

Hendricks Churchill

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The Stylish Litchfield County Home of Instagram's Eva Chen

The fashion guru's country home gets a pared-down, classic look.

By Alexa Stevenson
Photographs by Chris Mottalini
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“She loved the vibe of it,” says designer Heide Hendricks of the Litchfield County house client Eva Chen found in the perfect spot for her country home. By chance, Chen, Instagram’s director of fashion and shopping partnerships (and former *Lucky* and *Teen Vogue* editor in chief), looked at Hendrick’s farmhouse that was on the market and, while the house was perfect, the location was not as secluded as Chen wanted. So, while a real estate transaction between the two didn’t follow, a partnership did when Chen decided on a 1929 farmhouse with iconic New England vernacular still intact and an ideal setting. “She loved the house, but it needed a singular architectural direction,” says Hendricks. “We just know how to go into an older house and peel away the modifications, so it looks like one style.”

The inside was inconsistent in tone from room to room and would not accommodate the way Chen and her family live. “She wanted us to take the footprint and give it an open flow, but with segmented spaces where you could be alone with a book or an area where it fostered more of a gathering. It’s not a huge house. We wanted to help her create multi-use spaces without making it a big open loft,” says Hendricks. The designer and her team took down a wall to create a large living space on one side of the house, while the other side focused on segmented space. A garage was converted to a grandparents’ suite, the kitchen and bathrooms were renovated, floors refinished, and every surface painted.



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Chen looked to Hendricks to guide her on the interior selections. “She describes herself as not at all an interior person, but is an aesthete,” says Hendricks. “We helped her figure out that she gravitates toward the midcentury. Her interiors are similar to how she dresses: pared down, minimal and classic, but not opposed to pops of color or pattern used sparingly.”

The living room was arranged with multi-seating areas: with places to read and places to socialize. For the spaces the kids gravitate toward, Hendricks used materials that could take a beating. A Perennials indoor/ outdoor fabric covers a pair of tub chairs, and on a curved back sofa from Lawson-Fenning, is a durable tight weave from Romo. A window seat and a reading corner are also covered in indoor/ outdoor fabrics. Unifying the room is a large jute rug layered with an antique rug. “We kept the palette pretty subdued with very little pattern and soft colors. I love pattern but with Eva’s comfort zone, she gravitates more towards soft, quiet colors,” says Hendricks.

Hendricks pushed Chen out of her comfort zone in the dining room covered in a vibrant French paper. “Eva was reluctant to have a rich ornate pattern. We showed her that it flows so nicely with the rest of the house because every color in the house is in the wallpaper,” says Hendricks. She adds, “It’s almost like a vibrant, interesting coat liner—you don’t see it all the time but when you do, it feels special.” A leather-wrapped light fixture hanging above the table is striking but uncomplicated, allowing the wallpaper to have its moment.

Hendricks reined in the pattern and upped the functionality in the kitchen, which was once a galley. “We took down a wall to make a large space and changed the look of the fireplace to something more minimal. We added blue kitchen cabinets and a worktable instead of an island—they didn’t want to encourage eating at the island! It needed to be a dedicated worktable, and it seemed more appropriate here. It feels like it [the house] has been set up with solid bones and structure so you can throw life at it,” says Hendricks. “We gave her the type of decor that will look better as you live in it.”

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Summer's Easy Living: Forming a Narrative

