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VOLUME 20 ISSUE 5 - 2023

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Design + Decor is published six issues per year. To subscribe: [www.dd-mag.com](http://www.dd-mag.com); Back issues can be purchased at [www.dd-mag.com](http://www.dd-mag.com). For editorial inquiries: Editor, Design + Decor, 349 Forest Hills Boulevard, Naples, Florida 34113 or e-mail: [mattkolk@me.com](mailto:mattkolk@me.com). For advertising inquiries: Please call Shelley McCormick at 203-545-7091. Reproduction whole or in part without permission is prohibited. All projects described in this publication are for private, noncommercial use only. No rights for commercial use or exploitation are given or implied. The opinions expressed by writers for articles published by Design + Decor are not necessarily those of the magazine.



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VOLUME 20 ISSUE 5 | 2023



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*“I love luxury. And luxury lies not in richness and ornateness but in the absence of vulgarity. Vulgarity is the ugliest word in our language. I stay in the game to fight it.” - Coco Chanel*

Like Coco, Design + Decor stays in the game not exactly to fight vulgarity, but to share with the world what luxury design means, and who creates the products that go into designing an exquisite home. For two decades now, we have had the pleasure of working with brands far and near, and look forward to continuing our tradition of sharing only the best.

That is why for this issue, The Design Issue, we decided to have some fun and make “Luxury Matchmaking” our theme. We took a cue from The Proust Questionnaire, a parlor game popularized by French novelist Marcel Proust, who believed that by answering certain questions, an individual will reveal his or her true nature. Take a look at this year’s designers and their answers, and choose the one who stands out to you for your next project.

Our “In the Field” feature, “The Famous First Concrete Pool,” is the story of the oldest swimming pool company in America, Wagner Pools. The Wagner Pool Company was started by Edward L. Wagner in 1919 and is now owned and operated by the fourth generation of family members, the sons of John Gedney Jr. and his wife Mary Louise Wagner Gedney. Our piece tells the fascinating story of how E.L. Wagner introduced the swimming pool to the privacy of homeowners’ backyards, and how his critical innovations, sophisticated systems and commitment to excellence continue to have a major effect on the pool industry.

Sadly, as we were putting this issue together, we learned that John Gedney Jr. had passed away. We send our condolences to the Wagner Family, and dedicate this edition to John Gedney Jr.’s memory.

There is so much more to explore in this publication, so please take the time and enjoy your favorite beverage while you dive into our Fall edition.

Best,

Matthew J. Kolk  
Editor-in-chief



PHOTO BY JANE BEBEE



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MELANGE

# FABULOUS FOR FALL



*Eichholtz Solaris Mirror*

*This golden convex mirror is made with layers of gold spikes that glamorously imitate the rays of the sun. [sweetpeaandwillow.com](http://sweetpeaandwillow.com)*

*Kravitz Pendant*  
*Inspired in part by the big afro hair styles that popularized the 60s, Kravitz Suspension is also a tribute to the bold, multiple award winning rock star, Lenny Kravitz. [delightfull.eu](http://delightfull.eu)*



*Eichholtz Del Rio Desk*

*Elevate your home office with the opulent glamour of this Del Rio Desk. The brass accents complement the rich mocha oak veneer beautifully, giving this desk a sense of dazzling warmth. [sweetpeaandwillow.com](http://sweetpeaandwillow.com)*



*Soda Murano Glass Tables-*

*Soda was born in a Murano furnace where each table is blown, drawn-out and shaped by three master glass-makers. They are equipped with a complex system of burners to keep the same temperature throughout the mould, which is essential to give a hammered feeling to the texture. [gomodem.co.uk](http://gomodem.co.uk)*



*Sika Orange*

*Sika is a deer specimen rooted in Japan, whose strength and elegance inspired SIKI Wingback Chair. The most distinctive features of this wing chair are the button detailing in the inner back, the nailhead trim and the brass details of the arms. [covethouse.eu](http://covethouse.eu)*



*Geisha Chair*

*Designed to perform in a matter that indulges the eyes, the Geisha 's curves grace a room with the extravagance and poise of a Kyoto Geisha. [bykoket.com](http://bykoket.com)*





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# FALL INTO WINE

**D**esign + Decor, along with Dave Wagner, proprietor of Sipstirs Fine Wines and Artisanal Spirits and Craft Brews, hosted an intimate event for our clients at Sipstirs' Wilton, CT, location on September 6. Guests were treated to a special tasting of wines provided by Votto Vines, which included Champagnes, Chardonnays, Sauvignon Blancs and Tuscan-style red wines. To accompany these fine beverages, Design + Decor chose a variety of crostini with different toppings. (After all, charcuterie boards are so last year!)

Dave also has a location in Darien. He and his staff are knowledgeable and eager to assist you in finding that perfect wine or Champagne for your gathering. Or, if you are looking to create a great cocktail, they will help you discover the spirit that suits your taste.

Both the Wilton and Darien locations of Sipstirs always have an event and/or tasting going on, and also offer a wine club you can join to get a monthly delivery of your favorite picks.

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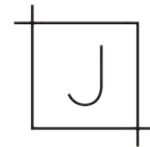


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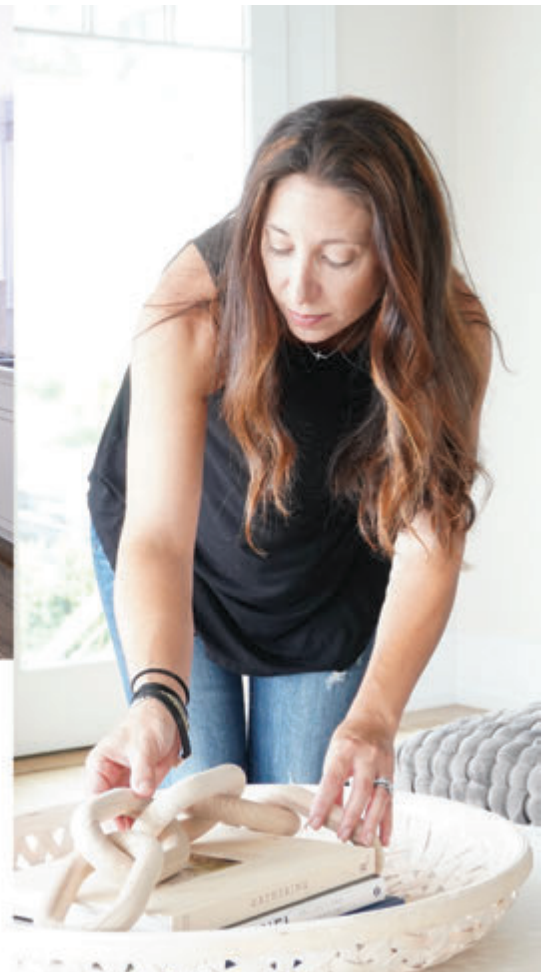




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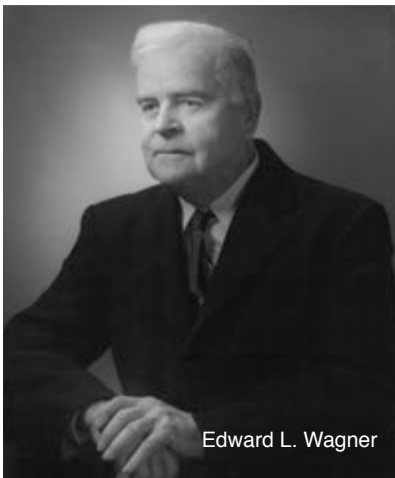
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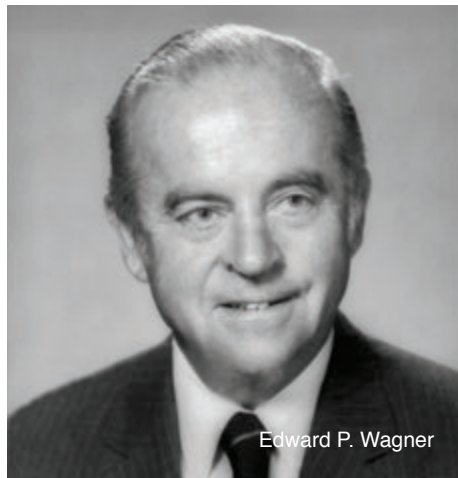
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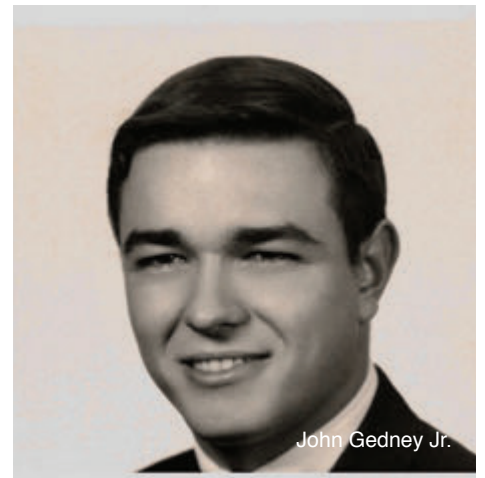




Edward L. Wagner



Edward P. Wagner



John Gedney Jr.

**T**he oldest swimming pool company in the country, Wagner Pools of Darien, CT, has the reputation of creating top-quality custom luxury pools for residential and commercial customers

and the Caribbean. Usually, clients pay us to travel, put up our room and board, and have us build their pool in Martha's Vineyard or Nantucket because they like the work we do over there."

