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THE SUNDAY TIMES

Inside fashion powerhouse Eva Chen's home

This Connecticut country retreat is the perfect escape from frenetic weekdays — even if there is the odd bear in the garden

By Marisa Meltzer
Photographs by Frances Tulk-Hart
September 12, 2021



Eva Chen on a sofa from Rouse Home. The artwork behind her is by Jonathan Borofsky

'I had *visions* of being the *country* Carrie Bradshaw'

The fashion powerhouse Eva Chen's weekend home in Connecticut is the perfect escape from her frenetic weekdays, finds **Marisa Meltzer** — even if there is the odd bear in the garden

Photographs **Frances Tulk-Hart**

"This is the farm where we get our eggs. You note down what you have taken and then pay on your phone when you get home," Eva Chen says. It's a fitting blend of high-tech and homespun for the country home of the director of fashion partnerships at Instagram.

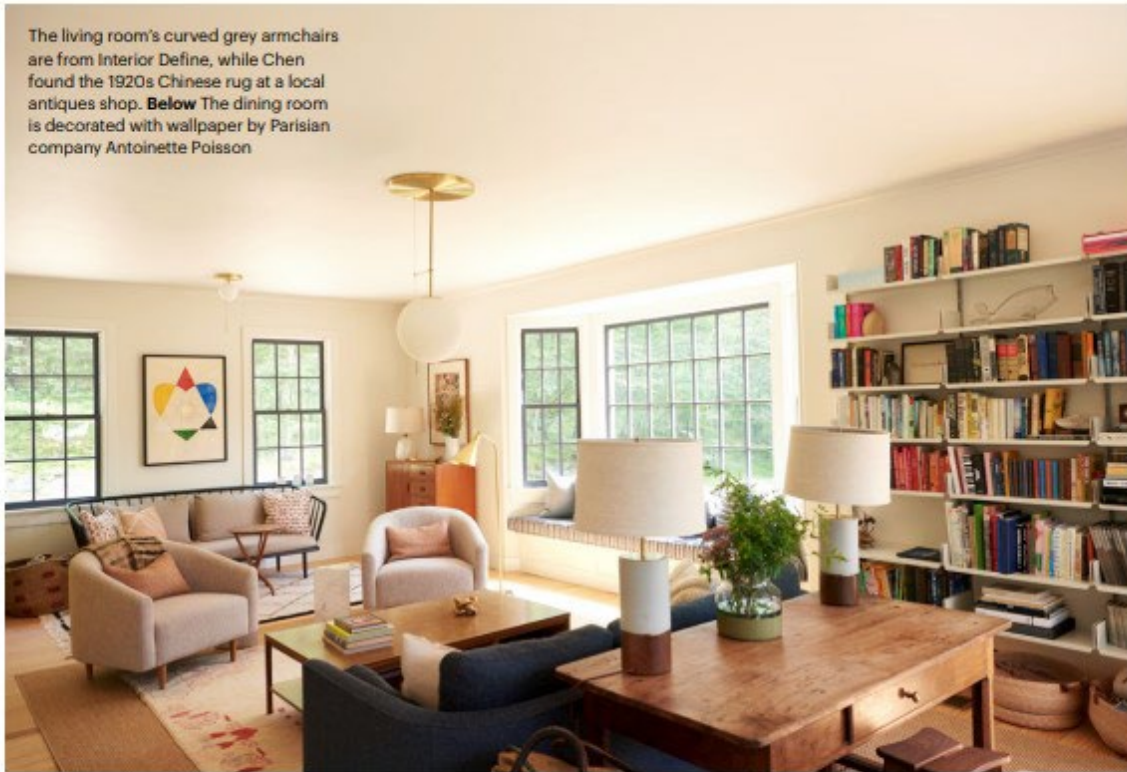
Chen, 41, is an unstoppable presence in fashion, with 1.8 million Instagram followers and an enviable collection of statement bags that's heavy on Chanel and Hermès, and who is seemingly friends — or at least on DM terms — with just about everyone. But instead of choosing the glitzy Hamptons for a weekend home and decorating it in colours as bright as the clothes she is known for wearing, the former special projects director of *Teen Vogue* and editor-in-chief of *Lucky* magazine opted for the sleepy confines of western Connecticut and a muted palette. "I wanted something soothing. I grew up in New York City, in Greenwich Village, so I didn't grow up with nature, unless you count Central Park. This was a wholly new experience for me and I wanted it to feel like you were taking a breath," she says.

