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A HOUSE MATURES WITH ITS INHABITANTS

Designer Amy Andrews reimagines a contemporary Shingle-style home for a growing family with a world-class collection of antiques

Story by Meryl Siegman | Photography by Robert Benson

When a couple with three young children moved from London to New England in the early 2000s, they looked for a country retreat as a permanent family home that would accommodate their extensive collection of antique furniture and objects. Native Californians, they put physical and visual access to the outdoors high on their list of priorities. They chose a two-story house designed in the 1990s by Connecticut's own "Duo" Dickinson, located in the desirable Mid-Country East neighborhood of Greenwich, CT. The neighborhood itself was a perfect choice, having been developed for homeowners wanting a larger footprint on sizable lots, with houses spaced far enough apart to provide total privacy. Situated in a country-like setting and surrounded by protected lands, the area has a pastoral ambience that is home to gracious residences interspersed with scenic riding trails.

The owners hired Amy Andrews, the principal interior designer and director of Hilton Interiors, a full-service design firm based in Greenwich. Hilton Interiors is the result of many years of a successful collaboration between Amy and the architect Charles Hilton. With a career spanning more than 30 years, Amy is recognized for the beauty, functionality and warmth of her contemporary and timeless designs. Known for her comprehensive approach, she seamlessly blends



all the necessary elements of design to curate spaces that reflect the homeowners, their family and their lifestyle.

Before long, the Greenwich homeowners and Amy forged a relationship that would last for more than two decades. What started out as a decorating project became more extensive as the children grew up and the house had to adjust to the needs of a maturing family. A work in progress over several decades, the home has the perfect ingredients to serve its inhabitants now and in the days to come: an iconic architect, an interior designer with talent and intuition, the clients' brilliantly curated collection of antiques, and even the land on which the house was built.

The American architect George "Duo" Dickinson, Jr. put his indelible stamp on the house nearly three decades ago. Dickinson, who describes himself as "a quirky, semi-traditional architect," has over 30 years of professional experience and more than 500 projects bearing his name. He is a colorful, well-known book author, journalist, blogger, lecturer and host of a monthly radio program about home topics.

"The house is on a gorgeous piece of land—an extremely lucky find," says Amy. Abounding with specimen trees, the property features a long, winding driveway, landscaped terraces, a pool and an old garden house from the original property. It is a quintessential example of Shingle-style design, made popular



at the beginning of the 20th century by the rise of the New England school of architecture, representing a renewed interest in Colonial American design. Although Victorian in style, Shingle-style homes represented a retreat from the highly ornamental Queen Anne architecture. With their distinctly American plain wood construction that blends into natural surroundings, these houses emphasize horizontal continuity both in their exterior details and in the flow of spaces within. Porches and large picture windows are used to invite a tactile interaction with the outdoors, evoking a romantic lifestyle.

“It was very important to the owners to incorporate the pastoral setting into their home,” says Amy, “so I created a good flow between the indoors and outdoors.” The expansive views of trees and lush greenery are visible from the home’s many windows. “The view is all about the outside, with abundant light coming in,” she says. “We used French doors





The room is dominated by the home's original Adirondack-style fireplace. Cowtan & Tout grasscloth wallpaper is part of the home's overall color and texture scheme for the walls. The vintage George Smith furniture is reupholstered with Colefax and Fowler fabric.





in many of the rooms, so the beautiful terrace and gardens can be seen from almost everywhere inside the house.”

Amy’s first challenge was to accommodate the owners’ extensive collection of antique furniture in a house with contemporary lines. Her solution was to mix modern decorating and design with the existing items, which involved adding more modern furniture and reupholstering older pieces with more fanciful fabrics. “The couple had a huge investment in the antiques,” Amy explains, “but they wanted an overall feel that was light and airy, so we added to them and gave them an eclectic feel.”

