



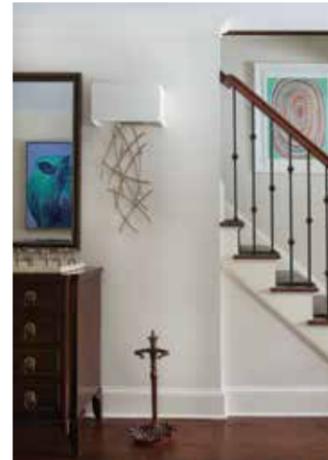
Personal SPACE

DESIGNER EMILY FUHRMAN TAKES US INTO HER OWN HOME,
WHERE HER LOVE OF DEPTH, TEXTURE
AND SURPRISE ARE AROUND EVERY CORNER

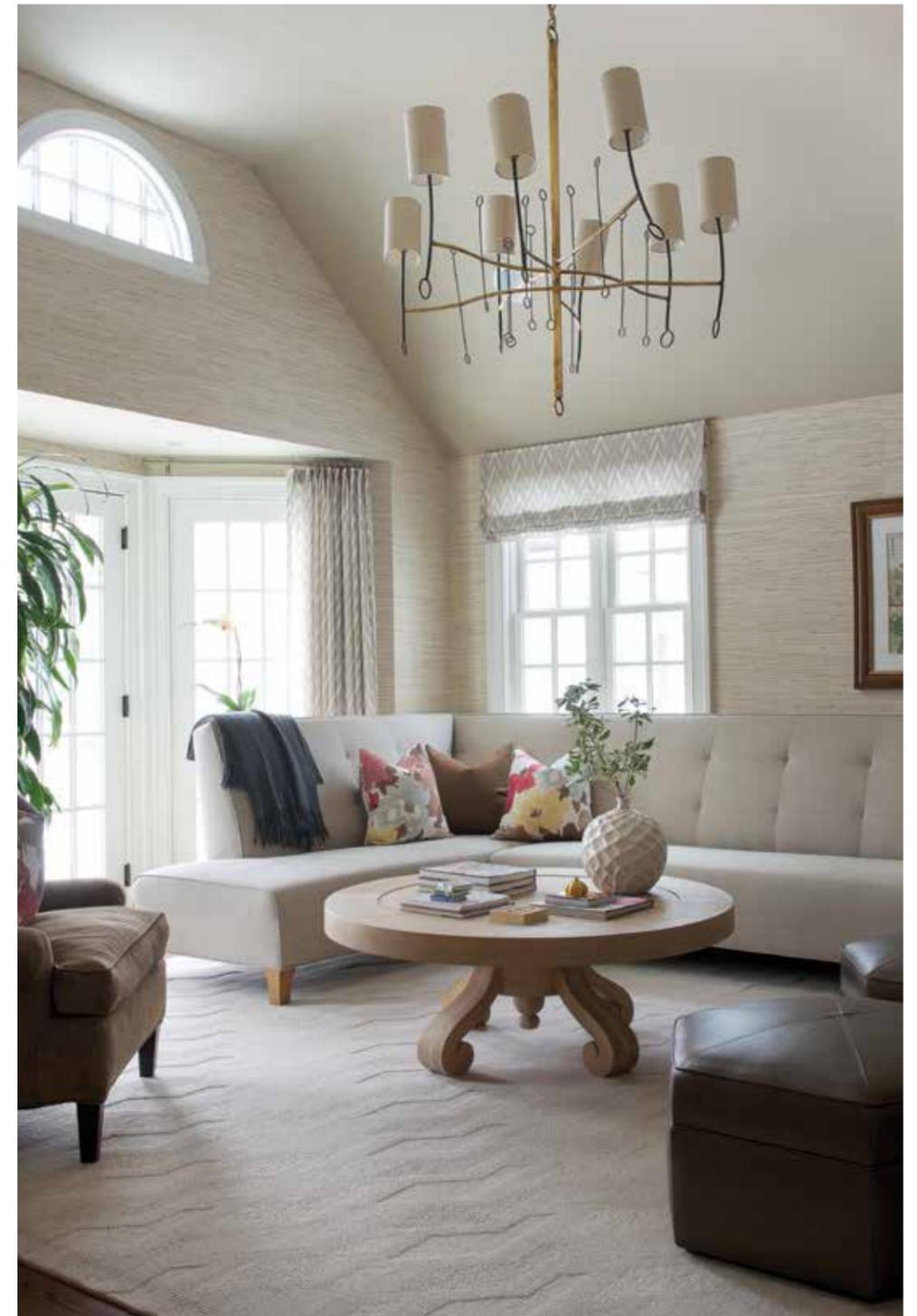
Prior to the renovation of what was a carriage house, this living room was an open courtyard. The Fuhrmans kept the atmosphere old-world with wood beams and a fieldstone fireplace.



