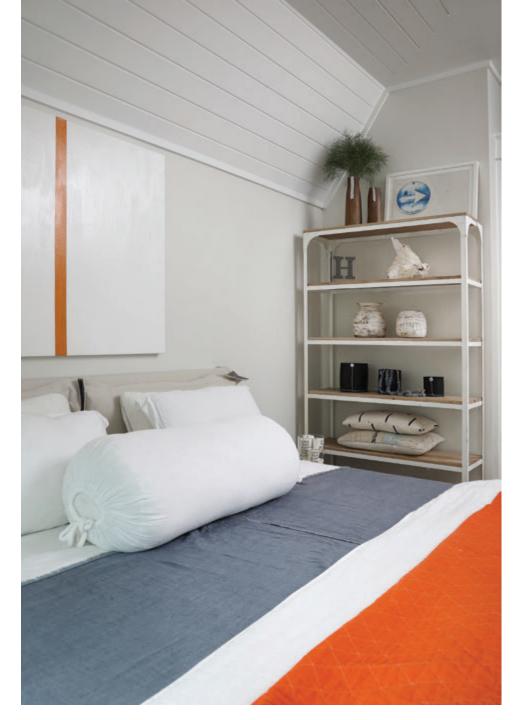






As both a licensed general contractor and an interior designer, Michelle possesses the ability to wrap a client under her wing at the start of the building process, which simplifies the experience for the client. Hogue Interior Design has a complete team ready to help: architects, drafting technicians, contractors, artisans and designers. "We go from blueprints to bar soaps," she says. "We take care of the details, personalizing the space and giving clients the full experience of the sensory, even down to the aromas." Incorporating earthy and unassuming scents with Le Labo Santal 33 candles is a trademark of her designs, as is including a bounty of textures and thoughtful gestures that create a unique atmosphere for the family.

That personalization comes through in a fun and irreplaceable manner. Before painting, for example, Michelle will ask the children of the home to write wish lists on their bedroom walls, so "their



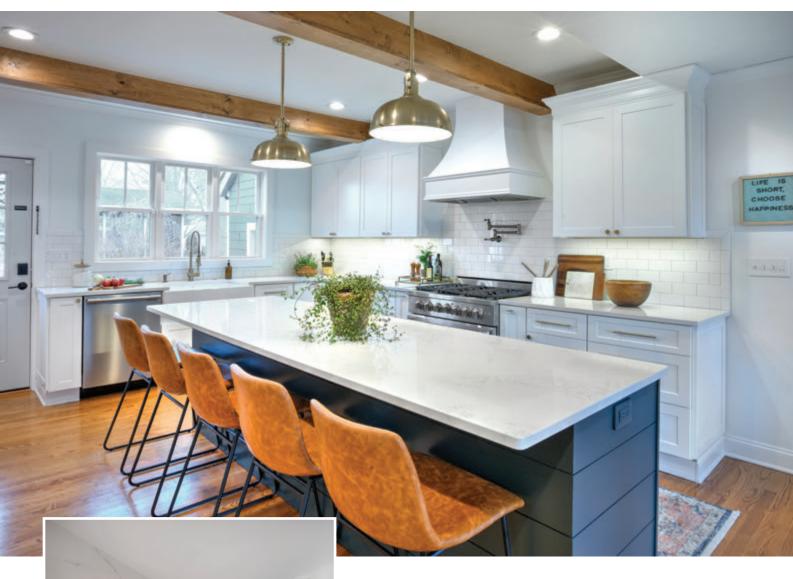




wishes will always be with them," she explains. Michelle recalls one poignant wish: a young child wanted COVID to be over. Michelle encourages the adults to personalize as well, such as urging a husband to write love notes to his wife on the back of some personal framed photos.

While managing the bigger picture, Michelle also pays attention to the small details: a magnificent concrete bathroom tub that retains water temperature, unique splashes of yellow on the office ceiling designed to increase the IQ and activity level, and her bonus obsession, lighting—be it natural, ambient or task. Her projects prominently display her delight in finding the perfect relationship between all three types of lighting and how they interplay with the elements in a room: a clear glass office door allowing natural light to sweep the room, textured mirrors that reflect light from the window, and aromatic candles or an organic lamp on a side table.

From blueprints to aromas, Michelle and her team strive to use her obsession to benefit their clients. "I'm obsessed with providing clients with a complete design-build experience, including what connects with all five senses, the way they live," she says. "They trust us with the process and let us take care of the details, and we take that as a complete privilege and honor."



onathan Gordon likes to describe his design firm, Design by the Jonathans, as a chameleon with expertise in all styles and no particular niche.

His talents allow him to create stunning spaces and even bend the rules when it comes to stylistic choices. For one project, he was asked to blend Art Deco with the classics and modern. No problem; being adept at various styles enabled him to do this. Jonathan and his team mixed mid-century color palettes with Art Deco textures and a modern layout and shapes. "We did it successfully throughout the entire house," says Jonathan, adding that the house garnered media attention after its completion.

Jonathan's unique ability to combine any styles developed out of necessity. When entering the design business, he came in cold with no reputation or publicity to fall back on. He knew that if he was going to make it in the industry, he had to do what was essential to accommodate his clients. "I had to adapt and study quickly," he says. "Within a couple of years, I was proficient in 15 to 20 styles. Today, I can mimic and cross boundaries. I love Studio McGee, but I also love neutrals. I've developed the ability to create styles based on the clients—something very personal to them. We're not selling them something we do, we're selling them something they want. This came from necessity, and we've gotten very good at it."

While his design firm decidedly steers clear of obsessions, he says his personal taste can be summed up as "an obsession with old brown furniture, tongue in cheek." In







designing his own home, his chose the heavily ornate and dramatic style of the Paris Opera House, designed by Charles Garnier and steeped in France's Beaux-Arts period. That period used classic motifs, gilding, sparkles, glass and crystal—entirely separate from Jonathan and his firm, and what he likes to give his clients.

"From a business standpoint, my clients love what they have in their home, just as I love what I have in mine," he says. "We're a scrappy, young firm, and we all love what we do. Our team's goal is to make people happy and, at the end of the day, that's why we do what we do."









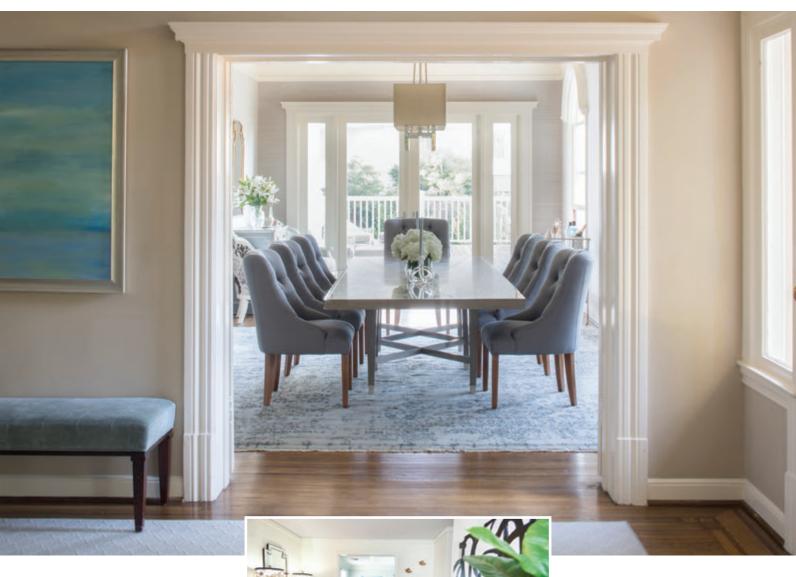
ncorporating the ancient Asian philosophy of Feng Shui into designs comes instinctively to Tori McBrien. It's not something she pushes on her clients at McBrien Interiors, but she's passionate about the subject and always glad to show a client how she can intentionally utilize the practice in a design project.

