

JANUARY 2021



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NEWS & SHOPPING

- 11** OBJECTS OF DESIRE New design must-haves, from lighting to furniture
- 15** NEWS Create your own modern table design and discover a new collaboration offering cheery dinnerware
- 17** PASSION FOR PATTERN Beautiful botanical fabrics
- 19** BIG CATS Bring out your wild side with animal print homeware
- 47** A FEAST FOR THE EYES Decorative platters pretty enough to display or serve
- 48** TABLE MANNERS Fancy napkin rings
- 51** OPEN BAR A glamorous drinks trolley is your perfect party partner
- 52** RAISE A GLASS Colourful and striking wine and champagne glasses

INSPIRATION

- 34** A PIECE OF HISTORY Michael Bruno, founder of 1stDibs, has set up home in a beautiful old mansion in New York's famed Tuxedo Park, built in 1901
- 82** SEASONAL STYLE SECRETS Ten fabulous Christmas decorating tricks
- 86** CURVE APPEAL Elegantly rounded forms bring softness and sophistication to this London property
- 94** ALL THINGS BRIGHT Interior designer Kate Guinness' family home layers vibrant patterns and historical colours
- 102** DOWN TO EARTH A shared lifetime of belongings have been beautifully curated in this Connecticut farmhouse
- 112** ENLIGHTENED THINKING An outdated Victorian townhouse has been injected with a touch of bright LA style
- 118** GRACEFUL & REFLECTIVE Take in the beauty of Chippenham Park's elegant frosted landscape
- 124** WINTER'S ROSES We hone in on winter-flowering hellebores

INSPIRATION

DOWN TO EARTH

This riverside farmhouse in Connecticut is the epitome of rural elegance and was too beautiful for one high-flying couple to resist

WORDS JULIET BENNING PHOTOGRAPHS TIM LENZ



MUDROOM
The shiplap cladding strikes a traditional and rustic mood. Nero River slate floor tiles, Mandarin Stone, are similar. Source a bobbin leg bench at 1stdibs. Similar William Morris-style cushions, Etsy

INSPIRATION



SNUG
A farmhouse door reveals a bar. All the windows in the house have minimal decoration to ensure the views of the river beyond can be seen. Antique Biedermeier occasional table and mid-century Jens Risom bench, sourced at Hendricks Churchill Reservoir, find similar at 1stdibs

INSPIRATION



DINING ROOM
This pared-back scheme places emphasis on the organic shape of the chandelier and the natural beauty of wood and woven materials. Table, custom-made by Get Back Inc. CH23 dining chairs by Hans J. Wegner, source from Pamono

‘I always used to pride myself on living all over the world. You cannot tie me down, I’d say,’ Katherine McConnaughey explains from her Connecticut home. A few years since retiring from a 33-year career as a flight attendant, both she and her husband David, the CEO of a media firm, have finally put down more permanent roots. ‘I’ve planted my great-grandma’s irises and a lilac that was given to me when my dad passed away. These are plants that have always moved with me and now we’re here, we’re never leaving.’

The couple, who have ‘lived in Manhattan since forever’ and raised their daughter Caroline there, discovered the appeal of the region on visits to friends. ‘We wanted to simplify. It’s incredible how people live out here. They’re so into the outdoors and growing organically,’ Katherine enthuses. ‘This is an area really devoted to conservation and preservation.’

Their original property was a mid-century era home that, no matter how they tried, they just couldn’t get to suit their lifestyle. ‘After three years we put it on the market and it sold in three days,’ Katherine says. While David was eager to build from scratch, Katherine was less convinced and had she not been in a certain place at a certain time things may have turned out very differently. ‘I was driving down this road and I literally saw the agent put the ‘for sale’ sign out for a 1920s-era riverside farmhouse. A few days later we viewed it.’ While Katherine was enchanted, David was more impressed with the home’s natural surroundings, the wildlife and the opportunity to fish. ‘When he found out a pair of American bald eagles raised their eaglets here yearly, the home became impossible to resist,’ Katherine laughs.

