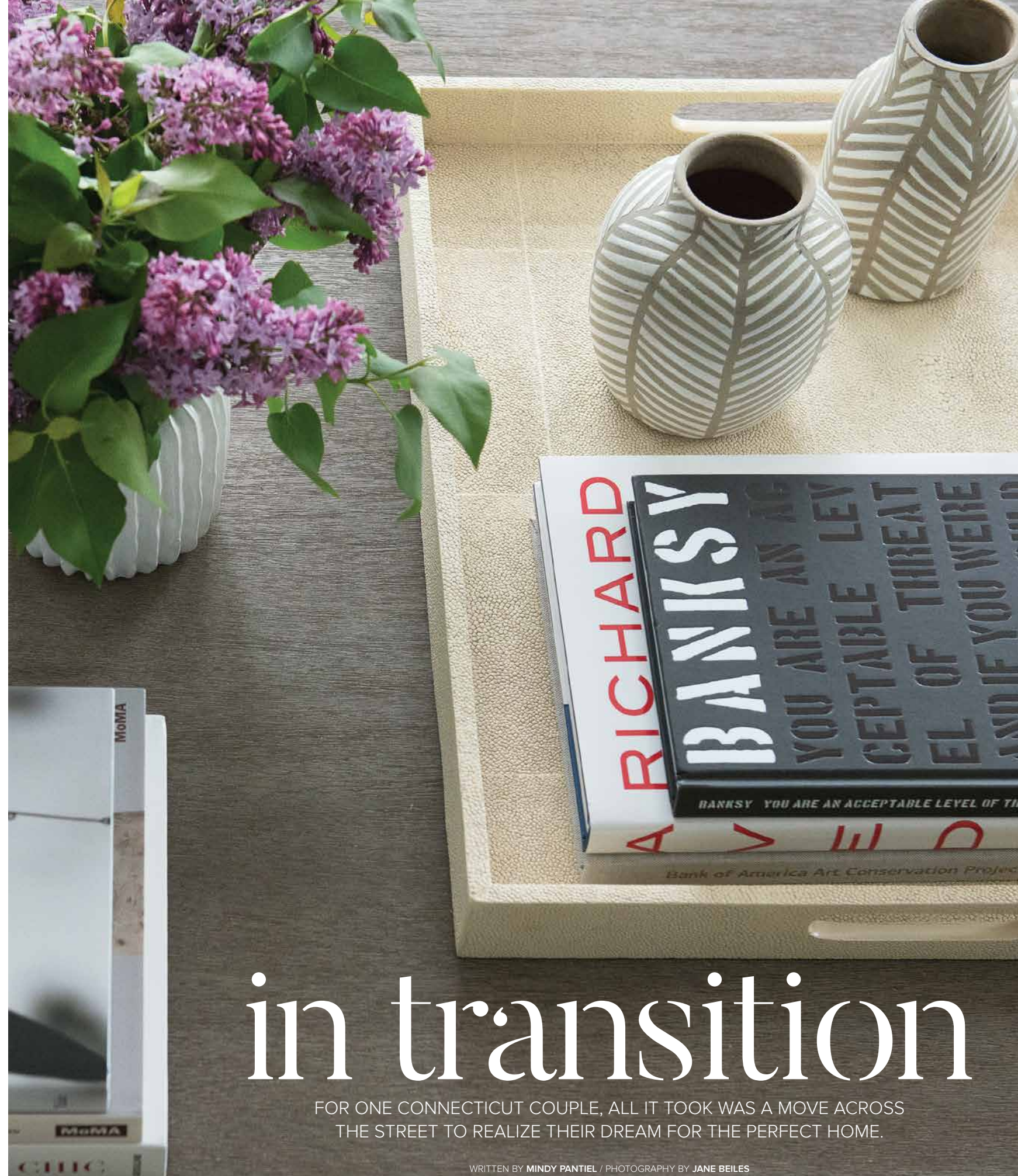


ARCHITECTURE / MICHAEL SMITH, MICHAEL SMITH ARCHITECTS  
 INTERIOR DESIGN / MICHELLE MORGAN HARRISON, MORGAN HARRISON HOME  
 HOME BUILDER / VEBI GJYLIQI, V & A CONSTRUCTION, INC.  
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / NEIL BRUNETTI, BRUNETTI DESIGN GROUP,  
 AND HEATHER O'NEILL, SECOND NATURE LANDSCAPE DESIGN



# in transition

FOR ONE CONNECTICUT COUPLE, ALL IT TOOK WAS A MOVE ACROSS THE STREET TO REALIZE THEIR DREAM FOR THE PERFECT HOME.

