

DESIGNERS' OWN HOMES

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Denise Davies

The designer blends **CUSTOM** pieces, **INSPIRED** finds and eclectic **ARTWORK** to make her light-filled 1929 home a soothing yet creative escape

INTERVIEW WITH DENISE DAVIES, D2 INTERIEURS | PHOTOGRAPHER JANE BEILES



DESIGNERS' OWN HOMES ISSUE



opposite: Davies takes a seat on one of her patios. The furnishings are from RH and CB2, and the ottoman is from Anthropologie. **this page:** The designer transformed the home's entry by installing glass paneling and a Lucite railing to the staircase. A white metallic grasscloth reflects the light coming in from the new modern glass-paneled front door. Davies's onsite studio is pictured above.

Tell me a bit about your home—did you buy it or build it? The house was built in 1929. I bought it in 2007, and I live here with my husband and two sons. It was a small farmhouse, and over the years, from the '70s to the '90s, quirky additions were added. I liked that it wasn't cookie-cutter and that it had interesting details; I knew I could do a lot with it. I just did a renovation this past year.



above: A Knoll tulip table graces the breakfast nook. The window treatments are custom Roman shades using the Bridge fabric from Caroline Cecil Textiles. **right:** The formerly small and dark kitchen had no connection to the other living spaces. The now bright and open space boasts white cabinetry and a quartzite vented hood, center island and countertops. The jewelry-like hardware is by Lisa Jarvis.

What were your renovation plans? When we first moved in, I paid a fortune for architectural plans. We were going to add 2,000 square feet, but then the housing market crashed, and I shelved those plans. I'm happy I did because, as we lived in the house, we realized that we really didn't need any additional space. We just needed to live here and see how we were actually going to use the house. For instance, there was a deck outside of our master bedroom and my son's bedroom that never got used. So, this past year, we built onto the deck and added a huge master bathroom, laundry room and my son's bathroom. I renovated every single room in the house, and four years ago we built my studio on the property.



this page: With one wall dedicated to floor-to-ceiling cabinetry, Davies nixed upper cabinetry and instead displayed artwork. A row of vintage stools faces a Slim Aarons photograph.



this page: With custom built-ins painted in a blue lacquer from Farrow & Ball, the dining room is striking dressed in Cole & Son's Hicks wallpaper. The table and chairs were scores from a vintage shopping trip, and the mirrored buffet is from Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams. The artwork is by German artist Peter Keil, whom Davies collects.



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above: Inside the “man cave,” an Eames chair, a custom D2 Interieurs velvet-covered sofa and a fun yellow chair offer comfy places to sit. The coffee table and rug, both custom by D2 Interieurs, round out the space. The architectural piece behind the sofa is from a building that was demolished in New York City in the 1920s.
below: Mil Caras wallpaper lines the hallway leading to the “cave.”



Did you lean toward using any specific colors? Since I use so much color in my designs and am so stimulated every day with what I do, I really didn't use a lot of color. My home is very soothing, and that was my goal: to keep it neutral and sophisticated. I'm a big collector of midcentury art and pottery and artifacts, I travel all over, and I'm constantly buying things I love and redoing them and selling them and keeping them, so I wanted my house to be a place where I could enjoy the things I love and find and buy along the way.

Was maximizing natural light important? Absolutely. Every room has a lot of windows, and over the past three years I've painstakingly replaced every single window in the house. In fact, the entire house has all new custom Marvin windows and doors.

