

design et al

A BOLD STEP FORWARD

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Eclectic Sophistication in The Heart of Connecticut

Design project by New York based company Tocar
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Juxtaposing the masculine and feminine, traditional and modern, light and dark was key to the philosophy behind the interior design of the Bahl residence. This project undertaken by Tocar, founders Susan Bednar Long and Christina Sullivan head up an internationally recognised interior design team based in New York. Setting up their own interior design company ten years ago, the talented creative team first worked together at Ralph Lauren where they learnt their trade.

A 10,000 ft Georgian colonial style new build located in Greenwich, Connecticut, it was bought by the Bahls, a young family with one child. Architecturally complete, but still not much more than a bare canvas, the place had a typical American floor plan, formal at the front but opening up at the back with a large kitchen connected to a breakfast room and family areas. Their aim was to turn this new build into a substantial family home where they could watch their child grow up. Over two floors, with five bedrooms plus the attic and the basement, the home took almost a year to complete. Though the work was purely aesthetic, it was an extensive project as they entirely accessorised the whole house down to every last detail. "We wanted to create something that the clients loved so we sat down with them to get a thorough idea of their lifestyle. They were very chic and sophisticated people, but also very friendly and we wanted to reflect this in their home", Christina explained.

They also wanted to create a home that fit in with the local area, a very picturesque place with many beautiful homes. Architecturally it was designed to look like an older building to fit in with other houses in the local community. One important consideration was that the clients had a young child so the high traffic areas needed to be child friendly places. This was something that they achieved by choosing soft fabrics such as leather, suede and velvet.

Once purchased, the clients wanted to move in to the house just



a month later, by which time they wanted all of the walls to be painted and the floor coverings to be down so that it would be liveable. This informed the order in which everything would be done and the choices made here laid down the basis for the colour palate. With this done, the next stage was to put together a formal presentation for the clients showing proposed designs for each room complete with fabrics, finishes and a scale floor plan.

They wanted to go with neutral tones on the walls, and throughout the home the colours chosen tend to be very feminine but by contrast the shapes tend to be quite angular and masculine. This can be seen in the

master bedroom where a caramel palate was selected against which substantial pieces of furniture in dark woods were placed to create a dark / light contrast. The choice of fabrics on certain pieces too, offered contrast with shots of blue giving life to chairs and sofas. One of a pair, the teak chest of drawers was custom made for this room, while a pair of modern French style mohair chairs share an ottoman – likewise across the rest of the home many items of furniture are to be found in pairs. Susan explained that this was a conscious decision taken with the aim of creating symmetry and a sense of balance, which was key to the scheme.

In the main living areas this approach can be seen again in the formal living room. Well balanced, this room is anchored by a fireplace, which faces on the opposite wall a flat screen TV, and is flanked on either side by a pair of sofas in taupe silk. A subtle feminine palate was chosen for light fresh tones while accents of a more masculine ox blood red colour were used on cushions and accessories. A great place for entertaining, the room has a saloon type feel which was achieved by dividing it into two seating areas using a custom made double-sided chaise in a fine velvet.



The design scheme is quite eclectic throughout the home, the combination of the traditional and the modern is something they both love to play on and view as an essential part of their style. This is particularly evident in the dining room where they contrasted modern pieces and textures against the traditional wainscoting and also in the study. The clients stipulated that this room must not be too suburban; they didn't want it to be like a typical Greenwich house. Traditional panelling was already a feature of this room against which eye-catching monochromatic pieces such as the window seat cushions and the zebra patterned wool rug were placed to add zing and add a modern edge.

Forming the main living area of the home, a large open plan living space accommodating kitchen, informal dining and a sitting area can be found towards the rear of the house. Though open plan, the functional areas are clearly defined by an archway that separates the dining and living space. The kitchen itself was complete, only requiring the addition of bar stools, accessories and the rather dramatic ceiling lights. Carrying the colour palate through the room, the casual seating area incorporates pale greens from the marble worktops. Likewise the stripes on the bar stools in the kitchen are picked up from those on the sofas. An unusual, but clever choice, the woven striped grey and cream matt is made of a plastic that can be hosed off while the sofas themselves have removable grey linen covers. Extending this theme of combining great aesthetics





with excellent functionality, the cream dining chairs are covered with a faux ostrich skin leather made from vinyl and capable of withstanding lots of wear and tear; all great advantages in a home that must be able to withstand the daily onslaught of family life.

Connected to this space, the den, a traditional family room, casual and multifunctional opens up through a doorway to the left of the kitchen and incorporates a games table, fireplace and bar. Here they aimed to tie the palate together with the rest of the house but make it deeper and so opted for browns, olive greens and caramels with a faux chocolate brown leather vinyl on

the ottoman, tattersol plaid fabric and tweeds inspired by menswear. The biggest challenge but also their favourite room of the home once finished, Susan told us was the media room. Built over a garage, this was what Americans refer to as a 'bonus room', a place that initially had the appearance of an attic room. With a large family on the west coast though, the clients wanted to turn this into a space that would have a dual function, acting as a guest room sleeping up to 8 people when they were in town and a media and games room for the man of the house when they weren't. So setting out to warm up the space and turn it



into a functional and inviting place but with a masculine feel, Susan and Christina plumped for a fun décor, a palate that would give a more clubby look and incorporated lots of pull out sleepers that could be hidden away when not in use. Making full use of the natural advantage of the room, a high gloss ebony desk, a classic modern piece was positioned in front of the window so that the clients could sit and look out onto the beautiful view of the lake by which the house sits.

In terms of their signature style, Christina explains, "We lean towards subtle elegant neutral fabrics and like to ensure that there is a nice flow from room to room. Rather than a staid look we prefer to create a mixed look that has an edge to it – nothing fussy but lots of texture, striped fabrics and geometrical patterns. This project was a very pleasant one to work on with really great, very trusting clients". Indeed the look created is a reflection of the identity and lifestyles of the clients and of the tailored signature style of Tocar.