Soon after, the couple moved in and began configuring the house for their lifestyle. Hiring

Heide Hendricks of interior design firm Hendricks Churchill was a decision that sparked an extraordinary synchronicity. ‘It was astonishing how many of Katherine’s images were on my own personal inspiration boards. We were aligned in our vision of what we were attracted to,’ Heide explains. ‘I’d never hired a decorator before, but this was our forever home, so we wanted to get it right. I knew that Heide would give the interior a unique story,’ Katherine adds.

The house had been renovated a few years prior, but the couple decided to create a new entryway and, with the river curving around the house, make more of a feature of the old screened-off porch as well as creating plenty of book storage. One of Heide’s triumphs was the overhaul of the basement. ‘The lower level was non-existent. David’s office down there had a dirt floor. We thought we would never use it but now, with a bar and snug where we watch TV, it’s a new portion of the house that’s perfect for entertaining.’ Heide’s instinct for pale and nuanced paint colours contributed to the period tone, with the high-gloss ceiling of the basement reflecting the light and bringing movement from the water.

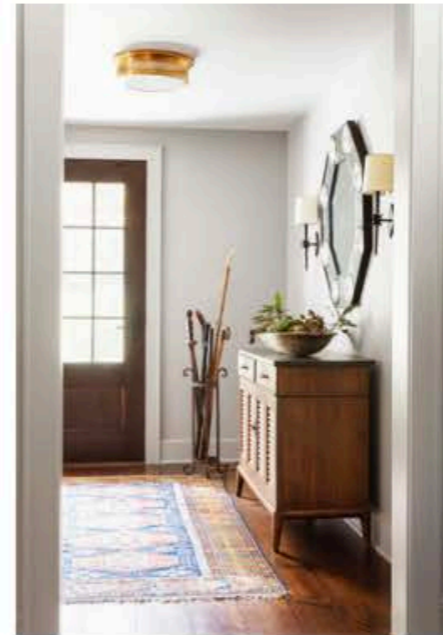
Heide was given strict instructions not to obstruct the windows. ‘I was very aware that the interior must not upstage the view,’ she explains. ‘Katherine and David are big nature lovers, so bringing in jute, cowhide and raw linen was right up their alley. But I also loved placing all their belongings, collected over the years,’ she adds. ‘Heide has joined both of our identities so beautifully,’ Katherine concludes. ‘There’s so much of our shared family history here. I’ve never felt happier or more at home.’

■ Interior design by Heide Hendricks, hendrickschurchill.com

INSPIRATION



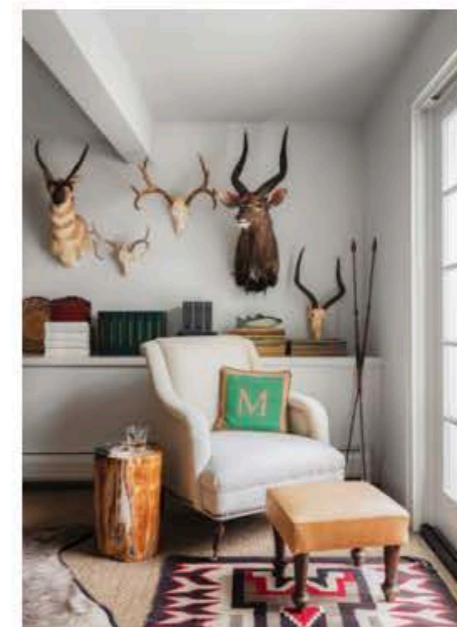
BREAKFAST AREA
 A French-style bistro table and button-back sofa make a relaxed nook to enjoy morning coffee. Lupin Slim bar table in marble, Sklum, 1940s leather bridge chairs, source from 1stdibs. Indian split-bamboo Chik blinds, Joss Graham



ENTRANCE
 The Persian rug brings a colourful vibrancy. Sideboard, source similar on 1stdibs. Octagonal mirror, RT Facts. Source a Persian rug at Rugs of London. Wall lights, Circa Lighting



MUDROOM
 Built-in cabinetry conceals coats and outdoor equipment. Ceiling light, Circa Lighting. Walls in Purbeck Stone, Farrow & Ball



OFFICE
 This space was once a basement with a dirt floor, now it has areas for work and contemplation. Armchair, Hammertown. Find similar solid wood side table on Etsy. Source a similar rug at Rugs of London. Walls in Ammonite, Farrow & Ball