"It's based on different ancient Asian philosophies pulled together," says Tori, a certified Feng Shui practitioner. "It takes in a bunch of information about how a space feels, and how the energy is manifesting itself on the inhabitants. It then uses that energy and transitions it to better 'qi,' that gut feeling when you go into a house."

Whether or not Tori intentionally utilizes the multifaceted, fluid art of Feng Shui upon a client's request,







however, the practice seeps into her designs. It allows her projects to breathe and flow, giving the homeowner a remarkable space that feels just right. "It plays into the design process naturally; it's obvious," she says. "For example, if someone has trouble sleeping, do they have stuff under their bed? It can't flow. It's almost intuitive. It's

such a natural extension of design. Often, I don't even bring this up to a client. I incorporate it in more and more, and don't necessarily call it out. We talk about flow all the time in design. It's just like the energy flow."

Initially, incorporating Feng Shui can simply be a few nuanced tweaks; major renovations are unnecessary, or can come later. Tori explains that including the five essential elements in Feng Shui-water, fire, earth, wood and metal-can make an incredible difference in a home. These elements have associated colors and shapes, and typically find their way into Tori's designs: wood on a chest, mirrors to represent water, metal via accessories or light fixtures, greenery, and teal-hued blues, which can also represent wood. Water can also be introduced via black elements or squiggly lines.

Green design is also significant to Tori. She chooses brands with sustainable initiatives, and asks clients about their green preferences on McBrien Interiors' intake sheets. The movement is becoming more

prevalent, she notes, even with big box brands, as more products display the FSC or Greenguard certification.

A conscious listener, Tori gleans essential information from clients about what they need or want in a home, and then puts her passions to work, either intentionally or intuitively. "Having this knowledge sets me apart," she says. "I personally know of only two designers who have a background in Feng Shui. In a very saturated market, it makes me stand out, but I don't know if it has drastically changed my design philosophy. It gives me another way to look at a space. With Feng Shui, the adjustments feel so obvious to me, and it's the way I've always designed."

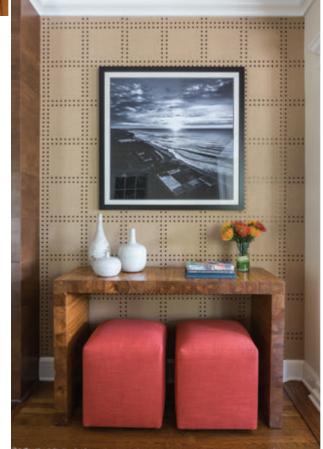


rt evokes fond childhood memories for interior designer Alexis Parent. When she was a girl, her grandparents would collect mid-century art and visit museums during their travels, always including Alexis in their museum visits. She developed a love of modern art that has found its way into Alexis' home and her work. Indeed, infused with her love for color, a lifelong interest in interior design, and her natural inclination toward art, Alexis gives her clients a new take on the importance of artwork in a home.

"I grew to love modern art because of my grandmother, but I learned about all types of art," says Alexis, founder of Alexis Parent Interiors. And artwork, she says, isn't just paintings. "It completes any room in interior design, is a significant investment and brings tremendous joy to a family. A room can feel bare without it; you can completely transform a space if you drop in a piece of colorful artwork."

While her own stunning dining room boasts original mid-century modern pieces inherited from her grandparents—lithographs from Alexander Calder, Marino Marini and Wassily Kandinsky, plus a handmade Murano vase and ashtray—she loves to support local artists, many of whom are showcased in her various projects.

Alexis works to acquire artwork that resonates with her clients, including fine art photography that can add a dramatic backdrop when paired with pops of color and fun textures. She is even known to go through









a client's photos in search of that perfect photograph to highlight a corner, room or memory. "I try to procure pieces that speak to the client's passions or lifestyle; I think that's really important," she says. "If a client can't get a handle on abstract art or the value of it, maybe fine art photography will work. It's a much more literal piece of art, but still offers wonderful impact to a room. It speaks to places the clients love. Art can take so many forms—that's what I love about it. There is no wrong answer."

Alexis incorporates artistic beauty into all her spaces—be it a dramatic black and golden-brown canvas by Connecticut's Meighan Morrison, which serves as both a striking backdrop and a solution to problematic high chair rail, or a colorful piece of art from Florida's Jennifer Gardner, used as a focal point amid serene neutrals.

At the end of the day, however, Alexis knows she's designing for her client. She listens intently and is conscious of what her clients want, careful to take them down their own trajectory and not hers. She also works to keep the experience fun and airy. Indeed, her knowledge of artwork is a unique gift that allows her to foray into the art world, searching for one-of-a-kind pieces to make the perfect room.

"I'm open-minded; I incorporate things not typically in my purview, and have it come out fabulous," she says. "I'm also fun to work with. I definitely keep it light and airy. I really get to know my clients, their likes and dislikes, instead of steamrolling and pushing through. I develop such special relationships with my clients."





arbara Lewis has collected wicker her entire life, so it's not much of a surprise that she likes to incorporate this fabulous organic product into projects for her firm, The Lewis Design Group. And with the product's recent revival, she works with stunning detailed wicker that adds a unique thrill to a home.

"I think it had a revival about five or six years ago, when they started use wicker in living rooms—beautiful chairs and tables," Barbara says. "What goes around comes around. That's really what defines a classic—it comes back. Some clients like it, others might not be quite as receptive. Interestingly enough, my youngest clients want it. I think it's just beautiful. It can be very pretty, especially if it's intricate and unique."

Wicker has found its place in surprising niches, and nothing shows this more than a fun Celerie Kemble wicker lamp in a color-splashed family room, giving the space a "dose of whimsy," Barbara says. "Nothing beats vintage for breathing life into a room, and adding depth and interest to a space."

This lovely, bright and airy family room, with its hot pink pair of chairs, and stunning powder room, with hot pink and orange wallpaper, showcase another obsession of







Barbara's: color. And she's not afraid to use it. She has the innate talent to bring lively hues into a room, pairing them with color-taming elements and finely honing the space so it offers a fun and energetic kick, instead of screaming obscene color.

Barbara is not limited to using color and wicker in her designs, however. She also loves wrapped furniture because of its versatility, color choices, fabulous fabrics and vintage finds. She successfully strives to achieve the right balance and unique look that set a space apart from others.

Interior design is a personal business, she explains, so it's important to truly listen to what clients are looking for in their homes. Her decades in the industry have enabled her to create a vast network that gives her the means "to take a client's dream and make it a reality," she says.

