





Designing a Dream

Blending Styles in New Canaan to Create a “Sparkling Beauty”

Story by Jessica Rivest | Photography by Jane Beiles





A growing family and life changes made it clear to Emily Fuhrman's clients that they needed to move to a larger home. Fuhrman, the founder and designer of Sage & Ginger LLC, recalls that her clients and their two children wanted to stay in New Canaan, CT, but needed more room. After finding a beautiful piece of property on a rare cul-de-sac, the family enlisted the help of Steve Lecher of Lecher Development to design and build their custom home, and hired Fuhrman to tackle the interior design. The entire process took about 18 months, during which time Fuhrman worked with the clients to create a beautiful blend of styles in their new dream home, which they nicknamed "Sparkling Beauty."

The project was a huge task, as the new residence was three times the size of their old home, and the clients wanted to start from scratch with the interior design and furnish the whole house. Fuhrman says a project of this scope requires planning and lots of communication. "Because this was a big undertaking and they wanted to do it right, we took our time," she explains. "We prioritized and focused on one space at a time." Fuhrman says they worked alongside the builder to incorporate the clients' wants into the interior design. "We began during the construction phase with a color scheme and lighting fixtures for the entire home, and continued to design room by room."

The feel of the home is light and clean, with some traditional pieces to

anchor it. Fuhrman says she worked with each client's style to create a design they both loved. The wife was looking for a lighter transitional feel, while the husband desired a traditional look. Fuhrman achieved the perfect marriage of styles to create a home design that thrilled them both, a combination that resulted in the "Sparkling Beauty" look. The mixing of traditional and transitional styles was the main challenge Fuhrman faced during the project. She accomplished that beautiful blend by mixing light colors and modern art with traditional furniture pieces to create a lighter feel and set a transitional tone throughout the entire home.

The beautiful entrance and foyer set the tone for the design of the house: clean, light and inviting. Fuhrman's goal was to keep the foyer simple and functional. She didn't want to overcrowd it, but sought to make it welcoming and fresh. She did that by using her skill for mixing pieces and introducing gorgeous details. "The console is definitely a traditional piece," Fuhrman says, "but we paired it with a funky little rug with a cool, thick, leather binding on the edge." It's those unexpected details, she says, that pushed the design to the next level and created the feel her clients wanted.

The huge, gorgeous kitchen features sleek countertops and stunning white tile, as well as clean, white cabinets and a beautiful hardwood floor. The enormous center island is perfect for the family to gather in the heart of the home, and the unique light fixtures are both beautiful and functional. Fuhrman explains that the clients wanted to keep the kitchen neutral but add some interest as well. "They wanted a



Stunning chairs create a pop of color in the formal living room while the neutral tones keep it transitional.







beautiful, clean kitchen, and then we added a little sparkle with the light fixtures and the fun roman shades on the windows,” she says. Adding unexpected touches adds interest and depth to the neutral, classic space, Fuhrman notes. She chose the engaging artwork for the wall because it adds interest and color to the room, as well as a little sparkle. “It’s actually a photograph stretched over canvas, with a glossy finish to create a cool sheen on it,” she explains. The heart of the home has a classic look that Fuhrman jazzed up with details, while keeping the classic vibe intact.

The family room is welcoming, with the handsome stone fireplace and cozy couch. Fuhrman says the point was to make it a great gathering space. “There’s lots of seating, it’s inviting and comfortable, and it’s a great place for people to relax,” she notes. Indeed, the family room really is for the family, Fuhrman says: it’s the place where the kids hang out and the family gathers together. It needed to be functional as well as beautiful, which Fuhrman accomplished with the large sectional and pops of color in the ottomans, bringing out the fun in the room. Like the rest of the house, the artwork completes the look and feel the clients wanted.