I love the white oak floors you have throughout. The floors were a terrible color—this 1980s red—so I lightened them all. We renovated the kitchen four years ago, and it had ceramic floors. We put matching floors in the rest of the house, and then we redid all of them.



left: The original dining room was completely gutted and turned into the new living room. Davies added hardwood floors, new windows and new French doors leading out to the pool. The sofa and rug were custom-designed by D2 Interiors, and the metallic Flat Vernacular wallpaper on the ceiling glows in the dark. New fireplace mantels were added throughout the home. **below:** The wet bar was updated with new cabinetry, a wine fridge and a custom stone sink.





opposite: The living room also features black vintage chairs and a “fun” sign, which is hardwired into the wall and can be illuminated. **above left:** At the top of the upstairs landing, a small sitting area is composed of vintage chairs discovered on one of Davies’s shopping trips. The artwork by Lawrence Lazar was sourced from Appleton Art Design. **above right:** Since the former laundry room was located in a closet, having a real laundry room was essential to Davies. One of her signature touches is making the laundry a fun destination for clients, so she chose to outfit her own space with a custom barn door, Whyte & Company pink resin farmhouse sink, graphic Femme© wallpaper from Drop it Modern, and cement tile flooring.

What did the kitchen makeover entail? It was completely reconfigured. It used to be an L-shaped kitchen, and it was a horrible design. I feel like counterspace in kitchens isn’t well utilized; all you really need is a big working island and the area around the stove. I made a floor-to-ceiling pantry where there used to be cabinets, and I designed the detail on the pantry doors. The hood is very unique—it’s wrapped in quartzite, and we had to reinforce it all the way to the joist of the house. There’s also a four-inch ledge that goes up and around. I have a lot of artwork, and in lieu of upper cabinetry, I chose to hang art. I really wanted it to feel more like a living area and not a traditional “this is the kitchen.” Even the lighting I used is midcentury.

Your home has a cool “man cave”—did your husband help design this? Oh no, he learned it’s better not to get involved! [laughs] He let me do my thing. The most important part was having a very comfortable, deep sofa. We put a custom D2 rug in there, and I made the coffee table. The piece

behind the sofa is a 1920s architectural piece from a bank on Madison Avenue in New York City. The artwork and all of the chairs are vintage, but the space doesn’t feel vintage; it feels very current. Out of all of the rooms in the house, this is probably the darkest one. And my husband approved it; he liked it a lot. He actually insisted on the yellow chair. I was going to sell it to someone, and he said, “No, I love it.” It just worked; it’s happy.

I love how much light the living room gets from all of the doors and windows. Those doors lead out to the pool. This room is very light and airy, and it’s where I go to read and have a quiet moment. I got those vintage chairs in Miami—they’re from Germany, and I absolutely love them. I always try to add the color black to every room I design, because black is what grounds a room and adds sophistication. The wallcovering I put on the ceiling made me happy. When the sample came in, it just spoke to me, and I made it work in the room. It’s a bluish copper with a

this spread: The master bedroom emits a Zen-like vibe. Above the custom D2 Interieurs bed is artwork by Nell Waters, and the vintage chairs in the sitting area are from 1stdibs and recovered in a Designers Guild linen.



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little metallic in it, and it actually glows in the dark. The coffee table is vintage, and we spray-painted the base with car paint. The “fun” sign was a carnival sign I got upstate; it’s actually hardwired into the wall.

How did you approach the laundry room? This is the first area you see when you go upstairs, and I wanted it to be interesting. You can’t even really see the washer and dryer; they’re off to the left. I also love faces—as you can see with all of the art in my house, there are a lot of faces—and I fell in love with the wallpaper. I knew I was definitely using that paper, so I had to find the perfect tile, which I did. The custom resin sink is fuchsia, and I put in a sliding barn door because I didn’t want a traditional door, and the space is tight. I thought it was a different detail to add.

What vibe were you after for your master bedroom? Serene, peaceful and comfortable. Comfy things give me joy—I should have grown up in the ’70s! The bed is a D2 bed, and in the sitting area, the little vintage table is from France, and we recovered those vintage chairs. It’s funny—people have chairs in their bedrooms and never use them, but I literally use those chairs daily. I’m a big meditator, and I sit in those chairs twice a day. They’re so comfortable, and I love that I actually use them.