WRITTEN BY MINDY PANTIEL / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JANE BEILES

Classic millwork by V & A Construction establishes a formal backdrop in the living room, where designer Michelle Morgan Harrison lined the bookshelves with a silver wallcovering by Koroseal. The Haddon lounge chairs from Hickory Chair are upholstered in Romo silver metallic fabric on the front and a Cowtan & Tout geometric-patterned fabric on the back. The gilded tripod table with mirrored top is from Pearson.



If you subscribe to the real estate philosophy of location, location, location as essential for a making a great home buy, then one Connecticut couple hit the mother lode. Not only was the property they found situated in what locals refer to as the “in-town” section of New Canaan—a coveted locale within walking distance of the town center—but the size of the lot also approached 2 acres. “It was one of the largest in-town properties and highly desirable,” says architect Michael Smith, whom the couple retained to design their home. “The typical properties in this area are much smaller, so this one gave us the opportunity to build an estate-size house.”

The homeowners, a couple with four young daughters, previously lived across the street and had been eyeing the property for quite some time when it finally came on the market, with the existing house listed as a teardown. With the couple already a fan of Smith’s work—“We saw

a classic stone-and-Shingle-style home he built and loved it,” says the wife—the architect came to the job with an established framework from which to begin. “The concept was to create a strong street presence with formal architecture on the front reinforced by strict symmetry and elements like a double gable,” says Smith, collaborating with landscape designers Neil Brunetti and Heather O’Neill on the surrounding property, where they sustained the established scale and proportion. “It is important to me that the landscape design marries well to the home and its architecture,” says Brunetti. To achieve this, he introduced matching fieldstone walls on either side of the front door to complement the formal entry. In contrast, the backside, with its pergola off to one side and rambling porch, is more asymmetrical and casual. “There are a series of spaces for entertaining that serve as an extension of the interiors,” he adds.

From the Aerin crystal-and-polished-nickel chandelier to the mirrored gold-framed églomisé coffee table by Julian Chichester, the living room sparkles. The Lorens sofa from Hickory Chair sports off-white Romo velvet, and the Vanguard X-based benches wear pewter leather. The silver-gray Tencel rug is by J.D. Staron.

A custom ivory demilune console with antique grilles by MTC Studio Designs and a sisal rug with metallic-gold binding from Stark enhance the ivory-and-gold color scheme in the dining room. The sunburst mirror and chairs wearing tufted ivory velvet on the front and Schumacher gold linen on the back are all by Lillian August for Hickory White. The table is the homeowners'; the antique-brass-and-cubed-crystal chandelier is by Visual Comfort.





A trio of glass pendants by Juliska lights the kitchen island, which is topped with honed Danby marble from Paul's Marble Depot; the Jessica Charles counter stools, featuring a driftwood finish, are upholstered in Schumacher vinyl. The kitchen cabinetry is by V & A Construction, and the farmhouse sink is by Franke.



**Below, left:** The kitchen's Vir Still Minimal faucet by Laura Kirar and the Michael S Smith for Loft fireclay sink are both from Kallista.

**Below, right:** A matte-glass tile backsplash by Ann Sacks complements the honed Danby marble countertops.

In the breakfast nook, a custom built-in banquette sports a cushion covered with Holly Hunt beige vinyl and is topped with Christopher Farr pillows, while the Bernhardt wingback chairs wear Pindler gray vinyl on the inside and Robert Allen raffia on the back. The custom table is by Tritter Feefer, and the glass-beaded chandelier is by Currey & Company.