"A great designer knows how to make a client's vision come to life and elevate it beyond what they had imagined," she continues. "Project management, communication skills and knowledge of furnishings, fabrics and construction are all integral to a successful project. There is nothing better than seeing the look on my clients' faces when they see a newly installed project. I always want it to represent them, while infusing the project with my own design aesthetic that brings it to that next level."







isters Emma Stroop and Maddie Loeffler love to mix geometric patterns and organic designs—a passion deeply rooted in the summers they spent as youngsters on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. For them, natural, imperfect, woven materials all have a deep connection to the environment. As partners in the sister-run business, Parker & Parker Interior Design, they utilize their experience and talents to create a transitional design that doesn't feel too beachy.

Despite their affinity for the ocean and clean geometric lines a more transitional look—the two designers are not limited by their interests and can translate it to multiple styles. "Most of what we do is transitional, but we definitely have clients who have a more traditional style," says Emma. "They obviously like more florals and botanicals. In those cases, we might be a little less heavy on the clean geometric lines, but something in the room is always meant to balance it out."

Examples of a pleasing mixture include a sunroom that boasts a sensational Midhill blue ottoman from Serena & Lily, combined with Burmese wallpaper from Sister Parish. The La Jolla

woven chairs and the tasteful, modern floor lamp strike a balance between clean and organic. Emma and Maddie also transformed a quiet area into an attractive reading nook using Pines Midnight wallpaper by FAYCE Textiles to back a bookshelf and add a unique dimension to the nook's ceiling area. The natural baskets and mixed use of accessories add warmth and coziness. The two love styling bookshelves with a mix of scales, and enjoy the art of accessorizing a room, searching for that perfect piece that finishes off a space.

With their love for detail and style, the team brings a unique niche to the design profession. They share a keen eye toward practical, livable spaces that are incredibly child-friendly, but also exude sophistication and serenity. They believe that clients can have spaces that are both lovely and child-friendly. "We possess a skill for kid-friendly designs," says Emma. "We're in the thick of raising young families ourselves, so we get it. Our clients are like us: they want cleanable, durable materials and stylish, safe and practical pieces. We love designing livable, stylish spaces that you and your family will love and use."











here isn't much of a dividing line between Diane Durocher's obsessions and possessions. She loves upcycling and repurposing, and is known for exquisite re-creations and eclectic designs. She also enjoys adding surprise touches to ceilings, an area she calls the oft-ignored "fifth wall."

When it comes to designing, Diane, the owner of Diane Durocher Interiors, has an acute eye for upcycling, and often finds new life in her client's old furniture, showcasing her passion for chairs. "Shop at home first," she says. "Sometimes that chair you find comfortable all it needs is to be reupholstered. It changes the old look, and you don't put it in the landfill."

Old-fashioned furniture typically has good bones and great lines, enabling several life changes—be it paint, stain or a new, fun fabric. Coupled with a relocation in the same residence using Diane's expertise, that piece becomes a lovely, rejuvenated addition to the home. One stunning example of repurposing is two antique bergère chairs straddling a bedroom fireplace. The former over-the-top gold chairs had great lines and were in fantastic condition, but were unsightly in their original state. Diane refinished them in a white glaze finish that brought out the unique carvings, then reupholstered them with exquisitely patterned cut velvet on the back, and a durable robin's-egg blue on the inside and seat covers. The reworked chairs are now a durable, plush and picture-perfect addition to the room.

In the same bedroom, the intricately painted ceiling draws the eye up.

The stunning presentation offers an architectural detail and perfect dimension with a unique blend of paints. "The ceiling is prime real estate—it's a blank canvas," Diane says. "Absolutely, it's forgotten. People don't realize you have endless possibilities. Usually, you just have lighting, but you can paint the ceiling a different color, do some detail.'

Diane isn't limited to "shopping" within her client's home. She has a steady source of antique suppliers and keeps her professional roving eye trained, even while on vacation. Her ability to recognize a good find has landed her in some interesting predicaments, as in the case of the beautiful "vase" this self-described germaphobe once found. Excited by its stunning rosy-pink color, Diane knew she'd found the perfect addition for a showhouse design project. She purchased it and discovered upon pickup that this lovely vase was instead an urn—accompanied by a "gently-used" chamber pot. "I'm such a germaphobe, but here I am with a chamber pot," she says, laughing. She adds, however, that the piece did indeed make a perfect "vase" for her project with full disclosure, of course.

Diane's expert eye allows her to look for unique and usable items both in the client's home and in various outside sources, such as Etsy, antique stores and garage/estate sales. But when it comes to repurposing from a client's home, she offers a valuable perspective. "Sometimes they've been looking at their surroundings for years," she says. "I look at their rooms and things with fresh eyes, and am unafraid to say, 'Yes, let's reuse that.""







hristin Engh of Mare Design loves the beauty of simplicity. While for some people, the word "simplicity" brings a host of negative connotations such as "cheap" and "stark," Christin's design world evokes attractive and serene images filled with sophistication, luxuriousness, elegance and coziness.

"I design spaces that are calming and create the sense of a sanctuary, with neutral color palettes and pops of color set off by a curated collection that adds interest but never clutter to a room," she says. "The final layer of art and accessories is so important to creating beautiful spaces, and I am very mindful of the placement of every design element—from the coffee-table book to the quince branch on the console. Just as accessories are important, so are the negative spaces. I always give space for the eye to relax; this is what makes a room feel serene and calming. A clean white backdrop, along with mirrors, plants and beautifully soft fabrics, creates a sanctuary experience."

Pulling together an elevated look with a clean aesthetic allows the various neutrals to pop using myriad textures, finishes and fabrics instead of patterns. Indeed, Christin confesses to not using patterns often in her designs, because she believes live and organic textures offer a more timeless element to a space. Still, textures and fabrics bring multiple layers of fun, comfort and freshness. Furniture, rug pillows and carefully placed accessories stand out against the whites and add dramatic elements without competing for attention. A stunning and unique curved coffee table with a snakeskin print, and a fun, crocodile-type finish on a side table can add enjoyment and a touch of drama that is pleasing to the eye.

"My secret to pulling together a space that is luxurious and elegant, yet also totally comfortable and inviting, is texture and styling," Christin explains. "Texture adds a subtle dimension and quality to furnishings, especially when the color palette is predominantly neutral. I love how this curvaceous cocktail table is that much more fabulous because of its snakeskin texture."

Christin says her ability to offer simplicity within efficiency, be it a "restrained room design" or project management, is a client-pleasing aspect of her business. Tracking orders and communicating with vendors and artisans is a large part of interior design. "I take project management very seriously," she says. "My clients tell me they appreciate how I keep projects moving along with timely updates. Communication is so important in ensuring that a project not only results in a beautiful space, but is also an enjoyable experience. With so many issues with supply chains these days, these organizational and communication skills are even more valuable to the success of a project."











hen asked what her design obsessions are, Lara Michelle quips, "Things that are in stock." She's joking, but not entirely.

Owner of Lara Michelle Beautiful Interiors, Lara is a lover of unique finishes, furniture and materials, and has a soft spot for custom work that brings one-ofa-kind, specialized items to her client's home. But that enjoyment is a boon in these times of lengthy delays and impossible-to-find items. "I can do unique things with custom pieces," she says,

"but now it's out of necessity, and I can do them easier, without waiting weeks on ends."

