

An Unlikely Story

An intriguing exterior, adventurous homeowners, and a skilled design team unite to write their own language.

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Styled by MICHAEL REYNOLDS



In the living room, interior designer Nina Farmer sourced a collection of pottery from Spain. The chair is vintage Silvio Cavatorta. **FACING PAGE:** The design team was tasked with seamlessly blending several additions with the original Cotswold-style structure. "It's really important to me and my firm to be involved in unique and interesting projects like this one," says builder Bill Manderville.

It's safe to say that most thoughtfully designed homes tell a cohesive style story—coastal, traditional, modern—that often references the location. But when reimagining the interiors and constructing an addition for a late-1920s-built Cotswold-style home in a region where Cotswold-style homes are few and far between, a design team had the opportunity to flex their collective creative muscle, break a few rules, and tell a new tale.



LEFT: The front door opens into an entry hall with a bar tucked into an arched niche that mirrors the arched front door. The wood grain on the bar cabinet was painstakingly aligned. **ABOVE:** When searching for countertop materials, Farmer knew traditional marble wasn't going to cut it in a stone house. She discovered impervious limestone at Ancient Surfaces in New York and used it for not only the countertops but also the ornate fireplace surround in the living room. The artwork behind the sofa is by photographer Tina Barney.



ABOVE: Farmer had the low ceiling in the dining room painted black and commissioned artist Nicolas Pasquale Valle, whose work she saw in New Orleans, to hand paint the wood beams. The custom table from Sakonnet Furniture Makers seats ten. **RIGHT:** In the second-floor corridor leading to the sons' rooms, the pattern in the white-oak floor echoes the groin vault ceiling. The bench is from Formations.

The homeowners, a couple with two sons, originally intended to build near the beach, but they quickly switched gears when they discovered a fairytale-like stone-clad home surrounded by ivy-covered stone walls in Westport. Unfortunately, additions from the 1970s and '80s and a "rabbit warren of rooms," explains architect Stuart Disston, made the space a complete gut renovation. "There wasn't any part of the house that we didn't touch."

On the exterior, that included combining and resetting new and salvaged roof tiles to match existing ones, restoring original wood shutters and iron window grates, and reconfiguring the pool room's porch and gables and adding cupolas. The homeowners also wanted a gym and sports court, which the design team built off an existing addition, effectively turning an L-shaped house into a 10,700-square-foot Z configuration.

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—Interior designer Nina Farmer



The kitchen with its stone walls, plaster range hood, and expansive island (those are under-the-counter storage baskets on the left) flows from the entry hall and into the dining room. "We wanted the kitchen design to be seamless with the rest of the house so that it doesn't startle," explains Farmer. Architect Stuart Disston points to the new concrete lintels above the windows: "What you see outside is what you see inside."





ABOVE: Farmer brought in more color on the second floor, as evidenced in the primary bedroom with its bright Bordeaux ceiling. **LEFT:** A vintage chaise was upholstered in a Pierre Frey fabric for a quiet moment in the bedroom. **FACING PAGE:** In the primary bath, his-and-her vanities stand opposite one another. Above both vanities, Farmer layered hanging mirrors against antique mirrors, which cuts down on repeating reflections.

Inside, sight lines were carefully realigned to eradicate the warren feel while still retaining intimate—and usable—rooms. Now the arched front door opens into a hall ideal for small-scale gatherings. It includes a bar with a green tile backsplash that mimics the home’s expansive lawns. The space, with its cozy seating area, can be closed off for impromptu parties. “The clients had specific ideas on how they wanted to live, how they wanted to entertain, in the home,” says interior designer Nina Farmer. “But when it came to the decor, they were game for anything.”

Inspired by the home’s somewhat exotic architecture—“In forty years of working in Fairfield County, I never knew this hidden gem was tucked away in Westport,” says builder Bill Manderville—Farmer brought in disparate but analogous motifs spanning California to Morocco. Reclaimed sawn beams were added to the main living spaces; in the dining room, inspired by

a winery she visited in Portugal, Farmer placed the beams against a black ceiling and commissioned a Los Angeles artist to hand paint each one. New plaster ceilings and walls evoke Spanish missions, but eased edges and the absence of any type of trim recalls an ultra-contemporary city space.

Terra-cotta floors on the first level suggest the American Southwest, while limestone comprising the living room's fireplace surround, the mudroom's island top, and the powder room's sink recalls Rome or Athens. The custom benches in the mudroom *could* have been salvaged from an Old World church, and the stone walls in the kitchen *could* have



RIGHT: Checkerboard tile adds a playful touch in the powder room. Note the custom plaster sconce to the left of the vintage mirror and the mythological creatures carved into the limestone sink. **BELOW:** The new mudroom features the same terra-cotta tile seen throughout the first floor. The homeowners had their kids walk on tile samples in their soccer cleats to choose the most durable option, says Manderville. **FACING PAGE:** The pool and spa were in place when the owners bought the home, but the design team restored both along with the surrounding terrace.



been made from the same stone as the home's facade (they weren't, but it was an exact match).

The art deco elements in the primary bath nod to the Jazz Age, while a Greek villa inspired the primary bedroom's subtle pale blue windows. And yet together with the Cotswolds-meets-Connecticut exterior, the design reveals a plot with twists and turns that make for a satisfying—and even timeless—read. “It’s not overtly one style or another,” admits Farmer. “There are many reference points and languages in the house, yet they seamlessly meld into one.”

EDITOR'S NOTE: For details, see Resources.

ARCHITECTURE:
Austin Patterson Disston Architects
INTERIOR DESIGN:
Nina Farmer Interiors
BUILDER:
Tallman Building Company
LANDSCAPE DESIGN:
Verdant View

