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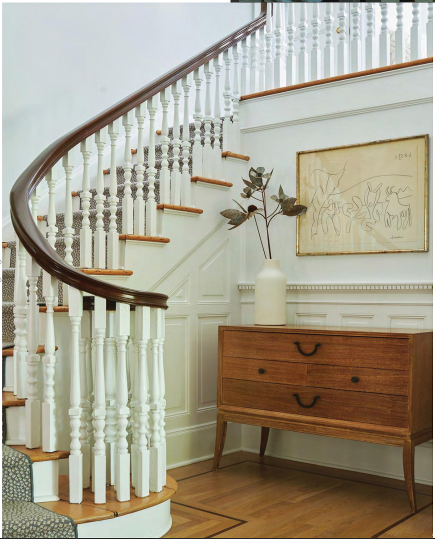
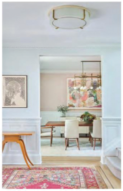
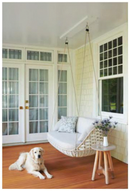


INTERVIEW WITH DEBBIE NOTIS, NOTIS DESIGN | *PHOTOGRAPHER JANE BEILES*

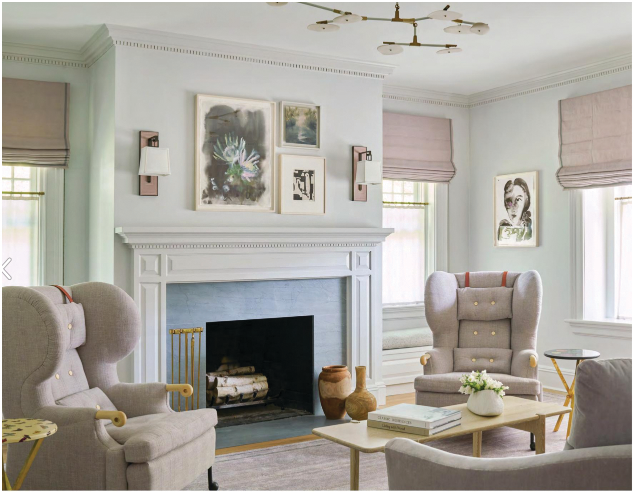
Open Minded

A **LAYERED** look, soft textures and a new flow
create a **LIGHTER, BRIGHTER** family home

You've done several projects with these clients. What is your relationship like with them? They found me about eight years ago through the Mayflower Inn & Spa in Washington, Connecticut, which was a project I had worked on. The client saw the project and loved how it looked. We met, and since then I've done four projects for them. The client is just a lovely human being. She's a pleasure to work with and appreciates good design; she's a dream.

opposite: A vintage Parzinger chest—nicknamed the "happy chest" because it appears to be smiling—welcomes guests in the foyer. A carpet from Stark runs up the home's original stairs. **above, left and right**: All items in the entry are vintage for a classic yet layered feel, as the pieces range in style. The foyer boasts original paneling, a vintage rug, an original Paul Frankl console, a Hans Wegner chair and a Jean Perzel ceiling light. **above center**: The original front porch was fitted with a Dedon swing.



left: Architectural details were added in the living room to match the home's original style. The walls, trim and millwork were painted in Farrow & Ball's Blackened, and custom pieces include the rug, coffee table and leather sconces. A Lindsey Adelman light fixture floats above the seating arrangement that includes BDDW chairs and vintage Fornasetti end tables decorated with butterflies, a theme elegantly repeated throughout the house. The artwork by Suzy Spence, Lourdes Sanchez, Poogy Bjerklie and Cecil Touchon are all through Sears Peyton Gallery.

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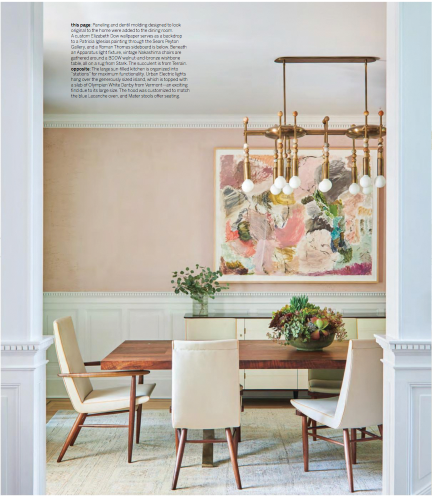
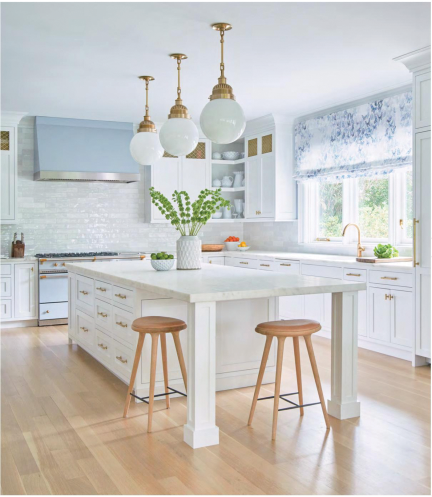
How would you describe their house? It's a Shingle-style home, in the vibe of Stanford White, built sometime between 1917 and 1920 in Westchester County. It's beautiful and classic, and while it is a stately house, it feels quite intimate inside. The clients moved in and lived there for a year, and during that time, we did a few quick fixes while we planned a renovation. Then they moved out for a year while we completed it. We worked with an architect who dealt with the exterior, construction documents, permits and architectural details, and I led the aesthetics of the interiors and provided the design for the millwork and vanities, all colors and materials, decorative lighting, window treatments, wallpaper, furniture and more.