That same formal/informal dichotomy is evident in the interiors, where the intricate millwork plays a key role. From the entry, the deep coffered ceiling beams and detailed pilasters that frame the living room opening signal formality, with the molding layers becoming noticeably less pronounced as you move through to the kitchen and family room. The mind-boggling job of keeping track of the woodwork fell to builder Vebi Gjyliqi, who, along with his crew, crafted everything in his local shop. "All the moldings are custom-made, and there is not one piece of stock anywhere," says Gjyliqi. "It's not just about cutting the wood; things have to be laid out just right, and each piece has to be symmetrical and perfect."

When it came to furnishings and finishes, interior designer Michelle Morgan Harrison took cues from the architecture but introduced fabrics and paint to make a more transitional statement. "The homeowners wanted that balance of a

traditional home with a more modern organic feel, and a yin-yang of luxe shine with natural textures and finishes," says Harrison. One example of this is the designer's use of high-gloss lacquered paint in all the main living areas before switching to a satin finish on the kitchen and family room walls.

According to Harrison, the wife was as clear about what she wanted—soothing ambience, with a palette of silvers, pale blues, lavenders, warm grays, ivory and gold, and a touch of glam—as what she didn't want. She had a laundry list of do-nots, from chinoiserie to the color red. "It's the first time someone has given me a 'no' list," says Harrison, noting things such as geometric patterns and anything beige were also pretty much banned. "I loved it! We actually ended up doing a few things on it regardless, such as geometric prints, but it was very helpful." In the living room, velvet with a sheen on the sofa, a pair of

A palette of beiges and pale blues defines the family room, where the Pearson swivel chairs are upholstered in Quadrille linen and the silk lumbar pillows wear Kelly Wearstler fabric from Lee Jofa. The RH sofa is covered in Sunbrella linen, the driftwood coffee table is by Lillian August for Hickory White, and the sconces are from Visual Comfort.



Harrison chose to appoint the patio with teak furniture that ages well. A cocktail area is furnished with RH's Coronado collection, while an RH teak-and-concrete dining table is paired with more chairs from the Coronado collection.



silk-covered slipper chairs, textured silk strie on the walls, and a pale gray thick-pile Tencel rug so soft that it begs for bare feet satisfied all the requirements. “The goal was to walk into a room, exhale and go aah,” says Harrison.

In the dining room, a gold sunburst mirror and a champagne sisal rug with a metallic border keep the space in the transitional mode while offsetting a traditional mahogany table from the couple’s previous house. The tufted chairs wear ivory-colored linen on the back and, in deference to those four little girls, sport pink Sunbrella velvet seats. Not surprisingly, durable fabrics also play a key role in the family room and kitchen. In the latter, the banquette is covered in vinyl, and the curved breakfast area chairs feature vinyl on the front and raffia on the back, both in pale gray. A silver-leaf

light fixture with sandblasted glass and an oval table with a matte ivory finish round out the panoply of textures.

Serenity reigns in the master suite, where the soft blue on the tufted headboard speaks in a whisper to the faint lavender on the draperies. Mirrored nightstands topped with crystal lamps supply a touch of bling, while the white fur rug is pure luxury. Housed in a turret, the adjoining master bathroom features a feminine beaded chandelier over the tub to contrast with the paneled ceiling. “Here and throughout the house, we succeeded in establishing an equilibrium of refined meets texture and formal meets organic,” says Harrison. “But perhaps, more importantly, we accomplished creating something that will stand the test of time.” ■

A cozy reading corner in the master bedroom features a chair and ottoman from Hickory Chair dressed in Fabricut chenille, a Mr. Brown London side table and a CB2 lamp. The Vanguard bed and tufted headboard are upholstered in blue velvet by Robert Allen, and the custom bench touts mohair velvet from Rogers & Goffigon. The white sheepskin rug is by J.D. Staron; the chandelier is by Oly.

Plantation shutters modulate the light in the master bathroom, where Harrison designed the vanity fabricated by V & A Construction; it sits on waterjet-cut marble mosaic tile floors from Paul’s Marble Depot. The polished-nickel sconces are from Visual Comfort, and the faucets are Perrin & Rowe by Rohl.