John C. Gedney III, vice president of E.L. Wagner Company Inc., talked about the expansive nature of Wagner's work. "We do most of our work in Fairfield County, CT, and Westchester County, NY," he notes. "But we also do jobs farther away, like in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, Cape Cod, Fishers Island off New London,

John comes from a family of civil engineers. His firm was started in 1919 by his great-grandfather, Edward L. Wagner, who was trained as a civil engineer. Soon after Edward established his company, Adolph Zukor, a celebrated Hollywood producer who lived in the suburbs of New York City, asked E.L. Wagner Company Inc. to build him a concrete swimming pool. Edward rose to the occasion and constructed the first such pool in the





United States. Zukor loved the pool, and so did his famous friends, including the Rockefellers, the Vanderbilts and the Astors. They, too, wanted pools like Zukor's, and before long, friends of friends were asking for pools, and this widespread trend ended up launching the swimming pool industry.

The pools of the mid-20th century didn't have the filtration equipment that exists today, so Edward L. Wagner had to develop methods to keep the water clean. He was extremely creative when he built a swimming pool. He sometimes constructed it near a natural spring, which would fill the pool and then drain out the other side, keeping the water flowing through it, so it was clean all the time. Over the years, Edward worked with other engineers to come up with filters and pumps.

As time passed, John's grandfather, Edward P. Wagner, took over the business from Edward L. Wagner. The company continued constructing pools of concrete—until gunite was introduced in the late 1930s and early '40s. John's grandfather helped bring gunite to the



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swimming pool industry and helped set the standards for its use in pools—standards that are still used today.

Gunite is a building material consisting of a mixture of sand, water and cement that is pumped through a hose at high pressure into the framework of the pool. Once the gunite is sprayed into place, the swimming pool is crafted with long trowels, which cut the concrete to the right widths and shape. Steps, benches, spas and water features are created. Steel rebar is used to reinforce the concrete and provide the pool with strength.

“Before gunite,” says John, “you’d have to form each bay of concrete—each wall and floor bay of the pool—and caulk them together with tar. That would seal the joints between the con-

crete floors and walls, so they wouldn’t leak.” Since the invention of gunite, instead of pouring concrete, the building team sprays the material through a hose at high pressure, creating one seamless pool. “You can make a pool where the walls started to curve to the floor,” says John. “It would be sort of like a Roman arch, which is a very strong type of structure.”

The finish is one of the most important features of a pool, says John, and there are three different types of pool finishes. The basic type is the plaster one, which is similar to a plaster wall in a house. “It has crushed marble dust, which is the sand in the mix, and then waterproof white cement with different color dyes added,” says John. “White gives you light-blue-colored water, gray gives you darker blue, black gives you an even deeper





blue finish, and you can do all kinds of colors in between.” There are some drawbacks to plaster, however. “It can stain a little more easily from leaves, or if a hairpin falls out and rusts on the bottom,” says John. “When you first put it on, it’s nice and smooth. But as it ages from the sun and chlorine, or if the pH gets too low, it can start to take away the smooth layer of cement, expose the sand in the mix, and feel like sandpaper.”

The middle-of-the-road finish is the QuartzScapes or quartz-based. “It’s crushed quartz mixed in with the plaster mix, and trowelled smooth and acid washed,” says John. “There’s a couple of ways to expose the crushed aggregate in the finish mix. It’s more durable than the plaster, and it looks nice. It adds a little more sparkle to the water, and a lot of people like that.”



The top-of-the-line finish is the pebble finish. “These are river-worn pebbles about an eighth of an inch in diameter mixed with different color dyes and white cement, which give different water colors,” says John. “They feel like an orange peel in texture, and will last a long time. Wagner installed my dad’s pebble finish on in the early 1990s, and it still looks great.”

Over the years, Wagner Pools has grown in size, and today the company has a landscape architect and a 3D designer on staff. The critical part of building a swimming pool is doing the initial design work, and figuring out everything before starting the project. “Fairfield and Westchester have a lot of rules for how much you are allowed to build on your property,” says John. “This has gotten more and more tricky every year.”

A photograph of a modern kitchen. The kitchen features white cabinetry, a white countertop, and a window with a floral valance. There is a sink with a faucet, a stove, and a refrigerator. The kitchen is decorated with a bowl of lemons, a vase of flowers, and a loaf of bread on a cutting board.

  
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Nevertheless, Wagner is dedicated to helping clients achieve their swimming pool design goals. “One of the big things Wagner has always had—back to my great-grandfather and grandfather—is engineering skills,” says John. “We’ve done all kinds of extremely complicated projects over the years—on the side of cliffs, vanishing edges, all kinds.”

One challenge with building pools is not knowing what’s underneath the ground. “Sometimes you’ll hit ledge rock,” says John. “You can hire a soil scientist to drill holes where the pool would be excavated, but nobody ever does that unless you’re near a swamp or the Long Island Sound or something with mushy soils that will not be suitable to hold up the pool.”

Hiring a soil scientist, explains John, could cost a client around \$10,000. Typically, the scientist might discover ledge rock under the soil. Clients would be better off seeing what’s under the ground during pool construction, he says, and putting that \$10,000 towards correcting the problem.

When asked how he knows if a client is happy, John replies, “Some clients use our service department for decades, having us do weekly service and opening and closing the pools for the seasons. We provide a high level of customer service in everything we do.”

In the Northeast, people need to close down their pools at the end of the season. Wagner helps winterize their clients’ pools so the pipes don’t freeze







and the structures are safe over the cold months. “We have a winter maintenance program where we come out once a month and check on the pools,” says John. “Then, in the spring, we usually tell clients a few weeks before they want to go swimming to set that date for opening the pool. We’ll come out, take off the cover, take out the plugs, reconnect the equipment, turn everything back on and balance the water chemically and sanitize it. We’ll also vacuum any winter debris that might have gotten under the cover.”

Wagner Pools has been going strong for more than a century, giving customers pools they can share with their families and friends for many years.

*Resource:*

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# DESIGN + DECOR







# NEVER OFF THE RACK

D2 Interieurs turns spec into spectacular  
for a young family moving from the city to Westport.

Story by Heather Shoning | Photography by Jane Beiles





If founder and CEO Denise Davies of D2 Interieurs were to be known for one thing only, it would not be for providing traditional interior design services. Bold use of color? Sure. Contemporary take on custom furnishings and rugs? Yes. Creating an unconventional and unimaginable yin and yang of pattern and texture, brazen and subdued, mid and mod? One hundred percent.

Denise knows design. Before launching D2 Interieurs in Weston, CT, in 2010, she enjoyed a 20-year career as a fashion executive in New York City, Los Angeles and Florence, Italy. Today, she manages a team of four, often working on more than 20 projects in various stages of design and construction at once. Her portfolio includes more than 75 residences in New York City, East Hampton and Southampton on Long Island, Fairfield and Litchfield counties in Connecticut, New York's historic Hudson Valley, and South Florida.

Of course, every project takes into account the homeowners' personal design aesthetic and how they will live in the home. But Denise's magic comes from her ability to turn her clients' wishes into something they never could have conceptualized, thanks to her signature touches. These include custom-designed and built furnishings, outstanding lighting, and liberal use of color, texture and pattern to elevate a home from basic to breathtaking.

That's exactly why she was contacted by a young family moving from the city to Westport, CT, with the request that she turn their spec home into a vibrant, elegant, family-friendly space in which to grow. "There are pieces of my personal aes-









thetic in this project,” says Denise. “I love to play with scale, color and pattern. I’m not afraid of mixing colors, but if you look at what we do, the bones of the room are very neutral. It’s one of my gifts to be able to bring colors and patterns together and make them work.” She’s also a fan of mid-century modern, which comes into her projects in subtle—and sometimes not-so-subtle—ways.

The first thing Denise did here was to lighten the dark wood floors throughout the residence. “That made a huge difference,” she says. “I feel like it elevated the home and made it feel bigger and brighter.” She added millwork for visual interest and wood elements to tie in with the flooring, including tongue-and-groove inset ceilings, open shelving in the kitchen, and an oversized barn door that separated the home office from the foyer. Fresh paint and wallcoverings blanket nearly every surface.

Now, upon entering the home, visitors are greeted by an artful foyer with a hint of traditional styling, updated by a magnificent Cassoni suspension lamp specifically selected to accentuate the dramatic scale of the space. Denise also created a custom rug design to visually fill the space. “The reason for designing that pattern runner, which was a custom design I drew, was because something solid wouldn’t fill the

space and give it interest like this pattern would,” she says. The oversized custom wood barn door with a chevron pattern layers on more texture and plays nicely with the proportions of the space.

Denise and her team gave the kitchen a touch of warmth by flanking the range hood with wooden shelves, and painting the kitchen island with Farrow & Ball’s Light Blue No. 22—the company’s lightest blue—which takes on a silvery hue. New light fixtures provide texture and a natural element. The light wood table is surrounded by robin’s-egg-blue chairs from sohoConcept in a mid-mod silhouette. The blue chairs are reflected in the custom window treatment in Schumacher fabric above the kitchen sink. Since the adjoining family room is a large area, Denise wanted a substantial sectional to ground the space. She opted for one that sits directly on the floor instead of having the visual lightness of a sofa on legs. The fireplace feature wall was part of the existing design, but Denise repeated the island color to give the wall soft contrast, while creating a visual tie across the space.

A nod to the family’s New York roots and heavily influenced by the husband, the formal dining room is debonair with me-









tallic grasscloth walls, leather chairs and a stone-topped table featuring a heavy wood base, which are slightly softened by the sexy curved corners. And then there is the artwork, with its graffiti style contradicting the chic room—a testament to Denise's expertise at mixing colors and styles. "When I get a sample from a vendor for fabric or wallpaper, with a whole story showing how the different designs work together, I toss it out the window," she says. "I love things that are just a little off, that you would never think of mixing together."

Opposite the formal dining area is a formal living room with a pair of sofas in soft white, and two armchairs









designed by Denise and upholstered in velvet fabric from Mokum in a soft blush hue. To give the room added texture and a touch of glam, Denise selected a Phillip Jeffries wood veneer and cork wallcovering in an ethereal “moon glow” color.