It helped that the area reminded her husband, Tom Bannister, creative director of an advertising agency, of Derbyshire, where he grew up. "It reminded me of a wild England, with stone walls and hedges and hills," he says. The two met at a party 20 years ago while Chen was studying at Oxford University. They bought the



The table and chairs in the kitchen are by O&G Studio

The living room's curved grey armchairs are from Interior Define, while Chen found the 1920s Chinese rug at a local antiques shop. **Below** The dining room is decorated with wallpaper by Parisian company Antoinette Poisson



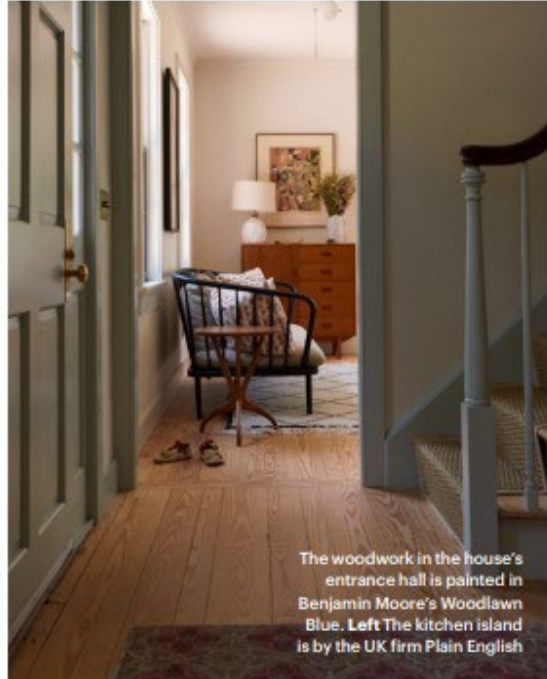
'I wanted it to feel like you were taking a breath'

2,800 sq ft home right before the pandemic and moved in during the summer of 2020 with their daughter, Ren, six, and son Tao, four. At the end of May this year another son, River, arrived, resulting in a bit of rearranging. "This was my office but now it's a nursery," Chen says. "I had visions of being the country Carrie Bradshaw, writing my children's books." (As well as the day job, Chen has written a number of popular books for the under-sixes.) Still, it has an impressive view of their pond, which has carp and the occasional heron — other visiting animals include black bears that raid their bins, wild turkeys and deer — and is decorated with a first edition of Roald Dahl's *The BFG* that Bannister gave Chen. There's also a framed copy of *The New York Times* from 1969 that covers the moon landing, which she found in a local shop.

Chen and Bannister worked with a Connecticut-based design firm to decorate the house, but were far from hands-off. "I went into black holes of research. I have a folder in my phone of posts of things I liked," she says. Instagram was a primary platform for research, and Chen singles out the accounts @nofeaturewalls and @thelavenderghost as especially inspiring. "I don't think it's an overstatement to say Instagram has changed fashion and interiors significantly," she says. "Once designers felt far removed and unreachable — you needed to go to a showroom before they would even talk



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The woodwork in the house's entrance hall is painted in Benjamin Moore's Woodlawn Blue. Left The kitchen island is by the UK firm Plain English



Chen with her husband, Tom Bannister

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The bath in the master bathroom is from Simon's Hardware, New York

Right Chen with her son River.
Far right Her children Tao and Ren play by a window seat covered in fabric and cushions by LA-based interior designer Peter Dunham



to you — but the velvet ropes have come down.” She points to an artwork on the wall of the living room by the artist Shantell Martin, who shares her creative process with her 201,000 followers, as an example.

As for the house, the biggest changes were in the kitchen, where partitions were removed to make it a large space that holds a fireplace (Chen’s first; chopping the wood is Bannister’s domain), a kitchen island that weighs 680kg and was shipped from England, and window seats for reading. “In Tom’s family everything revolves around sitting and talking. In my family the nexus is based around eating.” Bannister’s family in the UK has yet to visit, but Chen’s parents are frequent guests and the couple converted the garage into a dedicated bedroom for them.

In their Manhattan life, where Chen and Bannister live in New York’s fashionable Flatiron district, the couple grew tired of the weekend routine of bagels and parks with the kids and cramming in as many errands as possible. Yet even out here in the wilds of Connecticut they could, in theory, opt in to being social. After all, the designer Diane von Furstenberg and the artist Jasper Johns have homes in the area. “And my good friend Meryl Streep!” Chen adds, joking. But that’s not what she loves about the area. “There are three restaurants in town — and no pressure to dress up.” ■

