

inside: GREENWICH | NEW CANAAN | WESTPORT HOMES

at home

decorate!

IN FAIRFIELD COUNTY

INTERIOR DESIGNER
VICENTE WOLF

HOT FABRIC + WALLPAPER

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FINDS**

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KIDS' GEAR**

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by JUDY OSTROW photographs HÜYLA KOLABAS

PATTERN BEHAVIOR

Designers **Lauren Muse** and **Christina Murphy** infuse a Greenwich Colonial with lots of color, pattern and texture.





Great pairs create symmetry in the family room of this Greenwich Colonial designed by Christina Murphy and Lauren Muse. It has custom sofas, Texstyle Design chairs in Pindler & Pindler fabric and lamps from Williams Sonoma Home set on Barclay Butera side tables, one of which is graced with twin Ming white emperors from Lillian August. The space is anchored by a pinstripe carpet from Stark, and centered with a custom table that is covered in lacquered grass cloth and trimmed with chocolate leather; the horn boxes on top are from Dovecote. The "mirror" above the mantel is actually a flat screen television. Curry chair frames, and a small round side table from Laneventure loosen up the strictly linear pattern. The green velvet Harlequin pillows are from The Drawing Room.



clockwise from left: An Oly Studio sideboard topped with vintage lamps and a bamboo-framed mirror from one of designer Lauren's Stamford antiques sources deftly dresses one wall in the family room; sconces from Vaughan and a Niemann Weeks chandelier cast their glow in the dining room, reflected in the softly metallic floral wallpaper from Osborne & Little; the home's exterior.



Take the basics: a roomy house with good bones, in a great location. Combine these elements with a couple of savvy interior design professionals who have eyes for their clients' needs and tastes. Toss in a willingness to hew to a budget and still provide beautiful and livable interiors, and you've got a surefire recipe for the successful decorating that everyone is looking for in these value-conscious times.

The clients—a busy couple with their four young sons—had some practical requirements. For their large, active family, they wanted comfort and ease of maintenance. At the same time, they sought an aesthetic that would align with their somewhat minimalist tastes, and harmonize with the traditional architectural details of the classic Colonial house they had just purchased in Greenwich.

Enter Lauren Muse and Christina Murphy, a pair of design

The Greenwich colonial is newly built, but has the character and proportions of gracious homes of the 1920s, thanks to Christina and Lauren. In the elegantly appointed dining room, orchid vases are from Dovecote and the napkins and napkin rings are from Hoaglands.



talents for whom this new project would be another point of intersection between their parallel career paths, which began in the nineties at a Manhattan advertising agency where they were co-workers and became friends.

With her first child on the way, Lauren had decided to opt out of the grueling hours and travel requirements of the ad business and take up a career in design. Inspired by the process of decorating the home she and her husband had built in Connecticut, she made the leap by enrolling in the New York School of Interior Design.

Christina, who grew up in Palm Beach and counted the designers Mimi McMakin and her daughter Celerie Kemble among her childhood neighbors and friends, was inspired by Lauren's decision, and wrestled with the idea of a switch.

"I endured a few sleepless nights until I was forced to address the nearly audible inner voice telling me that interior design was a true passion of mine as well. Within a week, I was in my boss's



A chair from Walter's Wicker in the sunroom. **left:** The console and prints hail from various antiques outlets; the lamp, one of a pair, is from Orvis. "To stick to our budget we had to search out sources at every point in the spectrum," Lauren says.



The designers covered the sunroom's tile floor with a woven sisal carpet from Classic Carpet & Rug, and filled the light-struck space with accent pieces designed by Christina's childhood Palm Beach neighbor, Mimi McMakin, for Laneventure.





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INTERIOR DESIGN
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—CHRISTINA MURPHY

*Large-scale wallpaper, such as the Cole & Son print used in a first floor powder room, makes a small space vibrant and memorable. **below:** To add excitement to the kitchen plan, the design team uses the dynamics between round elements and the angled shapes—cabinets and counters—that one associates with kitchens.*

office giving notice,” recalls Christina. »

Once they finished their studies, the women’s paths diverged. Christina worked for several years at Kemble Interiors, by then a red-hot New York design studio. Lauren, who also jumped into the Greenwich residential sales market, found design clients among her real estate customers. Their word-of-mouth praise helped expand Muse Interiors—her design venture—into a going concern.

When Lauren brought in the Greenwich project—a large new home with grandly scaled rooms—it needed interiors on a tight schedule and finite budget. Lauren, who has an encyclopedic command of local Fairfield County design sources, called her friend, wisely figuring that a team approach could get it done. Christina, who, by the time the project appeared, had moved on from Kemble to her own studio, had files full of resources in New York. Together, the pair produced results—on time and in the black—that are the definition of every client’s dream.

Of course, it’s always good to have a dream client. “The homeowner was wonderful,” says Christina. “After we had a basic plan in place, she gave us almost complete free rein to pull together the components.” Adds Lauren, “She was very decisive and trusting



In the breakfast area, the Bausman table is illuminated by a dramatic pendant fixture from Remains; its large-diameter handblown shade creates a focal point. The painting by David Oleski and curtains made with a Lulu DK fabric add more roundness to the mix.