Also on the main floor of the home is a mudroom, where Denise added lively pops of color and a service pantry, which she used to push some design boundaries for her clients. She painted the cabinetry and millwork a deep, regal blue, and covered the walls and ceiling in a petite, geometric-patterned wallpaper. A swanky Tom Dixon mirrored blue pendant and a groovy Allyson Monson photograph set the space back in time, providing a '70s disco bar feel.

The primary bedroom is another grand space that Denise anchored, this time with an upholstered bed that sits directly on the floor. Textures abound here with the plush upholstery, Phillip Jeffries grasscloth wallcovering, and a high-low cutout rug with a ripple design. “The rug breaks up the room a little bit,” Denise says. “Imagine if that were just one flat rug—it wouldn’t have the same effect.” A pair of velvet chairs from Lawson-Fenning and an upholstered round ottoman sit near the fireplace. “I’m not one to furnish just for the sake of having furniture,” she adds. “I think less is more. But what you do put in has to have purpose.”





Denise selected a paint color to match the grasscloth and added luxe draperies in a similar tone to give the room a tailored, serene vibe.

The homeowners wanted their two young girls to have a fanciful, fun bedroom that would be anything but serene—and Denise delivered in spades. The uplifting design sprouted from the fantastic floral wallpaper from Caitlin McGauley, which Denise opted to use on the ceiling instead of the walls. Upholstered beds with no legs are more function than form in this space to ensure there would be no nighttime falls—or, at least, no far falls—to the floor. There’s a touch of mid-century style in the light fixture, layering whimsy upon whimsy, and a contrasting pattern on the window coverings made from fabric by Eskayel. “I love the mix of the patterns on the window treatments and the ceiling. It almost looks like little lips on the window treatments,” Denise says. “I love the positive and the negative of the pattern on the walls versus the ceiling.” The girls’ bathroom is equally bold and playful. Denise selected Benjamin Moore spring azalea paint color for the vanities, and replaced the light fixtures with a floral pop of yellow.

Creating kids’ spaces is a big part of the work of D2 Interieurs. “In general, a lot of our clients are young families moving from the city and





purchasing their first home,” says Denise. Many of them are at a loss for how to even start the design process, which is why they turn to her. And Denise loves watching the families grow. She says her clients collectively have had 11 babies over the years they’ve been working together.

“This is such a personal process, and I tend to have a strong personality,” Denise says. “I am who I am, I know what I’m doing, and I’m pretty vocal about it. I form a bond with these families because of that—because I’m very genuine and upfront, and I tell it like it is. That’s important when you’re doing such an intimate thing as designing someone’s home.”

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# DESIGNER SPEED DATING

2023 ANNUAL DESIGN ISSUE

Stories by Shehla Lucanera

A high-end living room featuring a large, multi-paned window with a view of a garden and a stone fireplace. The room is furnished with a light-colored leather sofa, a dark wood coffee table with a silver tray and candles, and a large chandelier. The walls are white with a subtle pattern, and the floor is covered in a patterned rug.

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# DIANE DUROCHER

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Growing up reading House Beautiful magazine, Diane Durocher has always been fascinated with design. As a child, she loved exploring showrooms and observing what makes a space exquisite. During her 28 years of experience transforming and beautifying homes, she has seen design trends and palette colors come and go, such as the Renaissance style's greens, red and golds easing into mid-century modern and grays. Her personal style resonates with the traditional, and includes classic clean lines accompanied by a modern fabric.

Dedicated to her calling, Diane took design classes after being married with three children. Greatly influenced by a talented uncle who worked in upholstery, she learned how simple changes can completely transform a piece. She noticed how a wonderfully decorated space made people feel, and cultivated the gift of creating an inviting, warm and comforting home. The combination of her experience, her appreciation for design history and her natural gift for decor has made Diane Durocher Interiors grow into the successful firm it is today.









**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

Being with family and friends. It doesn't matter where, as long as we're together.

**What is your greatest fear?**

Failure. I'm very Type A.

**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, who or what would it be?**

A time traveller to witness history. I've always been drawn to costume. The 1700s and 1800s saw the beginnings of the traditional furniture style—for example, Duncan Phyfe and Chipendale furniture.

**In interior design, which do you prefer—bold or subtle? Why?**

More subtle. You can always add a pop of color.

**What design trends do you want to put to rest forever?**

Late '80s seafoam green and the '80s Southwestern style.

**What design ideas do you want to encompass?**

Be sustainable. Shop in your home first. Look into repurposing and reupholstering. I like a classically designed room; I really try to go with a classic design.

**If you could team up with one iconic designer/architect with whom to create a room, who would that be, and why?**

Jan Showers—just classic and beautiful. Mario Buatta for the boldness.

**What's your favorite place to shop locally? Abroad?**

Local, antique markets. Abroad? Art galleries.

**What is your secret pleasure?**

Taking in nature, sunsets, enjoying the birds. Also, reading and yoga.

**What statement or quote do you want to be remembered by?**

Always lead with kindness. Treat others the way you want to be treated. There is no time like the present.

*Diane Durocher Interiors*

*Diane Durocher, Owner and Lead Designer*

*Ramsey, NJ*

*201.825.3832*

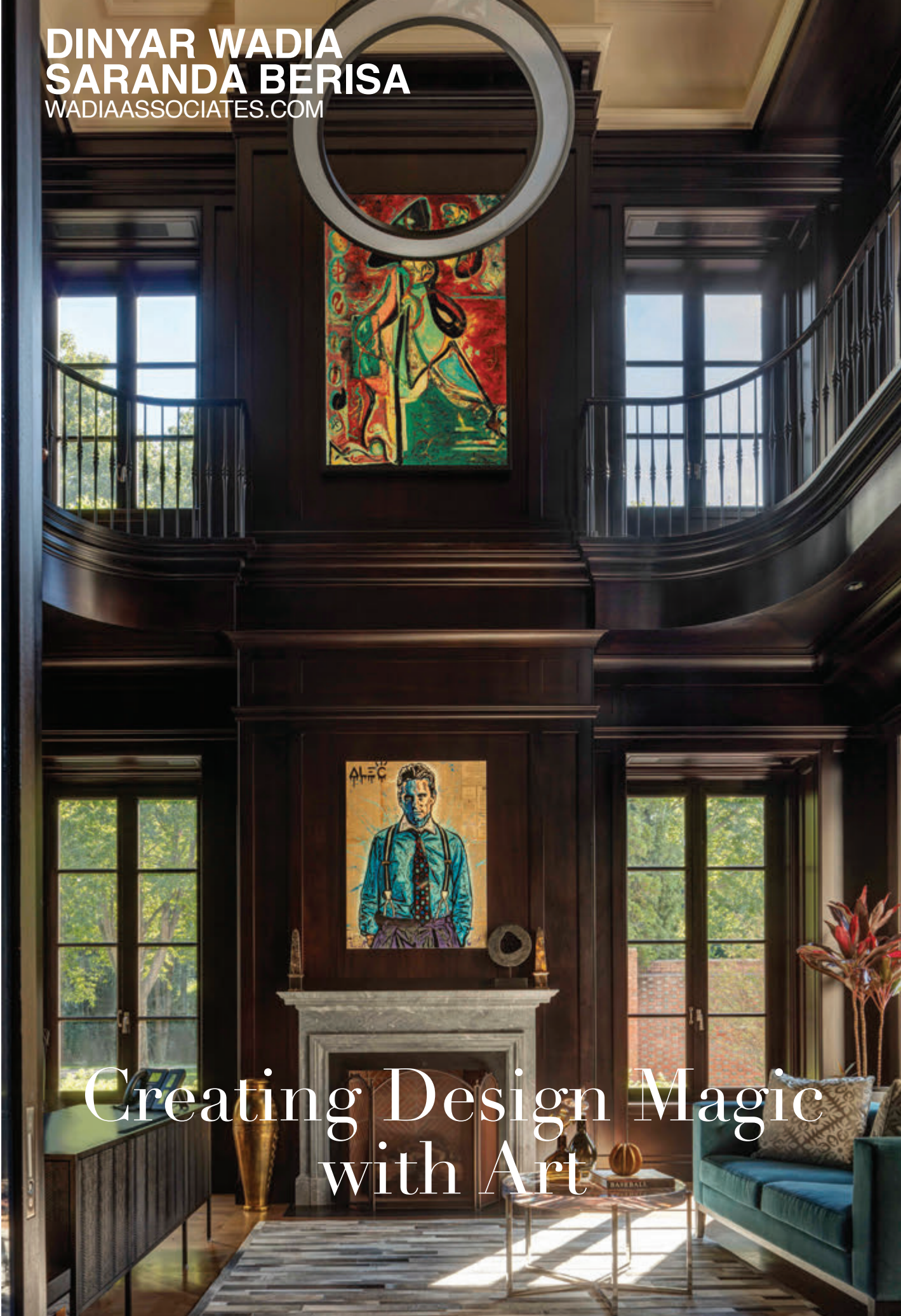
*dianedurocherinteriors.com*



**DINYAR WADIA**  
**SARANDA BERISA**  
WADIAASSOCIATES.COM



Creating Design Magic  
with Art







If you want to create an incredibly breathtaking home that is nothing short of magical, consider reaching out to Wadia Associates and Saranda Berisa, the firm's director of interior design and decoration. For more than 14 years, Saranda has been designing exceptional homes with Wadia, including classical upscale residences with a contemporary feel. Saranda gets involved in the drawing process of projects, long before ground is ever broken on a new build or renovation.

Specializing in homes 10,000 square feet and larger, Saranda enjoys focusing on making a home both beautiful and livable, ensuring the functionality of the space. What's her favorite part of the process? The detailed collaboration between the clients and the expert Wadia team to deliver perfection and exquisite luxury that is far beyond the clients' expectations. In just a few years, Wadia can create an extraordinary residence from the ground up—or provide a spectacular renovation that will delight the homeowners.

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

Personally, living in the South of France. No question. I find that lifestyle—with the historical backdrops of the architecture and landscape—to be like no other. The sunshine and ability to be outdoors exploring the azure waters, cultural heritage and the gastronomy is all I could ever ask for.