Lately, she has been keeping her upholstery workroom busy, which allows her an eight-week turnaround instead of the six months that seems to have hit the industry in the throwback of COVID-19. She's also keeping her carpenter busy with cabinetry by doing everything through him. "He does a lot of really cool custom finishes quickly, instead of taking four, six or sometimes eight months," she says. "So I'm a big fan of custom right now."

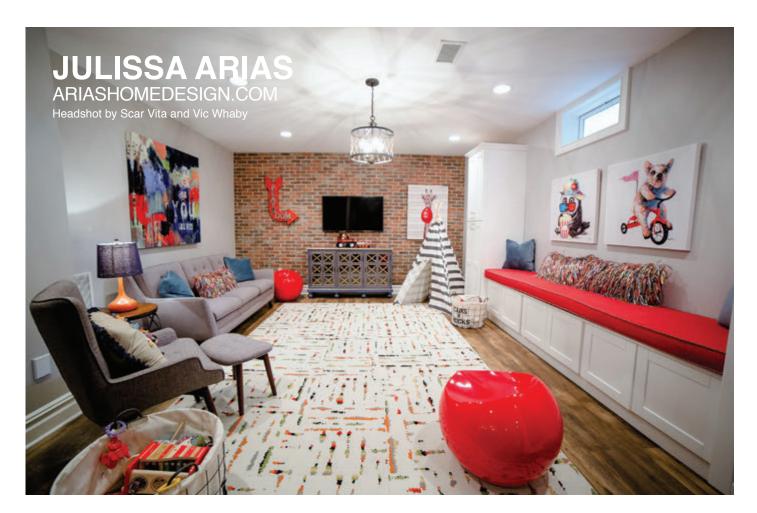
Lara's range of custom work is vast, including mudroom built-

ins, kitchen cabinetry, bathroom vanities, tiles, stone and wood. For all these designs, her team creates unique patterns, such as an intricate starburst by playing with the wood grain, impressive custom fireplace surrounds, and mantels with a variety of stone—think golden onyx for an extraordinary vibe. "You can't get specialties like these through regular furniture companies," she says. "It's so much more creative; you can basically do anything. My client's budget and my imagination are really the limit."

Lara has done hundreds of home renovations over the past 20 years. She says it's

essential to hire an experienced designer because of all the moving pieces involved in a typical project. Her specialty is the design and oversight of whole home scale renovations, which means ensuring everything and everyone are running smoothly and efficiently.

"I've gotten feedback from clients who say they love working with me," she notes. "I select beautiful items that express their tastes. I'm easy to work with, and have an easygoing attitude. I'm detailoriented and manage projects well. I have very good taste, and my clients love the way their homes turn out."









or Julissa Arias, the sky really is the limit. The designbuild firm of Arias Home has its customers covered from beginning to end, from the initial design to the last beautiful throw pillow in a stunning living area. The concept— bolstered by its motto of "Design. Build. Love."—opens up a wide array of possibilities for clients, accomplishing visions and dreams they didn't believe possible.

And for Julissa, a lover of vibrant colors, nothing is impossible when it comes to colors and patterns. It's all about scale and ensuring that the same scale doesn't occupy the same space. "I think there are no rules when it comes to design," she says.

"Sometimes I'll have a client who asks what my style is, but it's not about my style. I'm a big believer in no rules, and if there are rules, they're meant to be broken. I don't think any two patterns can't be together. I tell clients not to hyper-focus on the details; I tell them to think of the entire design."

Julissa likes to encourage those dreams, and part of realizing visualizations may be thinking outside the box or the client's comfort zone. Bright pops of red bring delight in a fun playroom. A mix of textures, fabrics and metals create a sophisticated yet child-friendly space that both meets a child's needs and matches the parents' style. Bright blues and fun surfaces

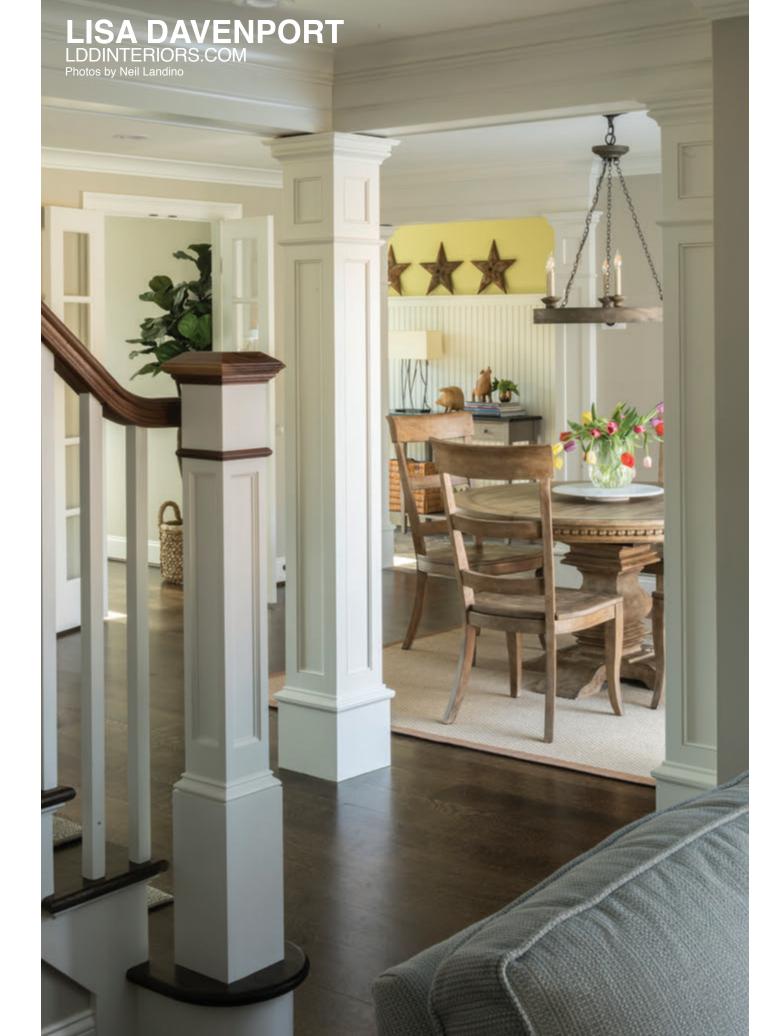


delight and relax the eyes with compatible yet animated neutrals.

"Clients like that I bring in color and patterns," says Julissa. "I've always loved color. I grew up in bright and vibrant cities. I've never been afraid of color; it's so present in my life. That's what my clients like—they would have never thought to do that. If I don't scare you a little bit, I'm doing something wrong."

Julissa says her firm's business concept is what sets it apart from others. She and her team are with their clients through all the bumps and rough spots, keeping the project sailing smoothly through all stages—pulling permits, handling inspections, overseeing furniture delivery, and, finally, hanging the curtains. The idea, says Julissa, is to be present so the clients know "I'm on their side."

