

a Splash of Dash

A designer adds just the right amount of color to give an almost-perfect home the spark it needs to suit its energetic young family.

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Interior designer Lauren Muse collaborated with Michelle Brunwasser of Weber Fine Art Greenwich to help the owners find works that would please them visually and suit their decor, such as the dining room's lively painting by Judith Kruger, *FACING NCF*. The entry's contemporary console and attention-getting art by James Nades provide a lively contrast to the traditional architecture.



The living room's high level of interest stems in great part from all "the varied elements of texture," says the designer. The metal side table is topped with petrified wood, while two stools flaunt velvet-clad bases to complement their seats of striped fabric by Duralee. Pale linen curtains afford privacy and soften the windows. The arresting painting is by Patrick Wilson.

One of our greatest style icons, the late Diana Vreeland, fashion editor of *Harper's Bazaar*, editor-in-chief of *Vogue*, and costume consultant for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, wouldn't have stepped out the door without her signature red lipstick. It lit up her

memorable face and gave notice that hers was an alluring, vibrant personality. Sometimes houses are like that, too. All they need is a dash of luster to boost their ambience and underscore their attributes.

Take this handsome Riverside home, for example. No ordinary dwelling to begin with, its meticulous construction involved only nontoxic materials. "The original owner had chemical sensitivities," recalls architect Sean Taylor of Mockler Taylor Architects. "Everything had to be designed and built around providing good indoor air quality."

Understandably, the current owners, Randy and Wendy Browning-Lynch, parents of young children, were delighted to have found such a nest. And as if a healthy home weren't enough, the place was beautiful and the layout was family-friendly. Still, the house seemed to be lacking a spark—something that would really bring it to life. Enter Greenwich interior designer Lauren Muse. Muse, like Wendy, loves color and, most important, has an enviable knack for injecting just the right amount exactly where it's needed. Since the house was in excellent condition, Muse was free to concentrate

PROJECT TEAM

ARCHITECTURE: Sean Taylor, Mockler Taylor Architects
INTERIOR DESIGN: Lauren Muse, Muse Interiors
BUILDER: Ken Bacco

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on cosmetics—"the fun part," she says.

The foundation—a neutral palette—was just waiting for her touch. Her splashes of color pop up throughout the home, creating a fresh, contemporary spirit. To launch this change of attitude, Muse began by energizing the entry hall with the kind of composition that inspires people to use the front door. Artist James Nares's bold print is paired with a custom console lacquered in Benjamin Moore's high gloss Hale Navy. On the floor, Muse added an irresistible Alexander McQueen rug in royal blue.

Aware that too much of anything is never good, Muse doesn't overload her clients. Working primarily with a mix of purple and orange—Wendy's own choice—Muse introduced plenty of muted shades and low-key patterns that are lively, but not daunting. A peek into the living room reveals armchairs clad in a subdued but attention-getting orange Romo pattern. Across the way, the chenille sofa hosts pillows covered in an embroidered orange-and-purple Robert Allen material ("I fell in love with this one and played the whole room from there," says the designer). There's an orange-and-white lumbar pillow to continue the theme,

Subtle details and elegant fixtures lend the family-friendly home stature. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The distinctive silhouettes and nailhead trim of a dining chair conjure edginess. The dining room's Arctic Pear chandelier by Ochre is fashioned with solid glass drops for an extra dose of sparkle. In the master bedroom, a lumbar pillow sports a metallic fabric for some grown-up sheen. A channel groove enhances the living room's white oak coffee table. Mirrored doors glamorize the dining room console. Nailhead trim—one of Muse's favorite touches—accentuates the living room sofa's lines.





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and shapely orange Dynasty vases on the mantel. But there’s also a surprise. Two stool-base stools flaunt a stripe of blue and white that ties in with the entry’s console. Everything is so harmonious it’s difficult to imagine one element without the other.

The walls of the adjacent dining room were hand-painted and stenciled when the Lynches arrived. But whereas some designers might balk at combining punchy art with a patterned backdrop, Muse is not among them. Over the mirrored console hangs a lively painting, by Judith Kruger, that complements the space. “Art should work in the context of the room, not be matchy-matchy,” Muse says.

Charles Stewart dining chairs dressed in lavender Highland Court linen gather around the dark table like spring flowers. Above hangs a gleaming Arctic Pear chandelier by Ochre. “We needed a soft color for the seats to offset the strong purple silk curtains,” the designer explains. “The chandelier is for bling.”

As sophisticated as the house appears, though, its decor is far more durable than visitors suppose. A parent herself, Muse knows comfort and livability are keys to a welcoming home.

Her ability to compose polished rooms that belie their wearability is clear in the family room. To rev up the cozy factor, she added bench seating—a favorite with kids and adults alike—alongside the stone fireplace. The custom coffee table with its weathered-wood top is ideal for a game of Monopoly or a tray of pre-dinner cocktails. The upholstered seating is treated to resist staining, and the ottomans, with their faux leather tops and ikat sides, are as versatile as they are chic. Here, as in many of the other rooms, a graphic but subdued carpet serves as a unifying element for the disparate patterns, while jolts of yellow lend sunny cheer.

The nearby breakfast room is both visually rich and hardworking. Sticky fingerprints and spills? No worries. The chairs (four came via the owner’s last address and were smartly refurbished)

The welcoming 4,000-square-foot, shingled house incorporates timeless features like a port cohere. **FACING PAGE:** Muse used a soothing gray-blue paint in the family room to create a backdrop for a host of lively fabrics including pillows dressed in a blue-and-taupe leaf motif from Zoffany and geometric stripes by Christopher Farr Cloth. New Lucite hardware and a freshly lacquered mantel increase modernity.





flaunt matte vinyl fronts and backs and faux leather seats. "They're wearable and cleanable," Muse says with delight. And yet, the entire scene, including the chairs' delicious color, the slick custom table, and the Oly Studio chandelier, is way too high on charm for anyone to focus on practicality.

Obviously, the parents' haven didn't have to be as long wearing as the communal rooms. After all, this is where Mom and Dad are allowed time off. But Muse kept everyday traffic in mind, incorporating a Tencel rug that looks like silk. Exercising her usual

creativity, she also installed an elegant, hand-painted metallic wallpaper from Studio E on an accent wall. The couple's existing bed catapulted from quiet to posh with a sunset-colored duvet and linen pillows with orange faux-leather accents. When schedules allow for a quiet chat, there's a grown-up seating area opposite the bed with chenille-covered chairs and a woven-metal table.

Timeless but also current, today's house feels like the perfect environment for a modern family. Muse's deft balance of what she describes as "clean lines and complex patterns" guarantees functionality. That it all looks so good is a giant perk. Had the owners opted for faddish hues and unforgiving furniture, it could have been a different story. Instead, their tasteful aesthetic combined with Muse's talents hits just the right kind of cheery, happy-ever-after note. •

RESOURCES For more information about this home, see page 132.

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The breakfast room's custom table combines a stained white-oak top with an industrial-inspired steel base. The colorful art, which couldn't be a better fit for the orange-and-purple theme, also graced the owner's previous home. **FACING PAGE:** Hanging his and her lights free up space on the nightstands in the master bedroom, where hand-painted metallic wallpaper covers the wall behind the bed. A faux-shagreen-framed mirror adds interest to the fireplace.