**What is your greatest fear?**

Is there only one choice? When it comes to design, I would say making an irreversible mistake. You can really lose sleep over the small things, too. Our industry is such that











you need to be on top of every element of the process to ensure the completed project gets pulled off correctly. It can be a painful road at times, especially because a lot of the process is out of our hands.

**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, who or what would it be?**

Definitely Barbara Eden of *I Dream of Jeannie*. Who wouldn't want to live in a bottle filled with a colorful luxury sofa and surroundings, wearing cool harem pants?

**In interior design, which do you prefer—bold or subtle? Why?**

I think there is a time and a place for either direction. Ultimately, I believe people's tastes ebb and flow over time or per residence/space. Perhaps you have a city apartment that is rooted in more luxury and jewel colors, while you also have a beach home that would blend well with a serene palette.

**What design trends do you want to put to rest forever?**

Framed quotes and mass-oriented decor. When we design, every home is different, literally invoking the feeling embodied in our clients of how they want to live. We try really hard to add a flavor of uniqueness and high quality in all we do.

**What design ideas do you want to encompass?**

At our office, we tend to design traditional homes architecturally, and from the interior design perspective, we blend in modern ideas that play off the history. Our goal is to always incorporate soul and color, if possible, with the intention of being the most inviting of spaces.

**If you could team up with one iconic designer/architect with whom to create a room, who would that be, and why?**

Hubert de Givenchy. I love the classics, and he was Parisian chic personified in the fashion world, designing for Grace Kelly, Jackie Kennedy and Audrey Hepburn, among many others. He studied at *École des Beaux-Arts*, so I am sure designing homes with him would have produced unforgettable spaces. Fashion and interior design have a lot of commonalities, and they play an important role in all of my work.

**What's your favorite place to shop locally? Abroad?**

Locally, New York City antique shops. Saint-Ouen Flea Market in Paris, Saint Germain in Paris and basically everything Paris.

**What is your secret pleasure?**

Wildlife, birds, bees, gardens. All are so critical to our existence in so many ways, and they keep the color in our lives. Be good to nature and it will be good to you.

**What statement or quote do you want to be remembered by?**

The words of Frank Lloyd Wright: "... if you invest in beauty, it will remain with you all the days of your life."

*Wadia Associates*

*Dinyar Wadia, Principal*

*Saranda Berisa, Director of Interior Design and Decoration*

*134 Main Street*

*New Canaan, CT 06840*

*203.966.0048*

*wadiaassociates.com*





LARA MICHELLE

LARAMICHELLE.COM

Photos by Chuan Ding



Timeless Experience  
and Elegance





**H**igh-end residential home specialist Lara Michelle has been beautifying spaces for more than 25 years. A graduate of New York School of Interior Design with a degree in fine arts, Lara has extensive design experience and years of hands-on involvement in all aspects of the design process, setting her apart from other designers. She describes her personality as “outgoing, relentless and persistent”—which translates into creating magnificent spaces for her clients quickly and efficiently, without sacrificing perfection.

Having trained under highly acclaimed design masters, Lara knows her way around a project site and is keenly attentive to organization and detail. She listens carefully to what her clients like









and don't like, and executes their wishes professionally and seamlessly, aided by her specially selected team. Lara Michelle Beautiful Interiors specializes in large-scale, luxurious and elegant renovations while providing a stress-free experience for its clients.

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

I'm happiest when I'm surrounded by family. I'm a big family person; I always want everyone together.

**What is your greatest fear?**

Getting sick.

**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, who or what would it be?**

Taylor Swift: she just owns the world at this moment in time.

**In interior design, which do you prefer—bold or subtle? Why?**

It depends on the space and client. I prefer bold. I love working with pattern and color, creating eye candy.

**What design trends do you want to put to rest forever?**

Horribly yellow and insufficient incandescent light bulbs! These need to be banned forever and replaced with bright and long-lasting LED fixtures and bulbs—not just for ease of use, to help the environment, and to save money, but also to see well in our rooms!

Ultra-low coffee tables and sofas must go! They are so uncomfortable to sit and get up from (especially for us taller folks), and I can never understand who enjoys sitting almost on the floor!

Large, outdated-looking countertop overhangs from the '80s! I am averse to countertop overhangs that hang over the cabinets more than a quarter inch, and even prefer them to be flush with cabinets for a super-sleek, chic and modern look.

**What design ideas do you want to encompass?**

Taking more design risks. Not playing it so safe.

**If you could team up with one iconic designer/architect with whom to create a room, who would that be, and why?**

Victoria Hagan from the Designer Hall of Fame. I admire her work and her knack for blending color. She created inviting interiors with comfort.

**What's your favorite place to shop locally? Abroad?**

I've gathered so many amazing resources over the years, like the D&D Building in Manhattan. Abroad? I like to support local artists and galleries.

**What is your secret pleasure?**

Chocolate and coffee—caffeine!

**What statement or quote do you want to be remembered by?**

I once had a client mention my magic touch, so "Lara's Magic Touch."

*Lara Michelle Beautiful Interiors*  
*Lara Michelle, Owner and CEO*  
 914.939.5777  
 LaraMichelle.com



**LAUREN VALLARIO**  
LAURENVALLARIODESIGNS.COM



# The Complexities of Chic Kitchens







**A** graduate of the Art Institute of Pittsburgh with a degree in Kitchen and Bathroom Design, interior designer Lauren Vallario has more than 10 years of experience working on renovations and new construction homes in New York and Connecticut. With a technical background in an upscale luxury kitchen and bathroom showroom, Lauren saw a need for intelligent designers who intimately knew the complex workings of chic kitchens and bathrooms. Her degree in psychology from Manhattan College also helps her put clients at ease: She understands how exciting—and, at times, how overwhelming—a renovation can be. She’s there to expertly support her clients through big and small decisions.

Lauren’s appreciation for the behind-the-scenes work means she loves being at the job site. She keeps a job-site binder or “spec finder” on the premises to help workers and contractors be informed of every step of the design plan. All designs and drawings are available for all workers to reference, which means better communication and much less idle time. Superior organization and execution ensure her clients’ residential or commercial property is completed as fast as possible.

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

Living in a beautiful place with all my friends and family around me.

**What is your greatest fear?**

Losing any of those closest people.









**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, who or what would it be?**

A dog. No cares but for love and food! Dogs love unconditionally and just want to be loved in return.

**In interior design, which do you prefer—bold or subtle? Why?**

Subtle as the foundation, with a pop of bold as contrast. This helps create dimensions in a space. Playing with texture is also so much fun.

**What design trends do you want to put to rest forever?**

I don't dislike any particular trend. Brushed brass is back in...I'm always curious to see how trends resurface.

**What design ideas do you want to encompass?**

I'd like to encompass focusing on function. I'd like to see designers focus on how people live. I'd like to see products released that are functional, and not just beautiful looking.

**If you could team up with one iconic designer/architect with whom to create a room, who would that be, and why?**

Frank Lloyd Wright. He had an amazing connection with nature.

**What's your favorite place to shop locally? Abroad?**

High Point Market in North Carolina. There is so much for any designer to see: little vendors, big vendors. It's the furniture capital of the world. Plus, Venice and Florence—two of my favorite places in Italy.

**What is your secret pleasure?**

DIY projects. I get great satisfaction out of indulging creatively with my hands.

**What statement or quote do you want to be remembered by?**

I think I can, I think I can. I think if I have a plan, I can do most anything—if only I think I can.

*Lauren Vallario Designs*

*Lauren Vallario, Owner*

*914.522.4527*

*laurenvallariodesigns.com*



**JONATHAN GORDON**

THEJONATHANS.COM

Photos by Robert Norman



More Than Your  
Average Designer





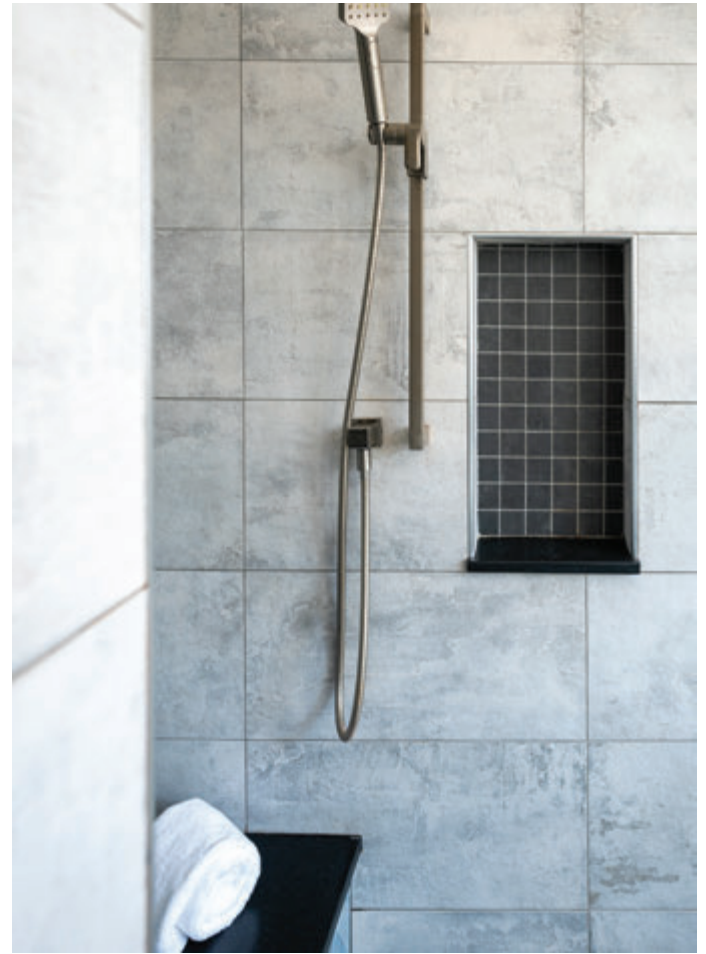
Jonathan Gordon, the lead designer, founder and owner of Design by the Jonathans, is not your average interior designer. Jonathan boasts an impressive résumé in complex engineering and fine art, in addition to his credentials in interior design. Noticing his natural gifts and keen eye, his grandmother advised Jonathan to consider designing—and his highly acclaimed, award-winning work confirms the wisdom of that advice. Committed to delivering the finest outcomes for each client, Jonathan is open to exploring all design themes and philosophies, with a client-first approach.