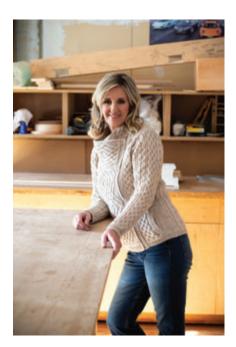
"In most instances, we're working together for a year. We spend a lot of time together," she says. "A lot of our clients are spending a lot of money with us, and it's a scary thing. Working with us puts them at ease."











isa Davenport wants nothing more than to put Americans to work. Her passion for using products made in this country is born from her desire to give artisans, tradespeople, weavers—the gamut—an opportunity to fulfill the American Dream.

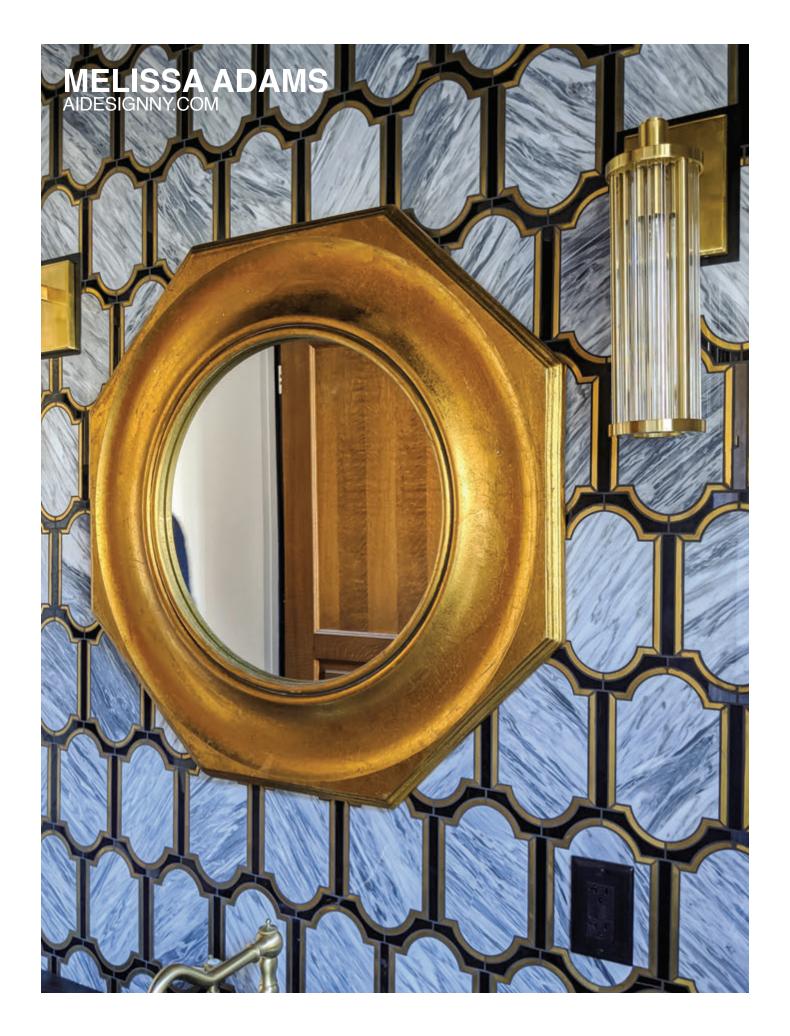
"My dream is to build and furnish homes that are fully American made," says Lisa of LDD Interiors. "In a perfect world, every piece placed in a room would be made here in the states. I really believe in keeping Americans working. We outsource so many products with the reasoning that it's cheaper overseas, but it's not necessarily true anymore. Things are becoming overpriced because it's hard to get them here. A lot of boutique artisans are popping up all over the place. Locked down in their homes, people are finding their own talents and are painting, sewing, building and making their own leather goods. There are a lot of artisans designing and making it here in the states."

For Lisa, it's not enough to just use the high-quality American-made pieces; she wants to know the story behind the pieces—whether it's the stunning green custom-made cabinetry made in Glastonbury, where

Lisa's client and the artisan sat together and sketched out the design; or the Cambria countertops she loves because of the company's desire to give back by helping its employees with their own American Dreams. Who made that exquisitely upholstered chair with the immaculate nailhead detail? And what about that elegant walnut and poplar wood staircase constructed in the shop and brought to the client's home? "When my clients put their hands on the back of that chair, they're holding on to a piece that was made by a fellow American," she says.

Lisa prides herself on being able to tell these tales to her clients. Each piece has a story, she says, and "I possess a freaking awesome collection of them. My ability is to find that American-made product that tells the story."

Lisa's ability to delve into her client's history to find his or her unique style helps her match client to artisan. To put together the client's story, she asks questions like, "What is your favorite ice cream?" and "What is your favorite childhood memory?" She says, "Working with me is like being in second grade again. It's fun, you play, but you're still learning. I want my clients to have fun, to learn."





a starring role in furniture and wall art. It allows the feeling to be more casual and less strict."

She continues: "These days there are so many great options in tile that incorporate metals into the mosaics, and I love using them in conjunction with gorgeous light fixtures to elevate the design aesthetic. Texture and movement are also prevalent in tile now, and where I used to feel bathrooms were more about flat and shiny clean design, I am finding an increased ability to bring in texture. It makes the room feel more comfortable and livable, less sterile."

Melissa is also passionate about emulating the outdoors by using natural colors and textured fabrics in hopes of "creating a mind/ body connection to the outdoors." She says the feeling of being at ease in a space directly correlates to interiors that pull from the exterior. "This is something that is important to me," she says. "I love inside/outside living. It became important to me to not have