BY JEANNE CRAIG
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JANE BEILES



OPPOSITE: Emily's office is on the second level, overlooking the living room. THIS PAGE (clockwise from lower left): An antique chest from her grandfather mixes with modern art in the foyer; an Odegard rug in the dining room offers a burst of color; antique garden stools; the Porta Romana Lollipop chandelier in the family room



After their first child was born, Emily and Jeff Fuhrman chose a path familiar to many new parents in New York City. They sacrificed the stroller-on-the-subway anxiety and pressure of the Manhattan school scramble for the carpools and commute of a suburb. The process of parting ways with the city wasn't easy for the Fuhrmans, though, particularly since they treasured their pre-war digs in the West Village. However, their journey to the green streets of Fairfield County was paved more smoothly by the prospect of putting down roots in a home with an ageless appeal of its own.

"We weren't looking for a traditional Colonial," says Emily of the house search they began in 2004. "We wanted something unconventional and full of character." The couple found that in New Canaan, where they bought a 2,000-square-foot residence built in 1930 that had once been the carriage house for an estate next door. While the couple was drawn to the vintage elements intact from the original design, the previous owners had updated the interior, so portions

of it had a heavy 1980s vibe. "It was just wrong," says Emily, "but we knew we could bring the charm back."

Indeed, that's just what the Fuhrmans did, although the success of the renovation is due in large part to Emily's confidence as a designer. She was an advertising professional on Madison Avenue when she lived in New York, but after moving to New Canaan, she carved out a career in interior design, founding Sage and Ginger in 2007. Her goal is to create beautiful, welcoming spaces for her clients, although she takes pride in adding twists, or what she calls the spice. "No two homes should look the same," says Emily. "A house should reflect the owner's personality and style, although to achieve that, you may have to move out of your comfort zone. That can make some people anxious, but in the design process, a few nerves can be a good thing."

Emily probably had a few jitters herself when she took her New Canaan home down to the studs for a renovation. Working with architect Teo Siguenza of Bedford, New York, the Fuhrmans ex-

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panded the house to 5,000 square feet by pushing out the front and back elevations and putting on a second floor. Yet as they rebuilt, the couple added old-world-style elements to the new spaces. Arched entryways and wide-plank wood floors are throughout the house, as are vintage wood doors that Emily found in salvage yards. She even located a trio of antique cut-glass windows that function as an art installation on an interior wall in the living room, where there’s also a fieldstone fireplace and rustic wood beams. “These details are a nod to the original home’s history, and they also make the spaces welcoming” says Emily, who encourages visitors to touch all of the interesting textures in her living spaces. She’s had a love of textiles since she was a girl. Her grandfather, who ran a men’s clothing company, introduced her to the art of mixing patterns and textures.

Her vision for the decor was simple. “I wanted it to feel rich and warm, but not too dark or serious.” To achieve that she used neutrals on the walls and a few intense colors in the furnishings, including purple, a hue prominent in the living room, where a pair of art deco tufted club chairs made in the 1940s turn heads. Emily reupholstered them with plum fabrics and a plum silk welt. “They’re glamorous and indicative of the Hollywood Regency period I love.”

Fuhrman is a master of the mash-up. She mixes metals and



OPPOSITE: In the homework area on the second floor, Emily uses a dramatic plant as sculptural element near a Lucite bench. THIS PAGE: One of two bedrooms for her young daughters

finishes with elan, combines graphic art and sculptural pieces, and blends old furnishings with new, often to playful effect. That’s the recipe for spice, she says, because the juxtaposition adds depth to any room. In the foyer, for instance, she combines vintage garden stools and an antique wood chest with modern art, including a manipulated photograph of a cow that she found at the Carriage Barn Arts Center. “I think it’s fresh and different and hopefully puts a smile on your face.”

While Emily says her personal style is grounded in layers, depth and glamour, she has a knack for creating cozy spaces, too. In the family room, for instance, a Porta Romana Lollipop Chandelier has crooked arms that are prankish and just right in a room designed for a family that doesn’t want to take itself too seriously. And on the second floor, where there are bedrooms for her daughters Sage and Ginger, a shared homework space is made more fun with a Lucite bench covered in Tibetan lamb’s wool.

The Fuhrmans home has evolved over the years, yet it’s still a work in progress, as there are plans to renovate the deck that extends the length of the house, and to capture the space beneath it for a lower level with a pool cabana room and gym. Is this the family’s forever home? Emily says yes. “We’ve invested ourselves in every detail. It’s hard to imagine my family living anywhere else.”

QA with Emily Fuhrman

What’s the toughest part about decorating your own home? Limiting what I can buy. In my profession, I’m constantly exposed to new things. When I see something I love, I want to buy it. The challenge becomes what to edit.

How long did it take to decorate? I spent a few years acquiring all of the key pieces, but I’m always finding new things. When you buy what you love, it always seems to fit in seamlessly.

Describe your personal style. Classic with an inventive perspective.

What are your favorite pieces? One of them is the Trove wall covering in my office. It looks as if lotus flowers have been hand-painted on canvas. And the paper itself is textured, which adds depth and dimension.

What piece of art has an interesting story? We have a pair of original Balinese shadow puppets made of buffalo

skin. Jeff’s mother bought them in the 1970s when the family lived in Japan. They were stored in her attic for thirty years, until we moved to New Canaan. We had them mounted on raw silk and framed in a shadow box that’s now on our mantel. I like their texture and graphic nature. Jeff loves them because they remind him of his childhood.

Describe your home in three words. Unexpected, comfortable, bold.

