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Designer Michael Whaley brings a lifetime of accumulated aesthetic sensibility to a wide array of interior projects from New York City to the Caribbean.

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On the cover: The interior of this waterfront home in Connecticut was brought to life by designer Michael Whaley. See page 8. Photo: Mick Hales

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Buying Guides

In this issue you will find 17 Buying Guides on our issue theme: Interiors. The Guides contain information on suppliers, manufacturers, custom fabricators, artists and artisans, as well as many photographs of their work. The Guides range from Columns & Capitals to Ceramic Tile and Stairs & Railings. They form a most comprehensive source for professionals working in restoration, renovation and traditionally styled new construction.

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A New E-Commerce Website, Produced by Restore Media, LLC

REX is a new e-commerce website that will go LIVE in March 2012. It serves the 500,000 building and design professionals and enthusiasts who are already researching building materials and services online via Restore Media’s eight websites. REX will make it easy for these "shoppers" to become BUYERS by providing them with a comprehensive look at the suppliers’ product lines. REX will allow buyers to search, compare, price and purchase online. REX will feature products, product catalogs, product specifications and product videos—all in an easy-to-navigate, searchable format.

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2 Actual field testing results after only seven months of exposure to moisture. For testing purposes, the seal between the bottom rail and the glass was compromised in both units.
In 1977, Michael Whaley’s parents hired New York designer J. Terry Brown to decorate their home in Darien, CT. In addition to Vidal Sassoon’s New York apartment, Brown’s resume included Dick Cavett’s New York townhouse and the Stamford White-designed home in Montauk, NY. For Michael’s father, who had transferred the family from Racine, WI, for his career in television, the Cavett connection was a good omen, and Brown did not disappoint: the design transformed a blank slate into an iconic contemporary family room, with a Carl Springer table, Brueton chairs and Hartmann lamps. The reception to the new room was extraordinary, not merely because hiring a designer was such a status symbol at that time. As he watched visitors’ eyes widen, Michael Whaley became aware of the power of design, and was changed too.

“His had taken a white box of a room and transformed it into an amazingly sexy, inviting space,” says Whaley. “People came into the house and stopped in their tracks. That’s when I became interested in interior design. I experienced that transformation along with that room. I realized that design had the power to change. I wanted to be able to do that too.”

Whaley graduated from Columbia University in 1984, with an education that would shape his future aesthetic. A proud Francophile, he majored in French and completed his thesis on 18th-century interior design while living in Paris for a year. As luck would have it, his thesis advisor was a curator at the Musée Carnavalet, which afforded Whaley backstage access to the city’s greatest architectural landmarks and a deeper understanding of French culture.

“Paris is overflowing with palaces that have been turned into decorative arts museums. Each one is better than the next,” says Whaley. “The history of decorative design is highly connected and attuned to the French national history. It is well documented and observed. That kind of passionate, attentive, academic pursuit of design barely exists today in America, except in smaller circles – for example, people who read this magazine or are members of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art. We rarely experience it in the larger design media and commentary or conversation.”

Photography by John Dolan, Phillip Ennis, Frances Janisch, Mick Hales and Durston Saylor

Interior designer Michael Whaley brings a refined style to projects throughout the U.S.

By Lynne Lovelle

Michael Whaley’s first introduction to the power of design was his parents’ home, which was decorated by J. Terry Brown. He opened his New York City office in 1987 and works throughout Manhattan, Connecticut, the Hamptons, Florida, the Caribbean and Colorado. Photo: John Dolan

For a gut renovation of a 1930s brick-and-slate house in Darien, CT (top), Whaley created warmth and functionality in the kitchen with classic light fixtures and earth tones. Photo: Phillip Ennis
Whaley designed every detail of a project on the Florida coast, from linens, to china and glassware, as well as a custom woven stripe fabric in aqua and pink for billowing curtains. Photo: Frances Janisch

Upon returning to the U.S., Whaley was accepted to the Interior Design Program at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. Life had other plans, however, and Whaley’s career fast-tracked when Albert Hadley of the renowned interior design firm Parish-Hadley hired him for a temporary position. As the fall of 1985 approached, Hadley encouraged Whaley to continue his real-world education at the firm, where he had spent the summer working four days per week at the office, while completing a side project in the Cayman Islands. Like many of Hadley’s protégés before him, such as Mark Hampton, David Easton and Gary Hager, Whaley joined the firm.