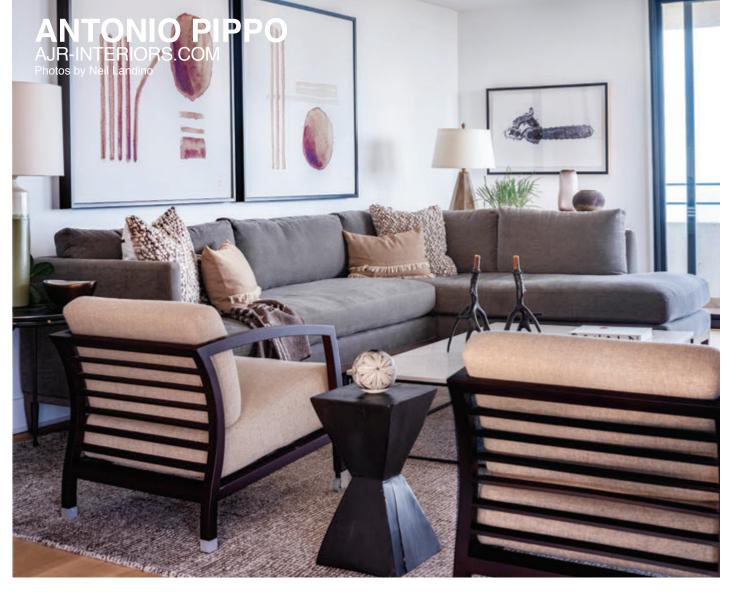


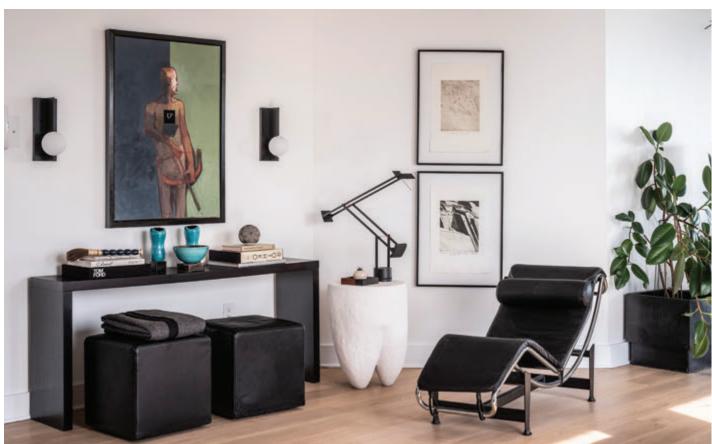


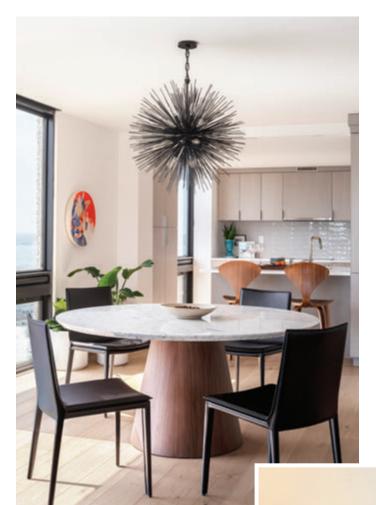
an interior scream louder than my exterior from a color and surface perspective."

Given Melissa's obsession with the outdoors, she says that finding red or yellow walls within her designs is not likely. Instead, her designs radiate organically with washed woods and natural textures, which intertwine exquisitely with her love of metals: Faucets of champagne bronze, tile with inlaid brass, the warmth of a wood door and a gilt mirror are featured in a powder room. A shower with mixed stone tile giving a pebble effect, and white resin bamboo fixtures with a pop of gold jewelry are used for the plumbing fixtures. Melissa creates a stunning aesthetic with her superb ability to interlace magnetic elements.

This year offers a new opportunity for her company. Melissa and her new partner, Scott Rausenberger, formed Melissa Adams Design & Consulting, bringing forth a venture foreshadowed by COVID-19 and the ensuing building and renovation frenzy. Both act as liaisons between off-site clients and design and construction professionals to create a seamless project made more challenging by pandemic restrictions. "People still renting in the city may have decided they want something outside the city," she says. "They're needing a client representative, someone who is going to oversee the whole process. This gives them a single point of access if they need it."







he dark richness of saturated colors and the oldness, yet newness, of black create a space that Antonio Pippo of AJR Interiors says generates a sophisticated, timeless room with a true sense of depth.

Not a fan of bright colors that pop in your face, Antonio likes the muted saturated colors in jewel tones and earthy hues, instead of light and airy colors. He admits these colors can run more toward the masculine end of design, but says that introducing a touch of femininity to the

room is easy to accomplish in subtle ways, such as adding an orchid, a round coffee table, a deep purple or a dusty rose. "More feminine colors on a straight armchair would work," he notes. "A curved chair lends itself to a more feminine look, but if you put a more feminine color on a more masculine straight-armed or club chair, the juxtaposition gives it more of a feminine feel. Masculine has more clean lines.'

Pulling saturated colors out of artwork provides a magnificent focal point and a subtle way to tie together the elements in a room of primarily whites and blacks. The muted and deep col-

oration of a painting in a recent project allows for those saturated pops of color in the fabrics and furnishings.

Antonio believes black is both old and new at the same. "To me, the appeal of black is that it is classic, timeless and yet cool again," he says. "It has made a strong comeback in design because it is so versatile. It looks great as an accent color in hardware, lighting and decor. Black even works as a neutral-but with more panache."

Listening and committing to his clients are the hallmarks of Antonio's professionalism and have helped foster many long-term client and vendor relationships. His wellrounded experience within the profession also allows him to see numerous angles of the business. "My expertise and experience in home furnishings, retail, construction and project management allow me to quickly respond to questions and challenges," he says. "When asked, I can quickly estimate furnishings as well as suggest construction resolutions and their costs. Lastly, I feel the homes I design beautifully reflect each individual client, and usually exceed their expectations."















e wants a purple accent wall; she does not. His favorite color is purple; she doesn't mind it, but not an entire wall. Purple is a great color to use in interior design, in moderation: throw pillows, a fun accessory or something else designed as a nod to the homeowner's favorite color.

Maria Lo Iacono steps in with knowledge and expertise about her passion: design that can stand the test of time and resist the pull toward the current yearly trend, whatever that may be. "Sometimes you get two people who clash, and you have to figure out how to make everyone happy, what is going to work with the family," says Maria, owner of Maria Lo Iacono Interiors. "One person will focus on one element at a time, and that's when you get in trouble. And that's when timelessness comes into play. One wants to buy trendy; they don't see the big picture. We love purple, but we can do it with the purple pillows."

Maria wants her clients to be able to look at something and still see the beauty over time—something that can change locations in the home, or have a slight makeover with unique materials, but still possess an attractiveness that permits the homeowner to fall in love all over again with its relevance.

Her projects reflect this timeless element: for example, a light and airy, cozy sitting arrangement with a nonmatching Bergère chair and ottoman moved to a fresh environment and spruced up with new fabric and legs. A custom-made contemporary table fits right into this new space. Maria also transformed a living room from a formal area with period furniture to an everlasting treasure with simple colors and lines, quality high-performance fabric, and no over-the-top theatrical flair. But timeless does not mean boring, as a handsome library project shows beautiful appointments, relevant colors and stunning black door frames and bookcases. The mohair and wool sofa, plus the pops of blue, give an exciting allure to the space. In a unique design move in this space, Maria changed the crown molding into a frieze with Roman numerals that run the room's perimeter.

Maria possesses the ability to create an authentic space true to the homeowner, but also something she believes in. With her strong design background, she likes to make a space special for the homeowner by incorporating sentimental pieces within the decor, such as repurposing and framing Hermès scarves given to a homeowner by her late father.

"I look for things that are authentic, true and can speak to other things in the house and to the people in the house," says Maria. "There are things we've been using for a long time, but don't forget this is 2021. One hundred percent, I believe in sustainability. It was used in one way, and now it's used in another way."



t's all about coming home, exhaling and relaxing in a calm and inspirational environment for Lisa Cloughen of Melone Cloughen Interiors. Lisa achieves this easily by tapping into her love for yoga, using its similar thought processes to buoy her interior design projects.

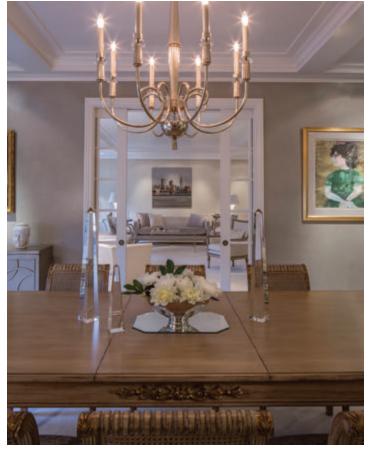
Creating and filling a space with the essence of her clients helps to establish a haven surrounded by natural objects, be they crystals, corals, found items or defining artwork—all bringing forth the ideals of yoga in an elegant manner. "It's hugely important to incorporate elements of the clients," says Lisa, and this doesn't have to mean surpassing the budget. "If you can't create something that is desired by your client without having an extravagant budget, you're not doing your job."