Not every designer is entrusted with the gracefully intricate antique homes for which Jonathan is regularly commissioned. He and









his select design team have gorgeously restored houses more than 200 years old. His professional team of artisans works with both residential and commercial clients, seamlessly delivering everything from rustic farmhouse style to sleek modern design. Jonathan's firm serves the Northeast region and beyond, welcoming small projects as well as the challenge of a complete renovation.

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

Enjoying and sharing in the happiness of everyone around me. The happier my clients and team are, the happier I am.

**What is your greatest fear?**

Not accomplishing the goals I set for myself in life, and not reaching for those goals.

**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, who or what would it be?**

I wouldn't. I'm here to make the most of this life. If you live a life with very few regrets, then there is no reason to come back, because everything here would be done.

**In interior design, which do you prefer—bold or subtle? Why?**

Bold doesn't mean gaudy or garish. Bold means that it stands out—is worth looking at. Personally, I like things that you notice.

**What design trends do you want to put to rest forever?**

Everyone has their own vision. It's up to the clients and what they want.

**What design ideas do you want to encompass?**

Flexibility of space and design.

**If you could team up with one iconic designer/architect with whom to create a room, who would that be, and why?**

Louis Comfort Tiffany—he had one of the best eyes in the business. Besides doing interior design, he painted and created stained glass. He was unbelievable in his versatility, a true artist.

**What's your favorite place to shop locally? Abroad?**

Locally, Monger's Market in Bridgeport, CT. It has all the reclaimed architecture, anything you can think of. Abroad? The Paris Flea Market.

**What is your secret pleasure?**

Movies. Some favorites are My Fair Lady, Inherit the Wind, Vertigo, Terminator 2, Ratatouille, the James Bond films, The Wizard of Oz, Labyrinth and Charade.

**What statement or quote do you want to be remembered by?**

There is no time like the present. Now, let's eat!

*Design by the Jonathans, LLC*  
*Jonathan Gordon, Founder and Owner*  
*85 Willow Street*  
*New Haven, CT 06511*  
*203.349.2549*  
*thejonathans.com*



**MELISSA ADAMS**  
AIDESIGNNY.COM



*Award-Winning Style*





**M**elissa Adams began her career immersed in decorative fabric design and managing luxury bedding and accessory lines. Her innate artistic vision and background in sumptuous textiles served as the perfect foundation to launch her award-winning business, Adams Interior Design. Fans of her work include contract clients such as Disney, The Four Seasons and Marriott. Her personal home style leans towards modern farmhouse, with a little coastal influence. Melissa earned her bachelor's degree from Syracuse University School of Fine Arts, and a master's degree from Manhattanville College.

Melissa prefers to bring together a look by using natural decorative touches, without being overwhelmed with color. She is open to working with delicate luxury materials, in addition to less-fussy practical and functional options. Melissa's own home features luxury linoleum floors, for the beauty and ease of rearranging furniture when inspiration bubbles up. Offering each client a personalized approach and attention to all essential details, she has elevated Adams Interior Design to A-list status.

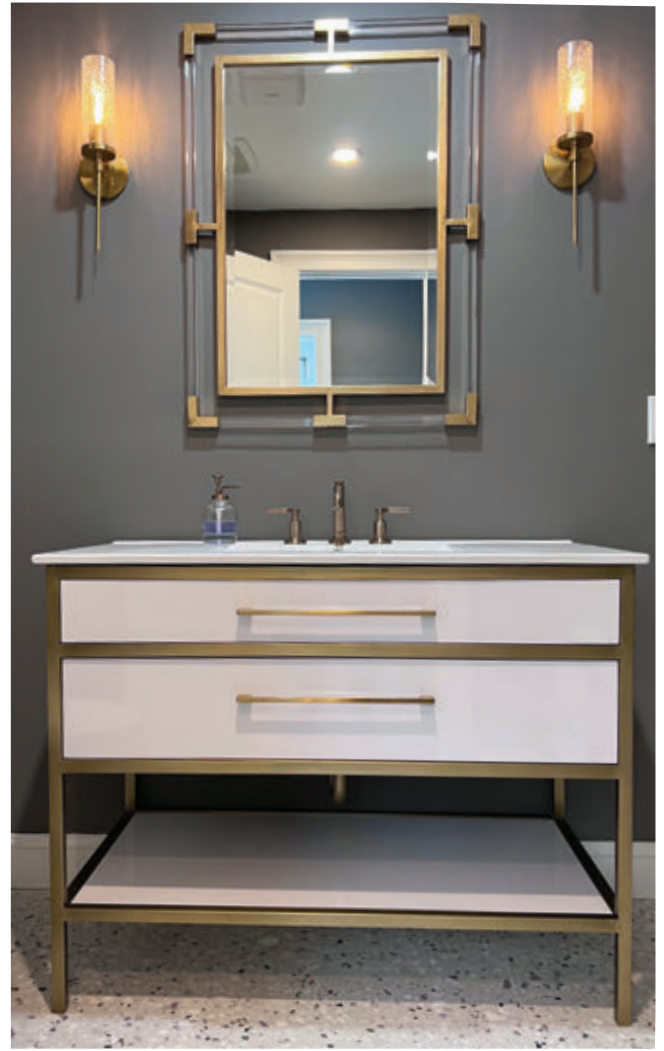
**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

Having a more pared-down, simple life that allows me time with people I care about. Also having enough money to travel a bit, and time to care for and nurture your home.









**What is your greatest fear?**

Running out of clients. Also, becoming irrelevant, both personally and professionally.

**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, who or what would it be?**

I'd want to come back as myself, just knowing everything I know now. Maybe start my career sooner, with more time to feel confident.

**In interior design, which do you prefer—bold or subtle? Why?**

Definitely subtle. I'm very inspired by nature and texture. For me, bold color doesn't create the backdrop for things I love. Subtle design can be luxurious without being too loud.

**What design trends do you want to put to rest forever?**

Painted accent wall—I'm not a big fan. Maybe stained wood trim; I don't really like it. TVs over the fireplace, because it feels very distracting.

**What design ideas do you want to encompass?**

I'd like to do more wallpaper, but subtle. I think it's an opportunity I don't dive into as much as I probably should. I'd like to get into other types of wall treatments, such as metal on walls, adding more character and depth to the house.

**If you could team up with one iconic designer/architect with whom to**

**create a room, who would that be, and why?**

Jeff Lewis, house flipper and interior designer. He's the funniest, most OCD person, and so talented. Also, Nate Berkus for his pared-down, natural palette.

**What's your favorite place to shop locally? Abroad?**

Country Willow in Westchester, NY; Artistic Tile; and Hampton + Dunes in Westhampton, NY. Overseas? Anywhere in Italy.

**What is your secret pleasure?**

I garden obsessively. Full-scale landscape garden—anything with nature. I'm obsessed with roses. I just got a water feature, a spring for a raised garden. I'm exploring growing plants with water.

**What statement or quote do you want to be remembered by?**

Wake up every morning and tell yourself you're a badass, and no one can mess with you. And then, don't let anybody mess with you.

*Adams Interior Design  
Melissa Adams Gruber, Owner  
917.886.6666  
aidesignNY.com*



**PRUDENCE BAILEY**  
PRUDENCEHOMES.COM



Enduring Designs for  
Your Lifestyle Needs





When a well-known designer wants to hire you as his design assistant, it's confirmation that you have a special talent for transforming spaces. Before she became an interior designer, Prudence Bailey hired an A-list designer to beautify her own home. The designer was so impressed with Prudence's creative vision, instinctive style and keen attention to detail that he asked her to join his design team. Prudence realized that colors, patterns and space choices came very naturally to her, and that interior design was her calling. Eventually, she founded Prudence Home and Design.

Known for its beautiful, timeless and inviting creations, Prudence Home and Design blends modern and traditional









styles to create the client's vision of a welcoming home. Working in the tristate area and beyond, the firm offers unique services: In addition to her design skills, Prudence has a corporate background and a knack for getting things done with a customer-centric attitude. Both creative and business-savvy, Prudence can see a project through beautifully and efficiently.

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

My idea of perfect happiness is when other people are happy around me—seeing my client happy with their space. Pride in your home can be so transformative.

**What is your greatest fear?**

Sharks! They're both a fear and a fascination. They are such interesting and mysterious creatures.

**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, who or what would it be?**

A singer—Lady Gaga or Taylor Swift. I appreciate that ability to move people.

**In interior design, which do you prefer—bold or subtle? Why?**

I prefer both. For us, it's all about the client. If I were to have my way, I'd say bold. If you let me go to have fun, bold can be a real game-changer.

**What design trends do you want to put to rest forever?**

Modern farmhouse—it's so overplayed. It's very simple; nothing about it feels creative. It's cookie-cutter, overdone. It's time to move on to personalized creativity.

**What design ideas do you want to encompass?**

We're known for color and use of pattern. I'd enjoy seeing a lot more creativity around color and pattern.

**If you could team up with one iconic designer/architect with whom to create a room, who would that be, and why?**

Dorothy Draper was fearless with color and pattern, using it in such a gorgeous way. She put things together in a unique way.

**What's your favorite place to shop locally? Abroad?**

For local, I like to support local vendors: Found & Design in New Canaan, The Antique and Artisan Gallery in Stamford, and Fairfield County Antique and Design Center in Norwalk. Abroad? The Paris Flea Market.