What was the goal of the renovation? The original rooms were smaller and darker, so we changed the entire flow of the house so it's much more open, brighter and family-friendly. We built an addition on the back and branched off to the side. On the first floor, we significantly expanded the kitchen and family room as well as the outdoor patio. The goal was to create a "heart of the home," where the space flows from the "function" area of the kitchen to the eating area to the family room, and everything is open to each other. We also reconfigured space to add a first-floor en suite bedroom. On the second floor, we expanded the master bedroom, closet and bathroom, added a terrace and expanded the daughter's bedroom with all of the windows. It was a pretty significant gut renovation.



this page: Paneling and dentil molding designed to look original to the home were added to the dining room. A custom Elizabeth Dow wallpaper serves as a backdrop to a Patricia Iglesias painting through the Sears Peyton Gallery, and a Roman Thomas sideboard is below. Beneath an Apparatus light fixture, vintage Nakashima chairs are gathered around a BDDW walnut-and-bronze wishbone table, all on a rug from Stark. The succulent is from Terrain. **opposite**: The large sun-filled kitchen is organized into "stations" for maximum functionality. Urban Electric lights hang over the generously sized island, which is topped with a slab of Olympian White Danby from Vermont—an exciting find due to its large size. The hood was customized to match the blue Lacanche oven, and Mater stools offer seating.



above left: The breakfast/coffee/drinks bar is outfitted with a California Faucets selection and Armac Martin hardware. The station includes a sink, icemaker, beverage refrigerators and storage for glasses, mugs and tea. **above right**: The main sink, which overlooks the backyard and patio, also features a faucet from California Faucets and hardware from Armac Martin. The window treatment is crafted from a butterfly-patterned fabric by Matthew Williamson through Osborne & Little. **opposite**: One of the "stations" in the kitchen includes a built-in desk.

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above: The "functional" area of the kitchen seamlessly flows to a cozy eating area with a comfortable Kvilt sofa and custom City Joinery table. The glass doors behind open to the back patio, enhancing the home's indoor/outdoor feel. The linen draperies can be pulled to either side to expose as much of the glass doors as desired.

above left: The Kvilt sofa is covered in a dining-friendly ultrasuede through Suite NY, and the pillows are in LuRu Home and Ferrick Mason fabrics through Studio Four NYC. **above right**: A Caitlin McGauley butterfly wallpaper is a whimsical touch in the powder room. A 1960s vintage mirror is flanked by Urban Electric sconces in a custom color, and the Dash faucet by Waterworks was selected for its playful "jacks" look.

What was the vision for the home's look and feel? The client wanted a relaxed, easygoing environment that was light, inviting and modern. I tend to mix a lot of classic and modern elements together to create a layered feel, and that was really important to her. The client and I both love blue, so there is blue, or hints of it, throughout the house, with accents of gray, lavender, navy, purple and other tones. The homeowner is also very tactile, so everything has a softness to it, and we incorporated a lot of textured fabrics and family-friendly materials that could hold up to a family living there, with children, their friends and dogs. We used matte brass and antique brass in many places, as that was the original metal of the house.

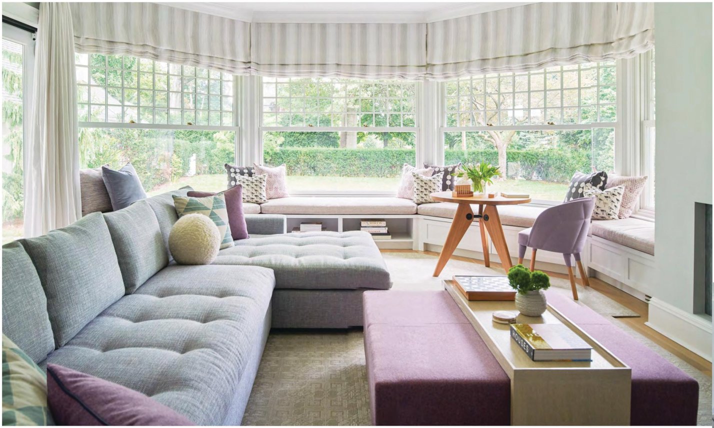
Did you use any existing furniture, or did you start fresh? A lot of the furniture was new, but a fair amount were items we had bought over the years. For example, the dining room is one area where we reused a lot of pieces. They already owned the BDDW table and the vintage Nakashima chairs that we had recovered several years ago, and we had used the Roman Thomas sideboard on another project. But the living room is all new and a lot of it custom—throughout the house as well—except for the ceiling light fixture, which we bought years ago. It's a Lindsey Adelman prototype, and I think it may have been one of her first porcelain lights.