*“When you invest in
HIGH-QUALITY FURNITURE,
updating just
means recovering.”*

—LAUREN MUSE

A distinctive shape and eye-catching fabric, such as the Zoffany chair covered in “Sumaya” from Creation Baumann, rescue satellite seating from wallflower status. Console from Lillian August, urn from Hamptons Antiques Galleries and mirrored pillow from The Drawing Room. **opposite page:** Good upholstered pieces, such as these from Hickory Chair in the living room’s main seating area, are staple elements of good design, ready to be dressed and redressed in new fabric with the passage of time. Helsinki Leaf pillows from Lillian August add color to the room. Another custom lacquered grass cloth and leather-trimmed cocktail table anchors the arrangement; lamp is from The Accessory Store. Gilt and mirror-framed prints and the metal side tables are from Rinsfret Home & Garden in Greenwich.



in our vision. There wasn't a lot of waiting around for the client to make up her mind. A lot of the credit must go to her." »

The underpinnings of the design plan are an outline for almost anyone wanting to fill a new home, or redecorate one that needs updating. First, invest in good upholstery. “The homeowner brought a few things from her previous home,” says Christina, “but we filled in with upholstered pieces of sufficient scale for the large common rooms and the master suite. When you invest in high-quality furniture, updating just means re-covering.” Well-made sofas and chairs will last a lifetime while

undergoing multiple changes of color, pattern and texture that suit a household's evolving requirements.

“The family members are big readers,” says Christina, “so there needed to be lots of places to curl up with a book.” With the wear-and-tear potential of four young boys, all the seating also demanded “sturdy” in the adjectives that describe it. The designers chose from respected lines such as Hickory Chair, as well as custom work; eye-pleasing textiles from a variety of to-the-trade sources provide the beauty part.

Another principle earmarking the project was to mix it up.



The pale palette in the master bedroom creates a soothing nest. The distressed mirrored side table is from Aidan Gray. The velvet coverlet is by Bella Notte and the Parfait shams are by Matouk, both from Fig Bench is by Twentieth Art Design, with cushion, pillow and drapery fabric from Lulu DK. Molton Brown candle is from Waterworks.

The combination of new and vintage pieces, with sources ranging from catalog merchants to custom ateliers, will give any room a lively quality that is personalized and pleasing to the eye. “We were working with a budget,” says Lauren, “so we used a high/low approach to furnishings.”

Lauren relied on some of her favorite local shops for many great objects and accent pieces. Among her go-to sources are the Antiques & Artisan Center and the Hamptons Antique Galleries in Stamford, as well as Westport’s Bungalow, and J. Pocker & Son in Greenwich. She also recommends online shopping for “when you can’t leave your living room.” Favorite keystrokes include 1stdibs.com, blinkdecor.com and mecoxgardens.com.

The pair splurged on objects chosen as stylish punctuation, particularly lighting fixtures. Because the home’s ceilings are high, providing lots of vertical space for display, Lauren and Chris-

tina found some showstopping pieces, such as the handblown globe chandelier from Remains that anchors the dining area in the round-themed kitchen. For a first-floor powder room, Lauren found a shimmering crystal drop fixture at one of her Stamford haunts. Art for focal points—in the kitchen’s dining area and over the sofa in the master suite—is dramatic in scale, leading the eye to the most appealing angles of a room.

Not to be overlooked, great wall coverings find their place in the plan. Using distinctive patterns selectively seems to be the key. In the dining room—an elegant and glowing confection of creamy textiles and golden accents—the designers chose a dramatic, large-scale floral paper from Osborne & Little to grace the walls above the wainscoting. In the powder rooms and master bath, thoughtful pattern choices make each space distinctive and memorable.

Combining all of these ingredients for good house dressing, the

The cozy seating area is centered by another David Oleski oil and side tables from Oly Studio. The mirrored pillow is from The Drawing Room and the blue coral is from Lillian August.





The dramatic master bath, with its marble floors and splendid soaking tub, gets a dash of design excitement with another richly patterned wallpaper from Studio Printworks LLC. Window treatments are from The Shade Store and the towels are from Waterworks.

designers have achieved interiors that reflect not only their professional discipline and creativity, but also a comfortable fit with the clients' needs. It's a recipe for success worth passing along. **ah**

Resources

Antique & Artisan Center, Stamford, 203-327-6022; stamfordantiques.com

Bungalow, Westport, 203-227-4406

Christina Murphy Interiors, 212-842-0773; christinamurphyinteriors.com

Classic Carpet & Rug, 203-359-3622; classiccarpelandrug.com

The Drawing Room, 203-661-3406; thedrawingroom.cc

Fig, 203-227-8669; figlinens.com

Hamptons Antique Galleries, 203-325-4019; hamptonsantiquegalleries.com

Hoaglands, 203-869-2127; hoaglands.com

J. Pocker & Son, Greenwich, 203-629-0811, and Westport, 203-222-7800; jpocker.com

Muse Interiors, 203-869-0097

Osborne & Little, Stamford, 203-359-1500; osborneandlittle.com

Remains Lighting, Greenwich, 203-629-1000; remains.com



The children's rooms reflect the sons' individuality. The little boy's room features custom trundles, covered in red corduroy from Kravet. The star pendant fixture is from Worlds Away.

left: The older son's room, with its chocolate and orange palette, features a hanging fixture from Visual Comfort, a small couch from DWR and side tables from Alexa Hampton.