

GOODS
TERRACOTTA TONES

SHOP TALK
DESIGN NEWS

ATHOME WITH
ELISA BULGRIN

athome

IN FAIRFIELD COUNTY



GETAWAY

Faraway
Martha's
Vineyard

GROW WILD

When Local
Gardens Go
Native

\$6.95 MAR/APR 2024
athomefs.com

Begin
AGAIN

Reset, recharge, refresh



this page: After leaving New York City mid-pandemic, the owners fell in love with this picture-perfect Old Greenwich home.
opposite page: An Arteriors pendant hangs over the custom black dining table in the breakfast nook, where seats are covered in mess-proof vinyl.

BURB Appeal

A young family trades city living for an OLD GREENWICH CHARMER, transformed to REFLECT THEIR ECLECTIC TASTES

INTERVIEW WITH RYANN SWAN, RYANN SWAN DESIGN // PHOTOGRAPHER READ MCKENDREE / JBSA // STYLIST FRANCES BAILEY





above, left: The entry sets the tone for the rest of the home, featuring a mix of curated finds that reflects that owners' distinct personalities. **above, right:** Swan's plan for the powder rooms was to keep them playful. Kelly Wearstler for Visual Comfort sconces add a modern glow against the patterned wallpaper. **opposite page:** Landing on the Celerie Kemble for Schumacher paper for the dining room was a major collaborative moment. Swan and the homeowner looked at many samples before opting for this winner.

Who lives here?

It's a lovely family. We met in Manhattan and then ended up moving out to the suburbs at the same time (mid-pandemic). We were in the same empathetic life cycle. They had come to Old Greenwich and rented to test it out—like most people did—and then found a great home on a picturesque birch-lined street. The house had been done to the previous owner's aesthetic very well, but they had a pretty strong aesthetic of their own, which was fun to understand and dig into. They gravitated toward things that reflected them; travels they had been on, textures, patterns. We worked around understanding who they are and understanding their perspective, but then filtered that through my lens.

What was your jumping off point for your design plan?

Our firm always does a pretty heavy concept phase. A lot of the images we pulled were of ground-up spaces and some beautiful natural wood. The first space that we dug into deeply was the dining room. I think coming

from the city, we all remember those sexy dining rooms that, when the lights went down, they would envelop you, but you could still go back for Sunday brunch. So we thought about those two phases. We found that Celerie Kemble for Schumacher grasscloth wallpaper, which adds that sense of whimsy, and we painted all the paneling that midnight blue, which grounds it and gives it that nighttime sex appeal. We recovered the chairs in John Robshaw fabric and then found the pretty patterned rug. It's a lot of pattern, which is reflective of what they like.

There are lots of fun patterns happening—between the fabrics and the wallpaper. Tell us how you chose them.

The wife had a pretty strong view in terms of patterns and wallpapers she liked and didn't. More so than I've probably done with other clients, we went through multiple series of papers and just looked at them together, seeing how they looked full scale, and she would think about that. I gave her a pretty narrowed-down selection to figure out what she liked, in her



“We found that Celerie Kemble for Schumacher grasscloth wallpaper, WHICH ADDS THAT SENSE OF WHIMSY, and we painted all the paneling that midnight blue, which grounds it and GIVES IT THAT NIGHTTIME SEX APPEAL.”

—RYANN SWAN, RYANN SWAN DESIGN



own words. For the dining room, this is one she kept returning to. Old Greenwich is a beach town, and it does have that grasscloth note—and the cane-backed chairs also speak to that nautical element—but it's definitely not beachy. We took our time. It was more of a conversation, which was fun to do.

Tell us about the kitchen.

The kitchen opens into that breakfast nook and the family room. They're always circulating between these three spaces, and the kids zoom back and forth with their toys. That console behind the sofa has toy storage so they can access it easily themselves.

How do you manage creating elevated spaces for families with small children?