Interior Designer Heide Hendricks Composes a Home Wrapped in an Ode to Nature

By David Masello
Photographs by Tim Lenz
July-August 2021





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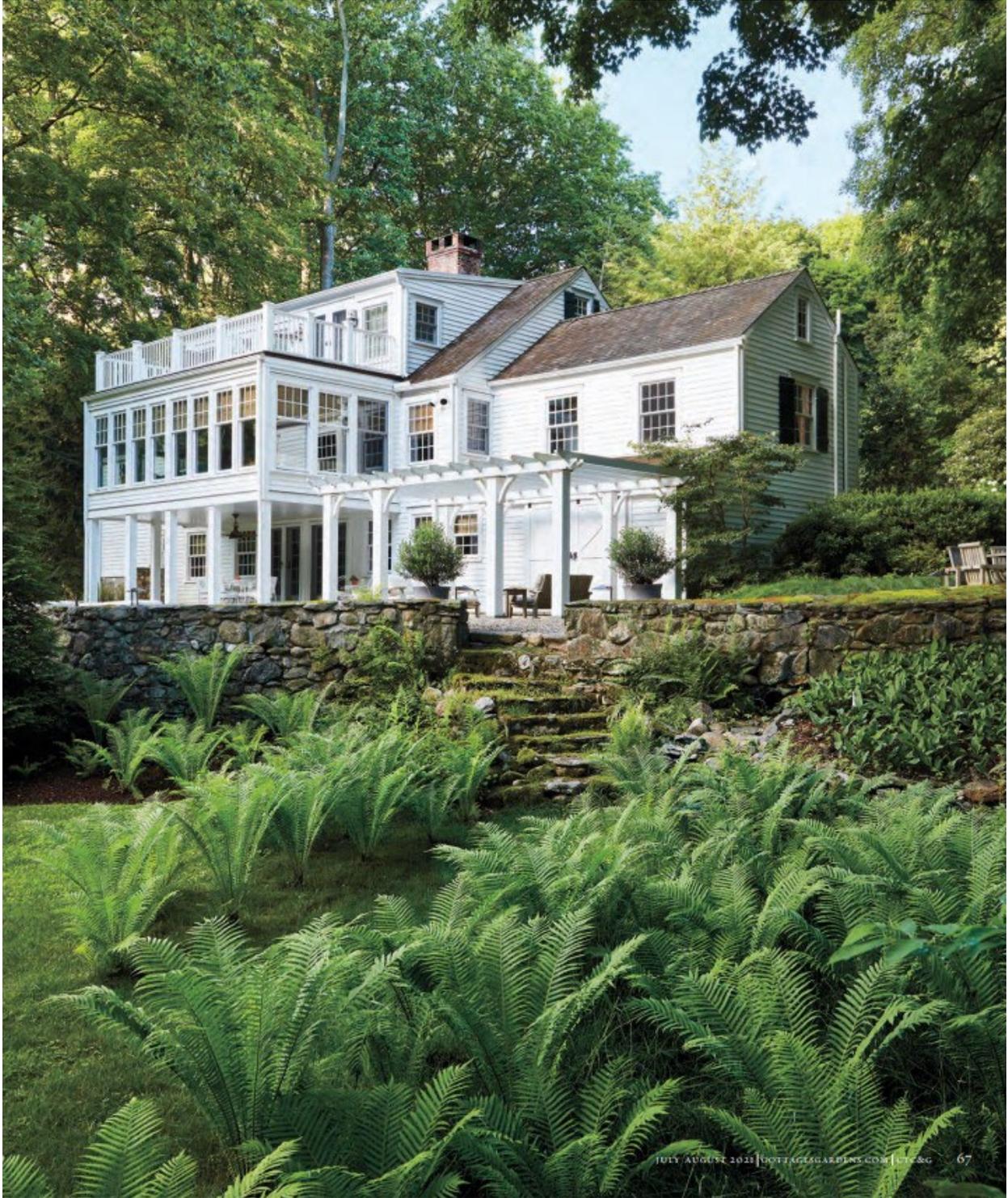
Serene Surroundings
The Saugatuck River
(THIS PAGE) runs through
the bucolic property of a
1928 neo-Colonial house
(OPPOSITE PAGE) in Weston.
See Resources.

Forming a Narrative

INTERIOR DESIGNER HEIDE HENDRICKS COMPOSES A HOME WRAPPED IN AN ODE TO NATURE

TEXT BY DAVID MASELLO | PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIM LENZ

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Dappled Sunlight (clockwise across spread from this photo) From the curb, the house appears more modest in scale, defined by three dormers. Interior designer Heide Hendricks fashioned a breakfast nook on one side of the main living room, using 1940s leather bridge chairs from 1stDibs and a vintage table set on a cowhide rug. The mudroom is painted with Farrow & Ball's Purbeck Stone; the slate flooring is through Tiles Direct. The shady grounds are shot through with beams of sunlight. See Resources.

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AT MCCONNAUGHEY has a favorite wallpaper in her Weston home. She never tires of gazing at the pattern, even if it does change constantly. The pattern, which surrounds three sides of the 1928 house she shares with her husband, is not on the walls, but, rather, outside of them. "When I look out the windows and see all the moments of nature around us, I think of it as being like wallpaper seen through glass," she says, referring to the sinuous Saugatuck River that winds through their property, along with foliage interspersed with nesting bald eagles, herons, and beams of sunlight and moonlight.

It was the home's setting that was the primary focus for the interior design that New York- and Sharon-based interior designer Heide Hendricks was commissioned to undertake. "The couple are both huge nature lovers, gardeners and conservationists," Hendricks explains, "and our mandate from the start was to not obscure the views in any way. In fact, we sought ways to bring in more of the surrounding nature and sunlight."

McConnaughey, who works as a Connecticut Realtor following a long career as a flight attendant for Delta, refers to Hendricks as "the best therapist a girl could have." While the homeowner has a special talent for staging interiors for prospective home buyers, she admits to never before hiring an interior designer. After a thorough search for the right designer, she and her husband chose Hendricks after viewing her previous projects. "David and I were struck by her sense of colors, the way she uses them, and her ability to tell the story of a home and its occupants. Every one of Heide's projects relates a narrative."

The McConnaugheys had stories they wanted to tell—and still make—with their home, which they purchased in 2018. Both came to the home with objects collected separately over the years—he with such things as vintage duck decoys and his mother's black lacquered Baker furniture and she with a variety of objects amassed from her world travels. The existing accessories and furnishings made for a home, according to Hendricks, that "felt like it had already been lived in, but which was also fresh." Of her relationship with the couple, she adds, "We synched right away and discovered early on that many of the resources on her wish list were already on mine."

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A Storied Composition (see page) The homeowners had their architect for the project, ART Architects, design custom shelving in the living room. The coffee table is vintage, and the accent table (foreground) by Andrew Martin is made of a petrified wood stump. See Resources.