“By working there,” he says, “I was given a window into the rarified world of some of the most powerful and influential families in America. I saw that gracious living is just as much about the quality of the person as it is about the quality of their surroundings. If you don’t care about design or the designer, then your rooms are going to fall flat no matter what you purchase.”

Moving on from Parish-Hadley, Whaley opened his solo office in New York City in 1987. Today, Whaley works with a small, close-knit team, consisting of a design assistant, office manager, and a network of skilled artisans, and he splits his time between the city and North Stamford, CT, working on projects in Manhattan, Connecticut, the Hamptons and further afield, such as Florida, the Caribbean and Colorado. According to Whaley, “Taste is not subjective. You either have it or you do not. Very few people have good taste. They hire me because I do, and they know enough to realize that I have it. They use me to bring good taste to their lives.”

The French connection is much in evidence in Whaley’s work, which combines minimalist elegance, rich materials, rare antiques and attention to “backgrounds” – walls, floors, ceilings and architecture. He credits Georges Geffroy, who created some of the most elegant apartments of mid-20th-century Paris, as a frequent departure point, but with a modern twist. “Today’s clients are looking for more comfort, but are still drawn to the effects of luxury,” he says. “I offer them a balance to create homes that feel good to be in, but also include the highest quality materials, for an exclusivity that sets their homes apart.”

Classic Transitional
Whaley’s design sensibility is artfully expressed in a gut renovation of a 1930s brick and slate house in Darien, CT. After years of unsympathetic renovations and additions, the house was in need of an identity and interiors with the necessary warmth and functionality of a family home. The house is now reminiscent of a 19th-century Virginia Tidewater plantation home on the exterior, with boxwood mounds and a sweeping double stair to the new entrance. Inside, Whaley completed the transition as a perfect backdrop for the family’s collection of English antiques. “They wanted me to create a house for them that is comfortable, welcoming, and youthful,” says Whaley.

In the dining room, Whaley added Chinoiserie-style fretwork over antiqued mirror panels to create a high style wainscoting against contrasting chocolate-brown lacquered walls. An antique green glass Indian lantern and geometrically embroidered curtains in moss green and chocolate create an exotic atmosphere for large family meals and celebrations. At night, the room shimmers from the reflection of the mirror work, walls and mercury-glass candles and objects. The artwork appears to float on the richly dimensioned walls.

For the family room, the client requested a fun, playful living space, able to accommodate the whole family, as well as a multitude of friends and pets, for gatherings focused on the flat screen. “They didn’t want the formality or cliché of a media room,” says Whaley. A Moroccan-style banquet
Above: Whaley traveled to England to purchase items such as china, furniture, lighting and accessories for the Watch Hill, RI, summer cottage. Photo: Philip Ennis

Right: The hallway of this Shingle Style waterfront home on the Connecticut coast strikes a balance between relaxed and formal. Photo: Durston Saylor

wraps around three sides, and is covered in a custom traditional ikat in tropical colors of acid green, aqua and brown. Twin Moroccan lanterns and an assortment of 17 pillows contribute to the relaxed atmosphere. "The interiors are chic in color and feel, while retaining the warmth and welcome of good classic design," says Whaley. "I was able to bring the richness of classic design principles to create a sense of comfort combined with modern needs."

Florida Oceanfront
Among Whaley’s favorite commissions are those for clients with whom he has previously worked. With second homes and vacation retreats, clients feel free to experiment, take risks and have fun. "Usually with the second or third home, clients are more willing to let me create something new and different for them," he says. "Because we have already worked together, I know what the clients like, what they want, what they mean, and most importantly, what they don’t even know they want yet."

In what remains one of Whaley’s pet projects, the clients put complete trust in him to design every detail of their Florida oceanfront home, from linens to china and glassware, ensuring a complete turn-key experience. “They live half the year in the Northeast, and had purchased this oceanfront home for use in the winter months,” says Whaley. “They didn’t want the typical Vero Beach look – instead they wanted color, fine antiques and high glamour.”