**What is your secret pleasure?**

Candy—licorice. Watching TV in bed, Season 2 of Physical.

**What statement or quote do you want to be remembered by?**

"Pobody's Nerfect"—a fun way to say, "Nobody's Perfect," which we grew up with. We all make mistakes; no one is infallible. People feel held to a higher standard. I'm hard on myself, too. We have to be much kinder and much more forgiving.

*Prudence Home and Design*

*Prudence Bailey, Founder and Principal Designer*

*76 Elm Street, Suite 204*

*New Canaan, CT 06840*

*203.859.9499*

*prudencehomes.com*



**JAN HILTZ**  
**CHRISTINE HILTZ**  
JANHILTZINTERIORSLLC.COM

# Teaming to Perfect Upscale Luxury







Jan and Christine Hiltz are the dream team powering Jan Hiltz Interiors. This mother-in-law/daughter-in-law collaboration delivers stunning, large-budget projects together, and their lucky clients are the winning beneficiaries. Jan Hiltz, a graduate of Connecticut's Fairfield University, has been designing homes for more than 25 years. Her daughter-in-law, Christine, also naturally creative and always drawn to the aesthetics of design, studied design at Hampton University in Virginia. What brought these two together to create their special blend of upscale magic? Jan's booming design business needed another helping hand to juggle all the success, and designer Christine was the perfect addition. Little did anyone know how wonderfully Jan and Christine would balance each other out, creating luxurious, well-thought-out beauty for their clients.

Christine's home is clean, comfortable and collected, whereas Jan's is eclectic and full of all the things she loves. Both ladies love and appreciate the transformative power of design, and each contributes something special to the design team. Christine's attention to spatial planning, drawing and computer CAD visuals ensures all technical designs are perfect and ready to present to clients. Jan's years of experience in every aspect of the building and design process means the budget is expertly managed to deliver the









comfortable luxury for which Jan Hiltz Interiors is known.

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

Jan: An afternoon with my grandchildren.

Christine: Time at home with my husband and son—plus our 150-pound mastiff and cat.

**What is your greatest fear?**

Jan: Getting in an airplane—but I love to travel.

Christine: Definitely drowning! But I think it's important to conquer fear, so I became SCUBA certified, and it is now one of my favorite hobbies.

**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, who or what would it be?**

Jan: Audrey Hepburn—what an extraordinary life! I love her style, her calmness; she was witty.

Christine: A peregrine falcon. I'm a daredevil!

**In interior design, which do you prefer—bold or subtle? Why?**

Jan: Subtle, with quieter fabric and surroundings.

Christine: A room with a foundation of subtlety with pops of bold, so it remains timeless.

**What design trends do you want to put to rest forever?**

Jan: The "more is more" trend. Too many small prints. Too many patterns in any given space.

Christine: Ultramodern rooms with furniture that doesn't look comfortable. Also, open shelves in the kitchen, with no closed upper cabinets. If you don't plan on keeping them perfectly curated at all times, you need not do this. It would personally drive me crazy!

**What design ideas do you want to encompass?**

Jan: I like an open floor plan. In the past, many rooms made sense as it was hard to heat a large space. I like open room concepts.

Christine: Integrating kid spaces and office into the home for functionality.

**If you could team up with one iconic designer/architect with whom to create a room, who would that be, and why?**

Jan: Kelly Wearstler.

Christine: I used to come home from school and watch the Christopher Lowell Show, and learn about his seven layers of design. He was a big influence, and I attribute my deep interest in design to him.

**What's your favorite place to shop locally? Abroad?**

Jan: Everywhere; I can't be restrained. High-end or Home Goods—it's like a treasure hunt. When travelling, little boutiques.

Christine: I like mixing specialty pieces with less expensive options, like T.J. Maxx or smaller boutiques. When out of town? Unknown names and unique stores.

**What is your secret pleasure?**

Jan: Reading a book by my pool. Even if I have just an hour when I don't have anything to do, it just makes me happy.

Christine: I enjoy gardening: planting flowers, weeding, trimming hedges, mulching. It relaxes me.

**What statement or quote do you want to be remembered by?**

Jan: Throw some money at it, and make it go away.

Christine: Thank God every day, for you are blessed beyond measure, and remember to cherish the little moments.

*Jan Hiltz Interiors LLC  
 Jan Hiltz, Owner and Designer  
 Christine Hiltz, Interior Designer  
 21 Bridge Square  
 Westport, CT 06880  
 203.331.5578  
 janhiltzinteriorsllc.com*



**KAREN BERKEMEYER**  
KARENBERKEMEYERHOME.COM



Immaculate Design  
Foundation

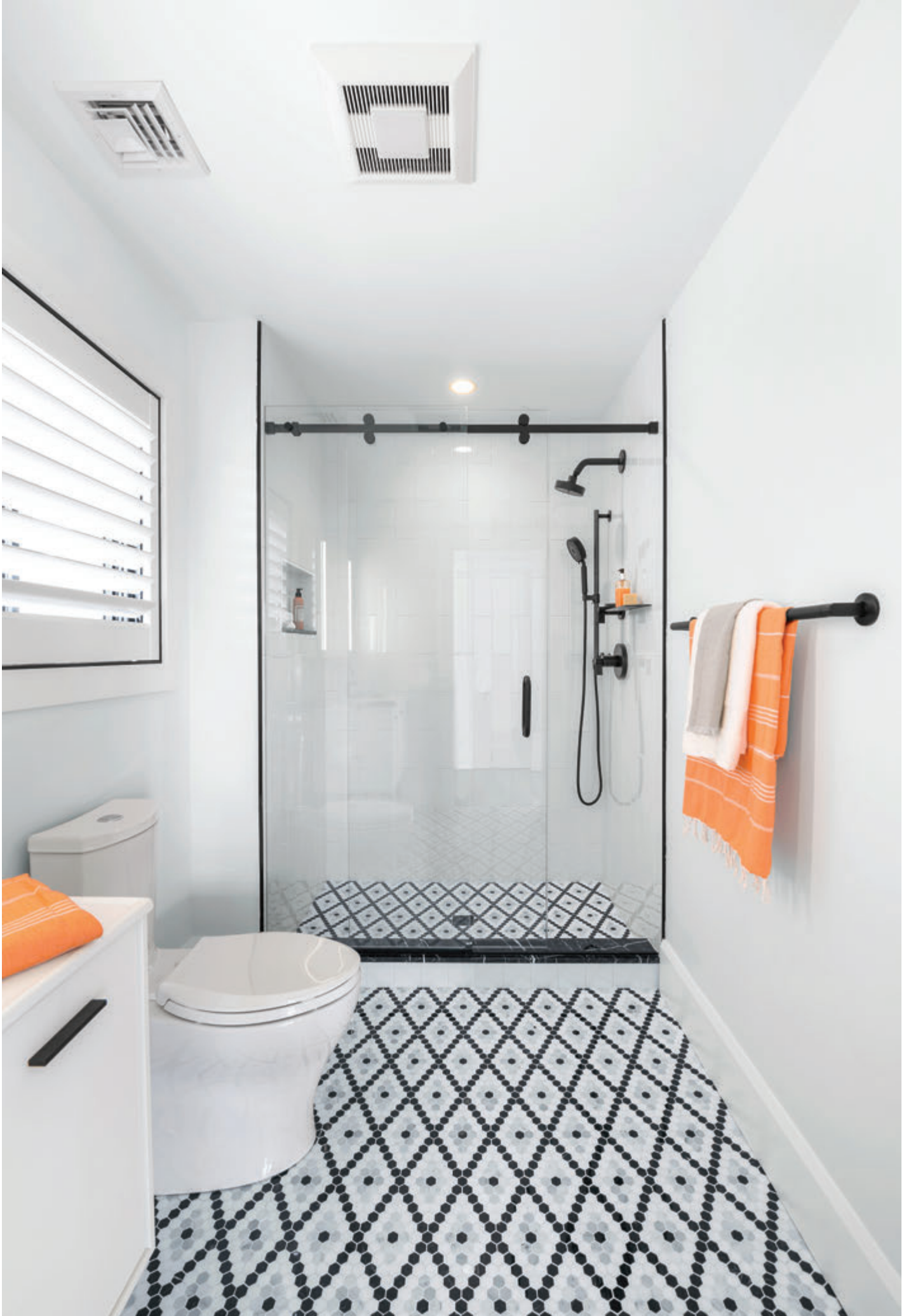




**K**aren Berkemeyer Home provides the finest backdrop for your timeless living space or office, specializing in custom cabinetry, tile and stone; plumbing fixtures; and countertops. Indeed, company owner Karen Berkemeyer and her experienced designers often collaborate with other interior designers, contractors, builders and architects to develop luxury spaces that are elegant and immaculate, inviting visitors to sit and stay a while. Karen's specialty team can transform any size apartment, condominium or residential home, and is willing to travel to other states to meet their clients' needs.

Math concepts are essential to intelligent design, so it's natural that Karen would hold a master's degree in mathematics. Karen's mom was also a designer, inspiring her to appreciate simple,









classic detailed designs and beautiful artwork. With the many magnificent design choices available to her, what did Karen use for her own, newly remodeled kitchen? She installed a modern door, incorporated bluish-black tones, and included cabinetry with both glass-front and regular doors, to look timeless and welcoming. The experts at Karen Berkemeyer Home enjoy working on wide variety of project types, and whether they do simple upgrades or highly complex designs, they can ensure their clients that the result will be flawless and exquisite.

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

Being with my children and grandchildren.

**What is your greatest fear?**

Being stuck in an elevator.

**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, who or what would it be?**

A dog.

**In interior design, which do you prefer—bold or subtle? Why?**

Subtle. I like understated elegance.

**What design trends do you want to put to rest forever?**

Floral patterns.

**What design ideas do you want to encompass?**

Modern classic.