My background is in hospitality, so that applies very well to designing for kids. I also have three young boys of my own, so I can speak to those spaces in multiple ways. We didn't pick all perennial fabrics; we focused

more on natural fabrics. Linens are naturally stain-resistant, same with wools. We went more that route, which was pleasant to explore. In the sunroom, the sofa is a lighter linen, but the ottoman has that dark texture, so you can sit there and put your feet up, and it's going to hide some sins. Even though the sectional sofa in the family room is that lighter blue color, it's a marled texture, so that weave helps to hide, too.

In the breakfast nook, we covered the cushions with resistant vinyl. I think when designing with kids, a lot of people make the mistake of saying, "We won't spend the money on stuff, because they'll just ruin it." But I've found that you're so much better off spending your money on a solid wood piece versus ones with a veneer. It's so quick before your kids drop something and chip that veneer versus solid wood, which will just take a dent. Eventually you can refinish it, you can sand it down. A black dining table with young kids is the way to go. If there's permanent marker on it, nobody knows.



above: The ottoman in this sunroom is covered in an antique rug, an inviting spot for family members to put up their feet. Swan kept the design open and adaptable to the kids who spend time in here. **opposite:** The clean and bright kitchen nods to the coastal neighborhood. McGee & Co. barstools were recovered in a custom mustard fabric.

this photo: The family room is the hub of the home, with a design that's warm, approachable, functional and, most importantly, durable. **opposite page:** A view of the sunny yard can be seen from the Serena & Lily sectional.



“We worked around **UNDERSTANDING WHO THEY ARE AND UNDERSTANDING THEIR PERSPECTIVE**, but then filtered that through my lens.”

—RYANN SWAN, RYANN SWAN DESIGN





above: Based on the family's needs, Swan transformed what was originally a home office into a welcoming guest retreat. A Finch Design pendant hangs over the king-size bed, which is layered with textural neutrals.

below, left: In the primary suite, Swan solved for asymmetric window placement behind the bed by installing off-centered drapery panels. **below, right:** The California flag that hangs over the crib is a nod to the husband's West Coast roots.



What was the most dramatic transformation in this project?

I think it has to be the dining room. It was very traditional coastal New England before, with a sheen on the wallpaper, a lot of silver and blue. It was lovely, but it just wasn't who they are. We stripped all of that out. Now it's a little more playful, but it's also more grown up, sophisticated, elevated. The patterns are more thoughtful.

There was also the space that served as an office for the previous owner. It was all cerused wood paneling and built-ins. For this couple, they needed the room for the grandmother, who visits for a month at a time. It needed to be a hotel room suite for her, where she could sit and lounge, watch TV and have privacy. There's a desk to work at and a full closet to use. It was a major transformation to something brighter and airier, with some fun patterning. This is a place that she's comfortable in.

What was the biggest challenge?

I think it was fitting all of the functional requirements into the spaces. The young kids need toy storage, a place where they can sit and do art, a place to play. Inside the sunroom credenza, we were able to store all of their art supplies and some of the toys. We didn't put two chairs opposite the sofa, which I think would've been a more natural layout, because we wanted

to be able to move those benches if the kids needed more space to play. I think the home was originally intended for an older family, so for us, it was trying to make it work for a family with a newborn, a two-year-old and a seven-year-old.

What was your favorite part?

I love the kids' rooms. I always love designing them. I find it so magical to be able to create a space where a little kid goes to sleep and to create the backdrop where they play. One boy asked for an outer space room, so we did the stars on the ceiling, and then we worked with an artist to commission a custom piece that depicts a spaceship that's also a skyscraper. In the nursery, we had the nod to the dad's California roots with the MadeGoods light, wallpaper and vintage flag over the crib.

Professionals:

Interior Design: Ryann Swan Design, 203-293-8455; ryannswandesign.com
General Contractor: VP Construction, Greenwich, 203-496-8105



left: Stars cover the ceiling in the older boy's space-inspired room. **right:** A commissioned piece of art by Michael McGuire speaks to the space theme and the family's prior New York City home.