The living room is a perfect example of Amy’s design alchemy. She installed a modern sectional with cleaner lines that is not overly fussy. She added a glass David Iatesta coffee table to open up the space, and covered a pair of antique chairs with a whimsical modern Cowtan & Tout fabric. The side table is a repurposed garden stool that was chosen for its perfect baby blue color. The Schumacher rug was obtained from A.T. Proudian, a Greenwich-based family-owned carpeting company founded in 1923. Finally, the fireplace is offset by a beautiful antique chest, and a stunning landscape on the





wall picks up on the space's connection to the outdoors. According to Amy, the room has "a contemporary feel with a lightness that flows with the antique pieces."

Another challenge was designing the house to accommodate the children, two boys and a girl, as they grew older. When the family first moved in, the children were young. As one of the boys grew to be 6'4" tall, he needed a larger bedroom and bathroom. And over a decade ago, the family wanted to add more space—in particular, the wife desired a breakfast room—so a new addition was built. "All she wanted was a breakfast room," says Amy, laughing, "but she got a garage, game room and small workout studio thrown in."

The front entry features a contemporary Dennis & Leen console, and modern sconces and a wonderfully crafted mirror from the John Rosselli showroom in New York. The Thibaut wallpaper represents part of a scheme used intentionally throughout the house: the walls in each room have a distinctly different texture to accentuate the unique design of each space.

In the family room, a fireplace from the original home was retained to create an Adirondack feel, and the existing bookcases were used as a backdrop for the owners' collection of lovely, eye-catching objects. Cowtan & Tout grasscloth wallpaper was

chosen to pick up on the color of the stone. Amy incorporated the couples' vintage George Smith furniture into the design scheme, with the chair recovered in Colefax & Fowler fabric, consistent with the theme of blending the old with the new. To keep up with the evolution of the house, the window seats flanking the fireplace were redone three times over the years.

The dining room, with its lovely bay windows overlooking the terrace and gardens, has a traditional but comfortable and inviting feel. Amy included the owners' antique table, chairs and sideboard, but added a tall David Iatesta breakfront with a modern flair to show off the collection of early 20th-century antique Rose Canton porcelain. "I added some new pieces to mix with the old to bring the room down to a younger vibe," Amy explains. "We had the chandelier custom-made and put down a new vegetable-dyed rug from A.T. Proudian." Amy describes the Lee Jofa window treatment as "really quiet," while the walls "absolutely glow with a little gold shimmer." A great space for any season, the dining room is a delightful setting, enhanced by the table's ability to expand from four seats to 10 to accommodate friends and family.

The breakfast room, the *raison d'être* of the new addition, features a custom plank table with self-storing leaves, so it can be expanded to service large groups. The textural chairs are





made from woven leather, and the grasscloth wallpaper adds another layer of dimension. But the most striking feature of all is the setting: "It feels like you're sitting in a greenhouse, with incredibly gorgeous views of the outdoors," says Amy.

The runner that goes up the stairs from the breakfast room to the game room above and continues through the room creates a sense of playfulness with its starry pattern. The game room itself features a pool table with customized blue felt to match the color scheme and A.T. Proudian rug. A Paul Ferrante chandelier is a modern take on a traditional iron fixture.





The pool table was made with customized blue felt to match the room's color scheme. The A.T. Proudian area rug has a matching runner on the staircase leading up from the breakfast room. The Paul Ferrante chandelier is a modern take on a traditional iron fixture.

The study—originally the daughter's bedroom but converted into an office when she moved upstairs—is a place of tranquility. The new design includes built-in bookcases and wainscoting to create the aura of traditional library, but with a light and bright look that ties into the rest of the house. Amy's team reupholstered the antique chairs, added Lee Jofa window treatments and covered the walls in a woven grass wallpaper to soften and modernize the space.

Finally, the master bedroom, featuring French doors and windows on three sides, has a light, breezy feel, accentuated by a beautiful cross-hatch hand-weave painted finish on the walls. The original wall-to-wall carpeting was retained, and an antique table from the family's collection was used in the room, so Amy livened up the feel by reupholstering the two antique chairs in a playful Cowtan & Tout fabric and adding a colorful contemporary Lorin Marsh lamp.

The gracious Shingle-style house has taken on and maintained the personality of its owners, growing and maturing along with them to reflect a modern lifestyle steeped in tradition.

Resources:

Interior Design
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Original Architect
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