I love the artwork in the living and dining rooms. Did you help source any of the pieces throughout the home? They had an existing art collection, but what you see in the living and dining rooms, we did together, which was so fun. We focused a lot on female artists and pieces that were modern and colorful.

How did you ensure the kitchen met everyone's needs? We worked very closely to determine the locations of things and were really organized and practical about what was going where. The kitchen is very user-friendly with different functions, like the coffee station, the kids' snack area and the built-in desk, and it's well thought-out. The client cooks a lot, and she wanted family and friends to feel comfortable being in the kitchen when she's cooking. The twelve-foot island was very important to her. It took a lot of research, but we were able to find a slab of Olympian White Danby from a quarry in Vermont to top it.

I love the sofa in the breakfast nook. We wanted to create a comfortable, relaxed space that was warm and cozy; sometimes the kids do their homework there. There are sliding glass doors on both sides that open up onto the patio, so there is a really good relationship between indoors and out. There are comfy chairs out on the patio to sit in and enjoy coffee in the morning or have a drink in the evening. The doors wrap around the corner in a Z-shape, so there is another series of glass doors in the family room that open up to the patio as well.

Tell me about the family room. The sofa is custom, and I can't tell you how many times we sized it and drew it in different configurations—we wanted to get it just right, and thankfully, we did. It was going to take up such a large part of the room, and it needed to fit the space well. The ottoman is custom, and it has a sliding coffee table tray on a track. We added the built-ins, and to the left of those is the fireplace and TV. The painting to the right was a piece we bought together for a different project. It's huge, and it was so perfect for that wall.



left: In the family room, the custom sofa and ottoman with a sliding coffee table tray were made by J&P Custom Upholstery. Motorized window treatments by Boaz Sharoni Design help to easily control the amount of sunlight coming into the space. Spacious window seats, with cushions and pillows by Artistic Upholstery, provide comfy perches to read and watch TV, and a Prouve table through Vitra is set up for writing or working on a laptop. **below**: Built-ins with custom millwork display a combination of midcentury vintage ceramics sourced over time and new items from Bungalow in Westport as well as small paintings by Isabel Bigelow through Sears Peyton Gallery and collage drawings by Jason Brinkerhoff through ZieherSmith. The large painting on the right wall is by Victor Matthews through GK Framing.

"There were so **MANY TIMES** where we would find a piece and say, 'Oh my God, that's ***PERFECT***.'"

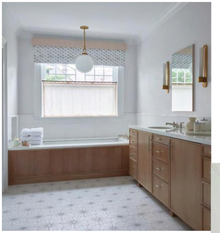
—DEBBIE NOTIS

Is there a story behind the butterflies in the powder room? I love that you asked that, because the homeowner loves butterflies. We put them here and there in an elegant way throughout the house to give you a smile. The powder room wallcovering is a beautiful painted wallpaper by Caitlin McGauley, and we custom-colored the sconces to go with it. This is a narrow space, and I found that vintage mirror on 1stdibs—it was just the right size.

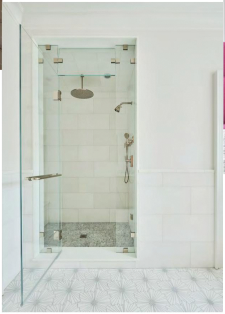
The master suite feels so serene. Definitely—they wanted an airy, calm, Zen space. It's also tactile all the way. The rug is shearling, and it's so comfy and luxurious. The kids were so funny—they were doing "snow" angels on it! The pink chaise is a yummy, soft bouclé fabric, and the window treatments are a gorgeous blue fabric with appliqués and embroidery from Holland & Sherry. The bed was fully custom, and there is a TV built into the base—you push a button, and the TV comes out and up. It also swivels, so you can sit on the chaise opposite the bed or on the window seat and watch TV as well. The TV was originally supposed to go over the fireplace, but it was going to be too high. I had seen my upholsterer do something like this on a bed before. The bed was already being built but wasn't complete yet, so we were able to add this feature. It works spectacularly. It's much more comfortable to watch TV this way than it would be to watch it so high up. Their master bath is in the same location, but the addition included expanding to the side of the house. It's much larger than before, with a separate water closet, a steam shower