this spread: The new master bath was given heated floors of irregular-cut Thassos mosaic stone that travels through to the shower and water closet; weathered white Moroccan handmade terracotta tiles cover the shower's walls and ceiling. For drama, the custom white oak vanity is topped with Calcutta Covellano book-matched stone and a three-inch mitered countertop of the same; the stone is by Dushi Marble & Granite. Davies also rounded the walls in the space. Every last detail was considered, which in turn created an interesting detail for the wall-mounted faucets from Waterworks. The pendants above are by Rich Brilliant Willing, the sconces are from Lawson Fenning, and the window treatment is made from an Ski fabric. After seeing the ext. soaking tub during her travels abroad years ago, Davies became obsessed with having it one day. After tracking it down, she was able to import it from Italy.





above and near right: In her onsite creative studio, Davies and her clients enter the loft space on seemingly floating stairs, with Davies's powder blue Vespa appearing as pop art through the glass risers; the studio's powder room is wrapped in Flavor Paper's Brasilia wallcovering in Licorice. **opposite:** In the studio loft space, the room is centered on a large white lacquered custom-built table perfect for client presentations. Custom-built shelving houses all of the fabric swatches, and underneath in the cabinetry is a comprehensive selection of over 150 samples of original D2 Interieurs-designed rugs. The lighting in the studio was one of the most important aspects of the space—there are fifty-six recessed lights in the ceiling and oversize dome pendants above the worktable. Lighting is by Fontana Arte, the Herman Miller desk chairs are in a Schumacher fabric, and the counter stools from 1stdibs are in a Larsen fabric through Cowtan & Tout.

You mentioned that the master bath is new. Can you tell me about that? The master bedroom had a bathroom, but it was very small. For the new bath, I put in a vaulted ceiling with a skylight—the room gets so much light now—and there are heated floors. I wanted the star of the show to be the book-matched slabs on the vanity, which to me are very serious, very “look at me.” While most people would continue the same slab in the shower, or put big tiles that looked like it in there, I wanted to create a complete juxtaposition to the vanity, so I put hand-glazed irregular tile in the shower. I also never had a tub like this before, and I really wanted one. The tub came all the way from Italy; it's so incredible. I saw it on Pinterest, but I couldn't find it anywhere. I literally had to brush up on my Italian to get this tub!

Your outdoor space looks like a resort—so relaxing. The pool area is outside of the living room, and that's our “weekend” area, where we go to hang out and have a glass of wine. I love the feeling of it. People always say, “I love your pool. I feel like I'm in a palazzo in Italy.” We're on three acres, so it's very private. I have another patio area outside of my studio as well.

When did you set out to create an onsite studio? It was in 2015. This was an old barn on the property, and I wanted a creative space where I could go that was separate from the house. My primary office is in Westport, and we built a separate studio on the property to be my creative play space. I renovated the barn and added the second level.



opposite left: The back-painted glass backsplash in the studio kitchen reflects Davies's favorite shade of yellow. The yellow pops seen throughout the studio are the same color seen in D2 Interieurs's logo.

opposite right: A custom window seat provides a cozy spot for respite. **below:** The studio is completed by a comfortable sitting area with a vintage modern sofa flanked by two custom upholstered swan chairs and throw pillows covered in vintage fabrics Davies found.

How does this home compare to other places you've lived? Every place I've lived has had its own unique personality. I owned a loft in Tribeca and one in SoHo. I had a pre-war apartment on the Upper West Side. I had a country home in Woodstock, New York. This home is completely different. I feel very "dug in" here; it feels like a true expression of me. With all of the other places I've lived, I knew I would eventually move, which I did. But I don't feel that way here. I feel like I've taken a deep breath. I can't believe I live here; I'm so grateful.

Designing your own home versus a client's—is it easier? Harder? It's impossible! As a designer, I have access to everything; I try to

never use the same thing twice; and I make a lot of my own pieces custom. You want everything, but you can't have everything. It's a gradual process, and I'm always buying things. If you buy things you love, they'll all work together. —INTERVIEW BY LAUREN FETTERMAN

Resources:

Interior designer: D2 Interieurs, Westport/Weston; 646-326-7048; d2interieurs.com
 Architect: Vita Design Group, Westport; 203-283-1561; vdgarch.com
 Contractor: Old World Construction, Redding; 203-544-9263