**If you could team up with one iconic designer/architect with whom to create a room, who would that be, and why?**

Frank Lloyd Wright. He designed simple and interesting kitchens, bringing the outside in.

**What's your favorite place to shop locally? Abroad?**

My favorite place is London.

**What is your secret pleasure?**

Barre classes.

**What statement or quote do you want to be remembered by?**

Create timeless designs and style.

*Karen Berkemeyer Home*

*Karen Berkemeyer*

*175 Post Road West*

*Westport, CT 06880*

*203.454.0032*

*karenberkemeyerhome.com*



MARIA LO IACONO  
MARIALOIACONOINTERIORS.COM



Thoughtful, Functional  
Sophistication





**F**or more than 20 years, Maria Lo Iacono has left her stylish, timeless imprint on the most beautiful spaces in the tristate area. Maria transforms rooms with her fluid combination of color, elegant silhouettes and carefully selected texture and material. She is most known for her extremely thoughtful approach to all projects and her exquisite bespoke built-in creations, such as bookcases, specially crafted coffee tables and other furniture with eye-catching features.

Maria earned her master's degree in interior design from New York's Pratt Institute, yet started her career as a popular television journalist. As a newswoman, she moved often, recreating a lovely apartment space each time she relocated. Her fresh design ideas and smart style attracted notice, and Maria realized she had a natural gift for visualizing and producing striking spaces. She launched her design business, assembling a talented team that is familiar with all aspects of the design and construction process. The firm flourished quickly, with projects ranging from simple consultations to the design of large-scale, high-end homes. With the sole purpose of delivering a visually balanced, crisp, clean, functional space that is unique and comfortable, Maria ensures the sophisticated finished lay-



out she creates will go far beyond her clients' expectations.

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**  
Being in the moment and letting yourself enjoy.

**What is your greatest fear?**  
At the beginning of summer, I went to open up the barbecue and a mouse jumped out!

**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, who or what would it be?**

Shakespeare. His words are so memorable. What a genius!

**In interior design, which do you prefer—bold or subtle? Why?**

Subtle, because I think you can experience it slowly. You can walk through a space and take it all in. I like a comfortable home to relax and recharge in, made for living.

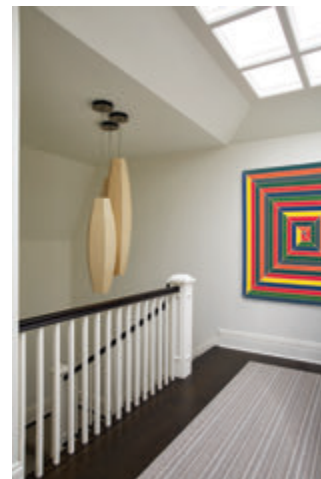
**What design trends do you want to put to rest forever?**

Spaces that try to reflect another time, like a stage set. I like authentic spaces.









**What design ideas do you want to encompass?**

Very crisp, clean spaces. Simple. I don't like a lot of clutter. I like clean lines with good materials. Buy the best, because it really matters. Have an awareness that something should last.

**If you could team up with one iconic designer/architect with whom to create a room, who would that be, and why?**

Mies van der Rohe; I'd love to see how his brain worked. And architect Robert Stern—timeless, classic inspiration.

**What's your favorite place to shop locally? Abroad?**

I like to order online. Abroad? Rome.

**What is your secret pleasure?**

Chinese and Korean comedy romances.

**What statement or quote would you want to be remembered by?**

To live with beauty every day, we must recognize simple things as well as rare objects, and make nothing too precious to be left on a shelf for only special occasions.

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**MARIA CASTRO**

CALICLOSETS.COM

Photos by Stefan Radtke



Exceptional Design in  
Every Area of the Home





California Closets has a number of exceptional designers ready to help transform and coordinate homes and offices. A graduate of Florida International University, interior designer Maria Castro is one of the very talented professionals the company is fortunate to have on staff. Previously, Maria was employed by a design firm in Miami, beautifying homes and handling both small projects and large-scale renovations. What does Maria enjoy most about working at California Closets? “Every day is a new challenge,” she says.

Maria can help clients who are overwhelmed with how best to organize and beautify their spaces. She transforms closets, pantries, mudrooms, children’s rooms, kitchen areas and even garages into areas that are not just neatly arranged, but truly attractive features of the home. Listening to a client is Maria’s key to creating the perfect space. She loves working with homeowners, and is often at the meeting table with the client’s personal interior designer and home contractors. While many clients have a hard time visualizing possibilities, California Closets utilizes 3D software to make the design process a fun collaboration, allowing homeowners to see their amazing space-to-be long before it’s skillfully built.

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

Being happy with who you are.

**What is your greatest fear?**

Not enough time with loved ones.

**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, who or what would it be?**

I would choose to come back as a book. Being a book would allow

me to share knowledge, stories and ideas with people across generations. I could transport readers to different worlds, inspire their imagination, and serve as a source of comfort and companionship.

**In interior design, which do you prefer—bold or subtle? Why?**

I prefer something bold. Whether it is a small accent or a large focal point, it can make or break the statement of the space you are creating.

**What design trends do you want to put to rest forever?**

Gray! I never want to see another jail cell room again. So sad and depressing.

**What design ideas do you want to encompass?**

Sustainability. I think the footprint we leave on this earth is important; the smaller we make it, the better.









**If you could team up with one iconic designer/architect with whom to create a room, who would that be, and why?**  
Philippe Starck. He is the opposite of how I would design a room, but his rooms are always fun, interesting and engaging. Therefore, I think it would be an exciting opportunity to do something completely different and out of my comfort zone.

**What's your favorite place to shop locally? Abroad?**  
Locally, antique stores! There's always a treasure and an adventure to be had. Abroad? Artisanal fairs. You bring back a piece of the place you are visiting.

**What is your secret pleasure?**  
Silence. With so much noise all around constantly, I love to take time to sit in silence by myself or to meditate.

**What statement or quote do you want to be remembered by?**  
Don't overthink it—just take the chance. You will either learn from it or grow from it, but never regret it.

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**DOUGLAS GRANETO**  
DOUGLASGRANETO.COM



*Boutique-Style Luxury*





**D**esigner Douglas Graneto's immaculate furniture pieces and stunning spaces beautifully showcase his art history background and his thoughtful attention to all aspects of design. More than a traditional design company, his firm, Douglas Graneto Design, specializes in commercial and residential interior design, custom bespoke products and exquisitely unique furnishings. Douglas worked with renowned designer Tony Ingrao for eight years before being encouraged to open his own company, which has been flourishing ever since. Douglas and his family are currently undergoing an exciting renovation at their own house. What design theme did he and his partner settle on? A mix of modern contemporary with some fun influences from his partner—who grew up in Tennessee—bringing in pieces that are truly special and cherished by everyone.

The strengths of Douglas' design team include understanding the homeowners' needs and desires and delivering personalized individuality, beauty and functionality beyond their clients' expectations. Recognized by major publications and elsewhere in the media, the small boutique firm is open to travelling and gladly serves clients worldwide; indeed, it has been commissioned for interior design across the U.S. and in the Caribbean.

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

Quiet away time—adventure travelling with my husband and daughter.

**What is your greatest fear?**

Heights, but it doesn't stop me from working in a high-rise.









**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, who or what would it be?**

I'd like to live in Paris in the 1940s as a writer or an artist.

**In interior design, which do you prefer—bold or subtle? Why?**

You need both. You need the subtle and bold to find a balance.

**What design trends do you want to put to rest forever?**

One-note everything. I like a room to tell a story with some cherished pieces or a color you love.

**What design ideas do you want to encompass?**

Pluralism. Something with layers, and the background is just as interesting as the foreground.

**If you could team up with one iconic designer/architect with whom to create a room, who would that be, and why?**

Renzo Mongiardino: classicist with an amazing sense of balance;

king of layer and texture.

**What's your favorite place to shop locally? Abroad?**

Stanford antique stores and the Paris Flea Market.

**What is your secret pleasure?**

I like to cook and plan a menu.

**What statement or quote would you want to be remembered by?**

Make it your own.

*Douglas Graneto Design*

*Douglas Graneto, Principal*

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# BACKDROP FOR LIFE

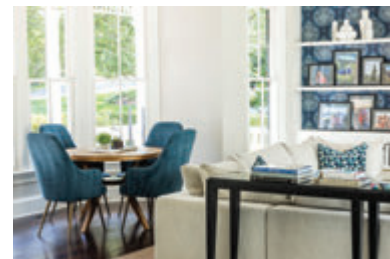
Molly Hirsch helps a successful businesswoman create a beautiful home for a carefree life.

Story by Heather Shoning | Photography by Abby Cole





Molly used a blue Galbraith & Paul wallpaper with a modern floral pattern to punch up the feature wall with built-in shelving. The reimagined fireplace façade coordinated with the adjoining cabinetry for a seamless look.



“When your home is designed well, it changes how you live in the space. Ultimately, your home can either work for you or against you,” says Molly Hirsch, owner of Molly Hirsch Interiors in Ridgefield, CT. “So when you design your home with your ideal life in mind, it makes everything easier.” Molly has built a career of designing homes for successful businesswomen and entrepreneurs to give them the perfect backdrops for making life outside of work less complicated and more enjoyable.

Molly’s design principles stem from the idea that a well-thought-out and designed space can make it easier to get your family out the door in the morning or to host large family dinners—to live the way you want to live. For instance, having an organized mudroom where everything has a place—coats, hats, backpacks, etc.—ensures a smooth transition from







breakfast to school and work. Or, if your desire is to host large dinners, having appropriate seating and serving areas makes this objective simpler and more attainable. “When you design around the things that are important in your life, then those things happen,” Molly says. “And that design principle has been the backbone of my career from early on.”

To ensure she gets it right every time for her clients, Molly engages them in deep conversation about their ideal lifestyle. She takes into consideration how they use certain spaces in the home. Who cooks? What would make everyday dinners and entertaining easier, including cleanup? Where do the children do homework—do they need a space in or near the kitchen or family room, or do they need workspaces in their bedrooms? Molly looks at the big picture for each space, and then dives into the nitty-gritty of functionality and space planning. It all matters equally to create a home that’s truly unique to the family.