A welcoming and relaxing home that offers a meditative quality doesn't imply that specific colors or patterns are off-limits. Mixing vivid corals or spectacular pinks with grays, whites, chocolate browns or blacks can create a soothing and sophisticated environment, as can a stunning array of neutrals. "It shouldn't be Mario Buatta on steroids," says Lisa, referring to the late interior designer known for his lush floral prints. "If your living room is deep magenta on the walls, make sure the rest of the room calms you down, so you don't want to run away from it. Your environment shouldn't exhaust you with sensory overload. No one color is not allowed, but be careful how you do it.

Lisa designed a fabulous meditative space ideal for quiet conversation or reading. Billowy sheer window coverings, the tranquil sound of running water, and the watchful eye of Buddha offer that sense of space and oneness with the environment. Buddhas hold a special place for Lisa, as do collected natural items such as shells and rocks. She believes these elements are soothing and









give balance and juxtaposition, allowing her to play with quantities and placement to find that unique vibe for her clients.

Lisa excels in color sense and clean designs. "The nuances of getting it right are not easy," she says. "Not everyone knows the right combination of warm and cool tones, and it gets tricky. How are you going to sort them so you get the right level of cool and warm to ensure that the space is soothing and feels good?"

She concludes, "I think too much visual clutter doesn't help anyone. Some of what I design in this crazy world is restraint, and that's not a bad thing."







22

Sarah Blank has learned that one of the main reasons a client wants a kitchen remodel is the lack of storage space. It's not a difficult stretch to understand why Sarah's passion is helping her clients become more organized.

"With our lifestyles so busy these days, who has time to look for anything?" says Sarah, owner of Sarah Blank Design Studio. "Everything in a kitchen must have its place. While designing a new kitchen for a client, it's key for me to understand what they own, what they like and how they function, so the flow is seamless, and the ability for my clients to find what they need becomes effortless. With an organized kitchen, the workings of the home become so much easier."

With the trend toward large kitchens as family gathering spots, it's surprising that Sarah finds some kitchens just too big for effective organization, citing the much larger space as a hindrance to functional cooking. "If you're a cook, you're not going to run around the kitchen," she says. "You want to work in a tight space: work-prep areas, range, fridge. If you say, 'I want a really big kitchen because I love to cook,' that's not going to help you at the end of the day. You're going to be exhausted. However, small or big kitchen, you have to balance so you don't have a bottleneck."

Elevating her penchant for organization, Sarah looks for nearby auxiliary spaces, such as a basement, butler's pantry, nook or alcove that can support the kitchen







and keep clutter at bay, and never overlooks the small details that can create more space, such as deeper base cabinets with deeper tracks.

While people appreciate the need for organization and storage, Sarah says they don't often know what goes into the planning stage. Education is key to ensuring that her clients get what they need. "I find that clients like my work for its high level of detail," she says. "People call me and tell me they saw my work and it's beautiful. I think they appreciate what it is, but I don't think they know what goes into it."









ith its humble porch, white wood siding and sloping roof, this charming home blends perfectly with neighboring bungalows along a quiet street in Norwalk, CT. Originally a 1,200-square-

foot summer beach cottage, the residence was built in the 1950s on a lot measuring just 7,400 square feet, a short distance from the water. While from the street it looks like the original house, once you step inside, the splendor of the light and airy interior takes your breath away. You quickly realize it is a meticulously conceived and luxurious designer home, thanks to its new owner and her architect, JMKA | architects, based in Westport and Greenwich, CT.

Now almost quadruple the size of the original at nearly 4,000 square feet, the gracious home features three stories plus a roof deck, with four bedrooms and three-and-a-half bathrooms. Its external space includes an expansive ipe wood deck, garage/pool house, private garden and backyard large enough for a swimming pool—all on a lot that is tiny by any standards.

Starting with a Great Architect

The new owner had already worked with Jeff Kaufman, the principal and lead designer of JMKA, on two previous projects. The firm could not have been a better choice for this project, based on its experience designing numerous homes throughout the area, and a reputation built on trusted customer service, team building and unparalleled project management. The company's philosophy is that custom architecture should be grounded to its place and respond to its environment; it is committed to using regional materials and sustainable strategies. Its projects





are always authentic and influenced by the past, but built for the present and the future.

The firm's philosophy and ethic are evident in this newly renovated home. It pays homage to its past with its classic bungalow-style details, such as the original gas lanterns on the front porch and its white beadboard walls. Yet the house is also functional and modern, featuring bathrooms with radiated heated floors, a concealed Liftmaster staircase, and Nest and Sonos technology installed throughout the home.

A Yearlong Project

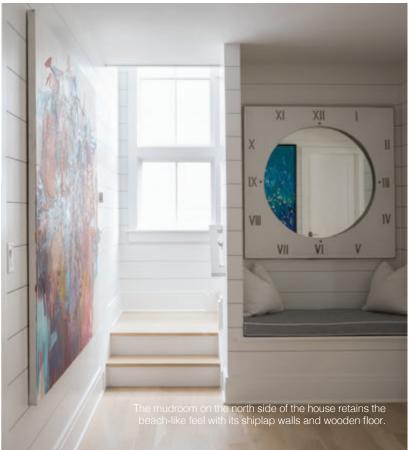
The scope of the project was very broad. It began with raising the building four feet to bring it up to code, and creating a new foundation. The design team gutted and renovated the original structure and doubled the square footage of the ground and second floors, with a new addition at the rear of the house. Also part of the remodel plan was a large third-floor entertainment space that also serves as an extra bedroom, complete with its own bar and bathroom.

"We designed the back addition to match the front of the house," Jeff explains. It houses the kitchen, living room and dining room, which open to an outdoor deck that is as large as the new ground-floor addition. When the living room doors are fully open, there is an organic flow between the indoors and outdoors. "The client got a lot of house out of this project," says Jeff. "Ultimately, we created a huge amount of usable space out of a very small footprint."

The team at JMKA maximized the home's proximity to the water and







use of outdoor space. One thoughtful design detail was adding a roof deck above the attic. Its access is provided by a cleverly designed remote-control staircase that is hidden in an inconspicuous box on the roof—open only when needed, and out of sight when not in use. The private roof deck is built out with a classic white railing to match the area's architectural style on the street side, and glass on the side facing the Long Island Sound to augment the view. "Because we raised the house four feet," Jeff explains, "the water view from the roof deck is that much more spectacular."

At street level, the architects built a fully enclosed garden that is completely hidden from view. Because the local zoning ordinance allowed only one accessory building, they designed a garage that doubles as a pool house, with enough room in the backyard for a small swimming pool that is yet to be built.

A House for Art and Entertainment

Jeff describes the owner as a "major entertainer." She has a large circle of friends and family who spend holidays and vacations together, so she wanted the house to have ample space for hosting large crowds. With that in mind, the architects designed the house with areas for groups to gather on the ground and third floors, and outside on the spacious deck. Overnight guests are accommodated in the two guest bedrooms on the sec-





ond floor and the third-floor attic that functions as an additional bedroom. The client has an extensive collection of artwork, with some of the canvases very large. Jeff saw this as a hurdle during the design process. "In this type of house," he says, "it's practically impossible to find walls enough to hang artwork so it can be appreciated from a distance." The solution was to create an open space in the center of the house, visible from the living room, so the paintings could be seen from far away.