opposite, top left: The stair landing doubles as a reading nook, lit by Urban Electric sconces on either side. On the window seat, a custom cushion in a Holly Hunt fabric by Artistic Upholstery was paired with pillows by Rosemary Hallgarten. The ceiling light over the stairwell is by Allied Maker. **opposite, top right**: The son's en suite bathroom features a custom vanity made by the contractor and painted in Farrow & Ball's Parma Gray, and the floor is covered in Carrara-and-Bardiglio mosaic tile. **opposite, bottom left and right**: In the son's bedroom, custom millwork built by the contractor was finished with leather hardware by Spinneybeck. A Risom chair through Knoll is seated at the built-in desk, and window treatments, fabricated by Boaz Sharoni Design in a Christopher Farr fabric through Holland & Sherry, add pattern. A Stark carpet covers the floor, and a Bone Simple Design light is above. **above**: The daughter's bedroom has an ethereal feel, with a pink fuzzy desk chair from RH and an elegant light by Bone Simple Design. The custom millwork was built by the contractor.

left: The serene master bedroom beckons with a luxurious light gray shearling rug through Stark on the floor. The custom upholstered bed with a mechanized slide-out TV lift from J&P Custom Upholstery provides easily accessible TV-viewing from any spot in the room. Lighting includes a Fortuny ceiling fixture and custom-colored Urban Electric sconces, and a Holland & Sherry fabric adorned with embroidery and appliqués was used for the window treatments. **below**: Custom millwork built by the contractor provides storage and display space. The painting by Malcolm Bray provides an infusion of bold color in the room, and the bed is dressed in custom Kohro bedding through Angela Brown Ltd. **opposite**: A custom chaise in a soft pink bouclé fabric, with a cashmere throw from Holland & Sherry draped across, is primed for curling up to watch TV or read a book.



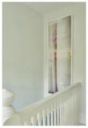
left: A beautiful custom mosaic floor in white Thassos and ash gray and custom-colored Urban Electric lighting grace the master bath. Window treatments, fabricated by Boaz Sharoni Design, feature a bird fabric custom-made by Kari Fisher Designs and a pale pink café curtain and valance fabric by Rogers & Goffigon. **below**: The walls are lined in white Thassos tile, and the sculptural fittings and faucet in the steam shower are from Kallista's Counterpoint collection. **opposite, top**: The third-floor hangout space also serves as a sleepover room. The daybed is from RH Teen, and the Sally Gall photograph is from Julie Saul Projects. **opposite, bottom left**: Arne Svenson's "Neighbors #7" from Julie Saul Projects was chosen for the third-floor landing. **opposite, bottom right**: In the hangout space, a pink Womb chair by Knoll sits in front of an original window seat. The window treatment is fashioned from a Seemakrish fabric, and the rug is from Serena & Lily.



and plenty of storage. The custom mosaic floor is so pretty, and all of the lights by Urban Electric were custom-colored. The window treatments are motorized so you don't have to reach over the tub to close them.

How did you approach the third-floor space? On this floor, there is one large room, a bathroom and a smaller guest bedroom. The large space functions as a sleepover and hangout room. There are two daybeds with trundles underneath, and there are a few ottomans that unfold into mattresses, so the space can sleep a lot. We didn't do anything architecturally to this space—we just painted the walls, floors and ceiling—but there is such a lovely feeling up here. Behind the Womb chair is this amazing window seat that's much deeper than it looks; it's such a good perch. That window seat is original to the house, but we added window seats wherever we could.

What has been the clients' reaction to their new home? They love it—they love the light and the colors, how it flows, how they can have tons of people over, and there's no area where everyone is bottlenecked. They are such gracious people, and it's always so much fun working with this client—she has a great, positive energy about her. There were so many times where we would find a piece and say, "Oh my God, that's *perfect*." It was like good karma! [*Laughs.*] We kept saying, "That's the Zen of design." Things just worked. —*INTERVIEW BY LAUREN FETTERMAN*



Resources:

Interior designer: Notis Design, Weston/New York City; 203-557-6560; dnotisdesign.com

Architect: Stoll & Stoll Architects, New Rochelle, NY; 914-576-0800; stollarchitects.com

Contractor: Noonan Construction Corp., Yonkers, NY; 914-373-4672; noonan.construction

Custom workroom: J&P Custom Upholstery, Long Island City, NY; 718-482-8500; jpcustomupholstery.com

Custom workroom: Artistic Upholstery, Norwalk; 203-849-8907; artisticupholsteryandfabrics.com

Custom window treatments: Boaz Sharoni Design, New Hyde Park, NY; 917-763-8266