When these homeowners—whom Molly has worked with on five homes, including this one—set out to purchase a historic plaque home in Ridgefield, they sought her help before they even completed the purchase. The turn-of-the-century Victorian was “dark and sad,” as Molly puts it. But that didn’t keep her from being thrilled with the home’s potential. Having worked together so many times in the past, Molly already









Instead of tucking the billiard room away in the back of the home, these homeowners wanted it front and center, so it had to look amazing. The combination of peacock blue paint, black-and-white Kravet wallpaper and chartreuse chairs from Ballard Designs give the space a stylish, modern edge that sets the tone for the Victorian home makeover.



knew the homeowners' style. Like most of her clients, the wife was a busy CEO. Her husband worked in finance, and the couple had three children. They'd lived in Ridgefield for many years, but longed for a home that better suited their propensity to entertain, and they wanted something walkable to Main Street. "The wife is the perfect example of wanting to connect with her kids when she's home," says Molly. "She doesn't want fuss; she wants easy. She wants carefree and maintenance free, but still wants it to be striking and beautiful."

Molly worked with Kristine D'Elisa of KKD Architecture + Design to plan a complete remodel that would rework the spaces to suit the homeowners' lifestyle. Architectural changes included moving two staircases, adding square footage to the mudroom and dropping a ceiling over the mudroom, which was originally two stories high. "This project was fun because the wife had been through the process before," Molly says. "I knew her really well and she knew me, and I was able to suggest things that she was completely on board with."

As soon as you enter the home, it's clear that the residence is designed for family fun and entertaining. One of the first rooms you encounter is the billiard room, with traditional millwork painted in a high-gloss peacock blue and black-and-white basketweave wallpaper. A backgammon table painted in the same blue is flanked by two chartreuse armchairs. The cut-to-fit rug from Palace Oriental Rug of Wilton, CT,





The kitchen cabinetry with its barely-there blue sets the tone for a calm cooking experience. The newly added service pantry ensures the homeowners have plenty of functional storage space. Northeast Cabinet Design provided both the cabinetry and the range hood with its luxe brushed metal design.







barring a border of the hardwood floor, adds a touch of Victorian formality.

The formal dining room sits back-to-back with the billiard room, but because of the connectedness of the two spaces within the foyer, they needed to play off one another. The millwork is a fresh white in the dining room, but to create continuity, Molly brought in the blue in the upholstered dining chairs and the window coverings. “I came across these Schumacher silk panels that are patchwork,” Molly says. “They had a version of that peacock blue in them, but also black and green and cream. I just love the juxtaposition between the traditional silk taffeta and the geometric patchwork.” Metallic silver wallpaper—also from Schumacher—with a soft, floral print contrasts with the black ceiling and a pair of gold chandeliers from Kelly Wearstler, giving the room an edgy, yet traditional, aesthetic.

As the CEO of a growing company, the wife needed a workspace that was both functional and inspiring. The room had built-ins the homeowner wanted to keep, so Molly designed a tone-on-tone look by painting the woodwork, walls and fireplace in a soft aqua, and finishing the look with a patterned wallpaper from Thibaut on the ceiling, featuring a similar tone. A damask marble fireplace surround, jeweled sconces and a crystal chandelier add an elegant sophistica-





The wife's office is truly a "jewel box," as Molly describes it. The chandelier from Visual Comfort with its teardrop-shaped crystals is such a luxurious element within the opulent space. The wallpapered ceiling creates an ethereal look.





tion. “It’s a beautiful little jewel box for her,” Molly says. “It’s bright and cheerful—it makes her happy.”

The family room is a light, airy space with white walls and trim and a soft, neutral Restoration Hardware sectional. Molly introduced blue in strategic small doses in the wallpaper lining the backs of the new built-in unit surrounding the fireplace, the upholstered chairs around a small round table and accent pillows. A long hallway with a series of French doors to the backyard and blue geometric Kravet wallpaper on the ceiling leads you from the family room to the redesigned kitchen and eat-in area.

Growing the footprint of the mudroom allowed the kitchen to grow a bit, as well, in addition to creating a space for a new walk-in food pantry. The traditional service pantry that connects to the formal dining room was updated to include a coffee bar that gets used daily. Inspiration for the palette in the kitchen came from a photo the wife spotted showing a hint-of-blue hue for the cabinetry. “The cabinetry color has this soft sophistication to it, but it can lean to the cool side,” Molly says, “so I wanted to bring in brass to warm up the whole space.” She selected satin brass fixtures and hardware, and a range hood that is brushed metal with soft brass detailing. To incorporate the large bank of windows the client wanted above the sink, Kristine of KKD Architecture + Design designed paneling to surround the windows and co-





Because the space is large, Molly employed lots of textural fabrics and furnishings in an array of cream and soft taupe shades to create a quiet, serene space for the primary bedroom retreat.

ordinate with the cabinetry. Molly added small brass sconces to play off the brass pendants by Kate Spade from Visual Comfort over the island. She also selected quartz countertops with striking veining for the countertops and backsplash. The adjoining eat-in area features a round table with graceful cane-backed chairs from West Elm and a delicate brass chandelier.

“I wanted the bedroom to be comforting, calm and relaxing,” Molly says of the primary bedroom with its neutral color palette. A slight metallic sheen on the rice-paper wallpaper adds an ethereal glow to the room, while the fireplace feature wall lined with family photos grabs attention. Luxe, textural fabrics in the seating area and the large rug add to the serenity of the space, as do the custom window treatments.

Adjoining the primary bedroom, the bathroom is bright with white floor tiles and cabinetry, and shiny polished nickel fixtures and hardware. As you look through the space, your eye catches the Creative Tile marble mosaic feature wall in the shower. A freestanding tub with a modern slipper silhouette sits in a windowed niche.

When the design team reallocated spaces in the lower level, the mudroom, which had once been a glorified hallway, gained floor space, but the proportions of the room were off because of the double-height ceiling. So the team put a single-story ceiling on the mudroom, which created a unique space upstairs that Molly turned into a small library with seating. Dark gray wool wallpaper, deep blue paint on the millwork and built-in bookcases, and a pocket door create a private little







The adjoining bathroom is equal in elegance, yet light and bright with crisp whites and soft gray in the marble mosaic tile and countertop from Venezia Marble.

niche for reading. “They go in there and chill and read books when they need a little quiet,” says Molly. “It’s a cool little secret space.”

“At the end of the day, family is very important to them. They are fun people who love to entertain,” Molly explains. “They wanted a pool table in the main part of the house so they would use it. I love throwing the rule book out the window and designing a home where all the spaces get used.” Although the home is large, she adds, it doesn’t feel gratuitously large: “It feels very much like a family home.”

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# THE BEAUTY IN THE DETAILS

Marble Works Design Team adds a refined touch to its fabrications and installations

Story by Hunter Powell



**M**arble Works Design Team was founded in 1994 by husband-and-wife Turkish immigrants, who originally focused on tile installation and countertop fabrication. While tiles and countertops have remained a foundation of the company, over the years the company has specialized in fabricating and installing many more features for the home, including custom door trims, intricate fireplace surroundings, custom tables, wall panels and custom sinks, all of the finest quality. The team is still family operated, with the couple's daughter, Sezen, taking over in 2008, and their son, Murat, running the production side starting in 2010. With Marble Works now in business for almost 30 years, Sezen looks back on its history and how the company has "grown further with a reputation for detail-oriented work, impeccable craftsmanship, and solving problems of challenging designs," she says.

As a fabricator, Marble Works uses a variety of materials, including all-natural granite, marble, limestone, travertine, onyx, quartz and even porcelain—which most fabricators shy away from—to create and install custom pieces for the home. In addition, says Sezen, "We are one of the few fabricators that suppliers come to and ask us to test their new products," which keeps them on the cutting edge as fabricators and designers. However, what most sets the firm apart, says Sezen, is, "We stand behind our work. We want to take on jobs that have major design challenges. We have a friendly staff that understands the stresses of home renovation, and does everything to make the countertop buying process as easy as possible, while including and educating the client in the design process. We provide services for every budget, and give the same amount of service for every budget."

The Marble Works team works extremely closely with every client to bring their visions to life—which Sezen believes is crucial from the very beginning of the design process. "Because it is their vision we are trying to create for them, and without that knowledge we cannot do our job," she says. "Our client-centered approach is providing customized or personalized services. It allows clients to have more control over the process and outcomes, which can lead to higher satisfaction and a better overall experience. It's essential for

fabricators to communicate clearly with their clients and understand their expectations to ensure a successful collaboration." The process includes making sure the client is outfitted with materials that will suit their lifestyle. "No one wants to just follow trends," says Sezen. "They want a stylish kitchen that will be functional and durable for their families for years to come."

Indeed, Marble Works demonstrates that durability and functionality do not have to come at the cost of style. Thanks to its incredible relationships with its suppliers, the company is always rolling out something new and exciting. "We are experimenting with three-dimensional stone wall panels that bring a different design element, and also depth, into any room," says Sezen. "This allows us to move from the kitchen/bath areas to bedrooms and living spaces." She also notes the new trends they're observing in design. "We are seeing natural stones more now, and we welcome it," she says. "Nothing can replicate the beauty and depth of natural stone. We are excited to work with materials we're already familiar with, but also with all the new quarries with new colors that are being imported. We are also seeing the mixture of textures, working with bush hammered limestone for kitchen counters, or machine texture on classic stones like Bianco Carrara or Black Absolute to give the stone dimension."

The world of interior design goes through many changes each year, but one thing every homeowner always needs is superior, high-quality furnishings. With a focus on the longevity of its fabrications and a natural cutting edge to its designs, Marble Works is a team that will never go out of style.

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