Bringing in the Light and the Sea

Because the home is sited on a particularly small lot, with the neighboring house just 15 feet away, the lack of natural light inside was also a challenge. According to Jeff, "We used lots of windows to bring in as much light as possible." The large second-floor dormers replaced the smaller original ones, solving some of the problem. Another solution was to create a long, transom-like window in the kitchen above the backsplash to let in more light. Numerous windows were installed on the south-facing side of the house to capture the afternoon sun, while the living room doors open entirely onto the west-facing deck

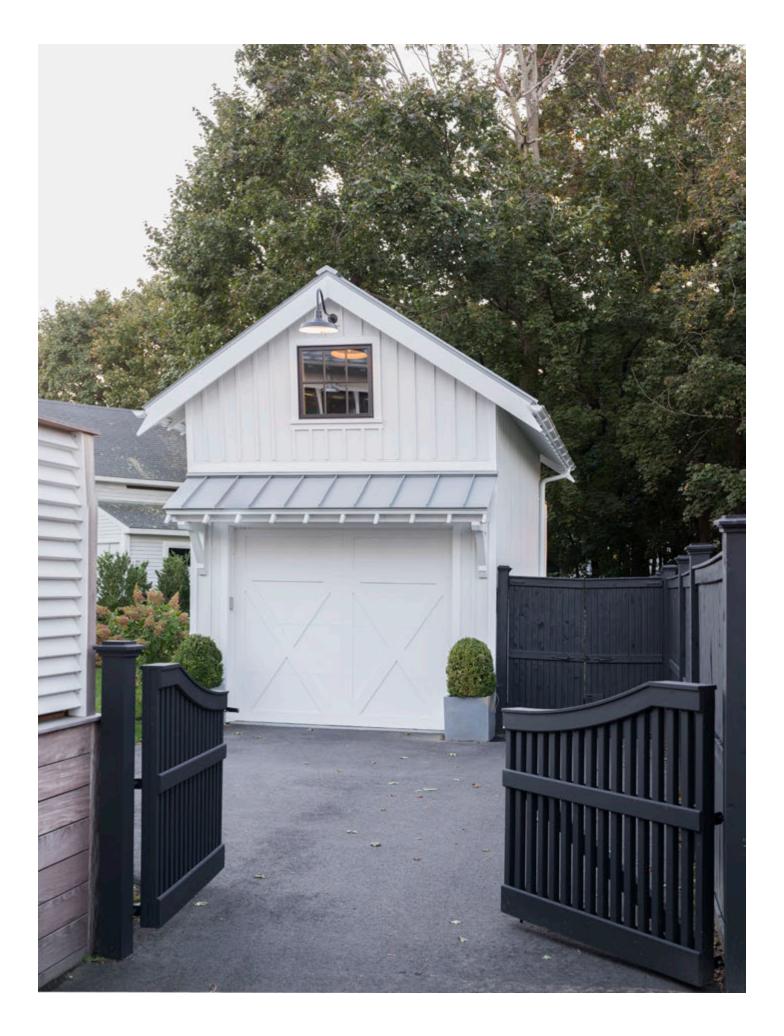
for a glimpse of the evening sun.

Perhaps the defining architectural detail of the house, however, is its beautifully and cleverly designed oculus, installed in the roof. Strategically located in the middle of the house, it is visible from the ground floor, allowing light from the skylight three stories above to filter down as it passes through a glass disc on the third floor.

The placement of the windows also enables the water to be seen from many of the rooms. While the view from the roof deck is spectacular, the tranquil Long Island Sound is also visible from the third floor as well as the master bedroom and bathroom, where it can be enjoyed while soaking in the oval tub.

Stunning Interiors

Overall, the house is light, bright and airy. White oak planked floors and white shiplap on the walls are used throughout, creating a sense of flow and cohesion. The kitchen—featuring a Calacatta marble-top center island, custom cabinetry, Glassos countertops and a hidden













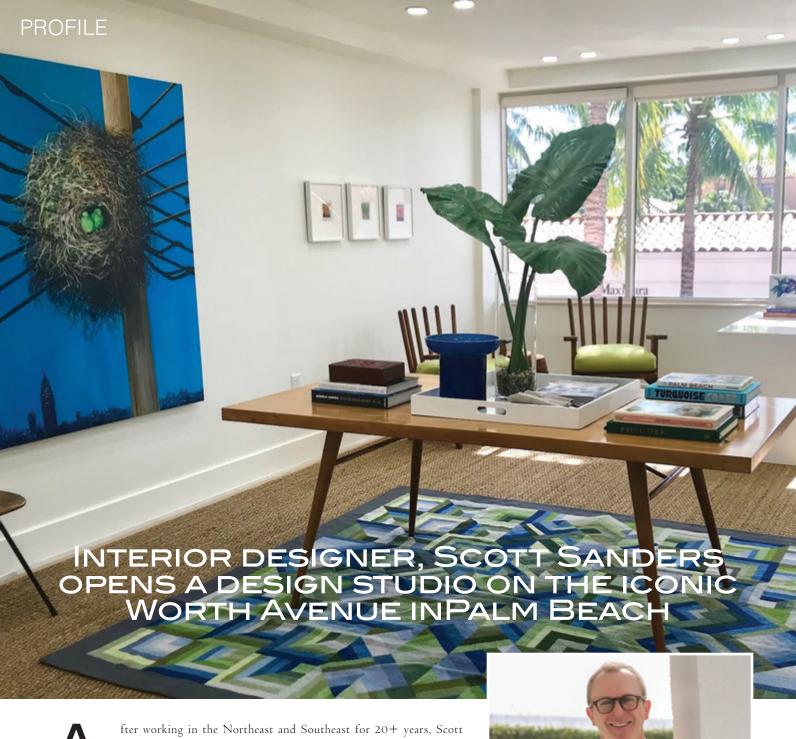
bar—opens to the great room, which has a gas fireplace. The beamed ceiling was designed to create dimension, so as light comes in, it plays with the texture rather than reflecting off a flat surface. A charming breakfast nook was created in the window off the side of the kitchen.

As for the interior design, the owner did much of the decorating herself. "She has a very good eye," Jeff says. "She bounced ideas off me, so it was very much a collaboration, but she gets the credit."

Indeed, both Jeff and his client would agree that the reincarnation of this modest beach bungalow was another successful collaboration. Through his expertise and vision, and her excellent eye and exquisite taste, the result was a stunning, state-of-the-art home that serves as a wonderful venue for both entertaining and quietly enjoying the Connecticut seascape—all in a tiny footprint.

Resources

JMKA | architects Jeff Kaufman 25 Imperial Avenue Westport, CT 06880 203.222.1222 jmkarchitects.com



decided to make his winter home in Palm Beach his permanent home. You may have seen Scott at two of New York's Kips Bay Showhouses or read his books, "Picture Perfect" "or "The Insider Guide to the Lord Baltimore Hotel and Baltimore Too." Scott's design services will call Palm Beach County (South Florida) home.

Come visit and browse his Worth Avenue mid-century furnished design studio showcasing his personal contemporary art collection...and get inspired.

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