Natural Instincts (opposite page, clockwise from top) Thomas O'Brien sconces from Circa Lighting flank artwork by Bryan Nash Gill on one end of the family room, which is furnished with an RH sofa, a Hans Wegner rocking chair from 1stDibs and Blu Dot ottomans. Hans Wegner chairs from the 1950s surround a custom dining table made of walnut with a cast-iron base. Animal trophies hang in the office and elsewhere in the home; the armchair is from Hammetown Barn. See Resources.

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Reflecting Well (above) In the family room, Hendricks purposely chose a high-gloss paint, Farrow & Ball's Ammonite, as a way to visually raise the ceiling and infuse and animate the room with reflected and refracted natural light. Antique Chinese chairs through Montage face off against a midcentury Jens Risom bench. ART Architects created a Dutch door to access the bar. See Resources.

The Best Rest (opposite page, clockwise from top) A guest room features a pair of twin RH beds with Rough Linen bedding; walls wear Farrow & Ball's Oval Room Blue. The cushions on a window bench in the primary suite are from Kirsten Hecklermann. In the main bedroom, a Ballard Designs lamp tops a West Elm nightstand alongside a custom Morris & Co. bed. See Resources.

Both Hendricks and the homeowners recognized the biggest interior design challenge as being the first-floor family room, situated at the rear of the house (the house is entered, essentially, on the second floor, with the land sloping to grade at the rear). What appeared to be a dim, low-ceilinged, basement-like space has since been transformed into a light-flooded family room with direct access to a terrace, the grounds, and, eventually, the riverbanks. Hendricks chose a high gloss paint for the ceiling, a visual trick that made the room feel far taller. "The glossy finish reflects light off the river and bounces it around onto the surfaces," says Hendricks. As the homeowner emphasizes, "Until that room was transformed, my husband and I said that we had bought a three-story house but that only two were used. Now we use every single part of the house." To make the room extra accommodating for

the couple and their guests, a former closet was renovated to house a bar—a space concealed by a Dutch door.

A living room of equal size, situated directly above the family room, features built-in bookcases, a stone fireplace, and a novel breakfast nook at one end. "Having a bistro table with chairs at one end didn't make sense to me at first," admits McConaughy, "but Heide is so smart that she knew we'd be at that table all the time."

McConaughy—who reads a lot of poetry and tends to see her home and its surroundings as a kind of visual poem—remains aware of the effect Hendricks' design has had. "Heide took a snapshot of how we wanted to live in the house, and we're now living the movie version of it. My whole life, I've always been searching for a completed home, until now that is." ♦

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Meet the Designer: Heide Hendricks

Uncover Heidi Hendricks' authentic design style.

By Sharon King Hoge

Photographs by Hollis Churchill, Amanda Kirkpatrick

November 20, 2020



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Heide Hendricks and her architect/third-generation builder husband, Rafe Churchill, adopted a hobby of buying and fixing up inexpensive properties, which in turn attracted potential clients. Now merged, Hendricks Churchill occupies an office on the green in Sharon, Connecticut, a renovated Greek Revival that houses the staff along with Reservoir, a warehouse and gallery space, featuring Hendricks' sourced and edited collection of heirloom rugs, contemporary art, furniture and textiles.

You and Rafe both grew up in Woodbury. What coincidence brought you together?

We probably lived just a few miles apart, but we went to school and college without knowing each other. One day, home for the summer, I was helping out at my father's sign company, sanding and painting, and Rafe happened to come by to visit a friend. We hit it off and became good friends.



What is it like to be partners at work?

We work so well together because there are distinct lines between our work. He doesn't really care about furnishings, textiles, rugs; and I don't walk in and say this trim is wrong, what were you thinking? We overlap in finishes, tiles, lighting fixtures—we have a yin yang thing going on. Our aesthetics were aligned from the first, and we continue to evolve together.

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You started doing renovations as a hobby—what draws you to a house?

There has to be an authenticity. You want to walk in and feel there's a history there—charming details we can embellish, as if it had been lovingly cared for over the years.

How do you give a sense of history to new construction?

You stay true to the traditional, but the rooms are larger and the ceilings are higher. The trim details look as if they were carefully considered by a carpenter, not just stock moldings off the shelves.

Why do you introduce colorful trim into rooms with traditional white plaster walls?

It's a great opportunity to get color into a space in moderation. Also, it's easy to change out the trim color rather than repaint the whole room.

What's the idea behind your Reservoir retail operation?

I'm always out at flea markets, estate sales, looking at interesting, unusual, well-made items—maybe some piece with great bones that needs the right fabric. I stockpile so it doesn't end up in my own home; I love having an inventory.

How do you divest yourself of an object you love?

It's an irony, but I'm not materialistic, not attached to things. I love beautiful things but don't feel I have to own them.

But there must be an object you'd hate to part with.

A friend remarked she's seen so many of our homes and some pieces never get cut. There's a large slab table, very wabi-sabi, rustic and primitive, and it's been our outdoor table for 20 years. I think I originally found it in the town dump.

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