While some homeowners are moving away from a formal living room, it was a must-have for Fuhrman’s clients. To make the space fit with the transitional look of the rest of the house, she suggested the gorgeous blue chairs. “Let’s do a pop with the chairs,” she told them. “Let’s make a statement.” Another fantastic fireplace greets guests in this room, and beautiful artwork adorns the walls. The entrance to the living room is stunning itself: the beautiful arched millwork creates a majestic feel, and the plush fabrics carry that feel throughout the room, while the colors and lines of the furniture help to soften and lighten it. “What’s so pretty are the beautiful, soft curves of the chairs, which really lighten the feel of the room,” says Fuhrman. She adds that it was great to work with these clients, who were always open to her ideas and trusted her to achieve the look and style they desired.

The modern art and stunning chandelier in the formal dining room help to lighten the heavy traditional pieces and create that perfect blend Fuhrman’s clients were looking for. Mixing styles makes the room and each piece in it stand out, she explains. “When you have traditional pieces and everything matches, you expect that,” she says.



The kitchen is sleek and neutral with a little sparkle in the details.



“But when you have that juxtaposition with the different pieces, you don’t expect that. Yet it works and turns out beautiful.”

The master bedroom is a tranquil oasis with the calming blue walls and clean window treatments. Fuhrman says she designed the bedroom as a place for her clients to relax and unwind. Here, the task she faced involved the sheer size of the bedroom. “When you have a space that big, it’s a challenge to make it feel cozy,” she says. But Fuhrman succeeded by creating a neutral space with lots of layers. “When you add layers to the room, you build and create this very warm, inviting space, even though it’s so big.” The roman shades on the windows are two different fabrics with different textures to create a layered effect. The simple but beautiful fabric headboard is layered with big, fun pillows, and the stunning bench forms another layer at the end of the bed. The mirrored nightstands and crystal light fixture create the sparkle the clients love and add the unexpected to the room, something Fuhrman loves to do in her design. “I love all the different elements instead of everything matching—mixing things up and making this beautiful space.”

Fuhrman believes the key to home design is to pick things you love that also make you happy. She says that in building your style, it’s important to surround yourself and fill your home with things you think are beautiful. She loves working with clients to uncover their design styles and even have them push themselves to unexpected places. She enjoys adding interest by layering textures, mixing finishes, blending old with new, and incorporating graphic art and sculptural pieces. “It’s really all about finding the right balance,” she says. “The design has to work both functionally and aesthetically and embody the homeowner’s persona.”



This project went off without any issues, Fuhrman says, and she had a great working relationship with her clients. “They know what they want,” she says, “but at the same time, they are open to new ideas and are always responsive, clear and respectful.” It was fun, she

says, to mix both styles and desires to create the “sparkling beauty” the clients envisioned for their home. She also notes that the couple even evolved in their design desires during the process. “When we began working together, the husband was strictly traditional,”



she says. "But as I got to know him better and uncovered his funny and fashion-forward sensibilities, I felt he could be pulled out of his comfort zone. His latest request was graffiti wallpaper! I love when clients evolve through the design process. There's so much great stuff out there, and an artful, unexpected mix is always a terrific look!"

Fuhrman graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a B.A. in Communications and Marketing, but her interest in design was seeded at an early age by her grandfather, who ran a men's clothing company. He introduced her to textiles and taught her about artfully mixing colors, patterns and textures. In 2007, when Fuhrman inherited her grandfather's vintage cloth collection, she decided to follow her passion and officially enter the world of design. She started designing one-of-a-kind decorative pillows, using her grandfather's fabrics. To make the pillows even more special, Fuhrman em-

The family room is beautifully designed to be comfortable and inviting.





Layers and the perfect combination of furniture fill the huge peaceful oasis bedroom without over populating it.



bellished them with “jewels” she sourced from travel around the world. The pillows were popular among retailers and clients alike. Soon her fans began asking Fuhrman to extend her creativity and passion for design beyond pillows, and use her talents on all aspects of their homes.

Resources

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