Whaley assembled a collection of painted and lacquered pieces that bring brightness to the rooms, and custom-designed traditional style rugs to be woven in tropical colors. The living room walls were Venetian plastered and highly polished to resemble the pink interior of a conch shell. Whaley designed a custom woven stripe fabric in aqua and pink to use for billowing curtains, which give a sense of being inside a beachside cabana on the Riviera. “My instructions to my clients were to show up with their suitcases,” says Whaley. “When they walked in the door, they were over the moon. I was able to give them everything they hoped for, while still creating a look that was fitting to the beach setting.”

Watch Hill Summer Cottage
Another second home, a summer cottage in Watch Hill, RI, presented a rare opportunity to restore a previously neglected, three-story Queen Anne-style house. With seven large bedrooms, a wraparound porch and a turret, the house had all the requisite elements of a romantic summer beach house, but was in dire need of a sense of continuity. Whaley envisioned that the house had been handed down to the owners through the generations, with each subsequent family adding a new layer and leaving its mark. “I travelled to England to purchase on the clients’ behalf furniture, lighting, china and accessories to imbue the home with authentic history,” he says.

Whaley used a program of William Morris hand-block wallpapers as backgrounds for most of the rooms, which
are furnished with comfortable, custom-made upholstery, English Victorian antiques, and Arts and Crafts pieces. Sourcing antiques is part detective work and part luck, and Whaley was fortunate—"Throughout the project, unique and special pieces that seemed to already belong in the house kept finding their way to me," he says.

Among them is a Victorian-era beaded needlepoint framed bird that hangs over the sofa; a set of hammered-brass windmill-shaped fireplace tools; 19th-century English servants bells, which Whaley found on London’s Portobello Road; and a marvelous French Bamboo coat stand. "I especially loved selecting the antique gas light fixtures and sconces," he adds. "These one-of-a-kind purchases add genuineness to a new renovation. Sometimes we need to go back in time, to collect the old and place it anew to create the layers of depth and detail the home deserves."

Shingle Style Waterfront

Whaley’s assertion that good taste knows no particular style is perfectly illustrated in a Shingle Style home on the Connecticut coast. Here, among the relaxed breezy palette, generous seating arrangements designed to accommodate numerous family members and friends, and detailed woodworking, exists one of the most unusual rooms of the designer’s career, and a testament to his versatility— an authentic Japanese Tatami room.

“The client had lived in Tokyo,” says Whaley, “and had asked the architect to create a Tatami room hidden behind a set of paneled doors in the library. When you are standing within the traditional library, with its finely built walnut bookcases, designed to house rare books, a collection of car-shaped English tea tins and the accumulation of trophies reflecting a rewarding career, there is no hint of what lies on the other side.” But once within the shelter of this refuge, all the cares of the day seem to drop away and a sense of peace and serenity sets in.

Whaley visited New York-based Japanese art dealer Naga Antiques to find just the right balance of fine Japanese antiques and artwork. Traditional low tables sit beneath a pair of delicate hanging scrolls; the rice-paper screen doors cast a soft filtered light and hint at the meditation garden outside. The custom designed futon, covered in a soothing sage silk, sets the tone for this beloved haven for the client. "Great design can have a transformational effect on a space, and also on the people who inhabit it," says Whaley. "This particular client obviously has significant responsibilities and demands on his time. I am honored to have created a space for him to find sanctuary and renewal."

After almost three decades in the business, Whaley continues to inspire his clients to allow him to accomplish something special in the design of their home. As a designer, he welcomes a variety of aesthetics, and finds fresh ways to combine traditional with the best of Modern, the sleek with the Bohemian, and the tried-and-tested with the exciting and new.

"I am not a purist," he says. "I remain open to all possibilities— those contrasts are often what make a room pop. I want to help my clients articulate and then achieve their dreams for their home, and I want to help them get it right. Most importantly, I want to help them take it all the way to the finish, so that they can live and enjoy down to the last detail."
It's a real estate story as old as time. The location was magnificent – the house was anything but. When a 1950s rambling brick ranch came up for sale next door to the clients' weekend home in St. Michaels, MD, they jumped at the chance to purchase the property for use as a guesthouse. Overlooking a tributary that flows into the Chesapeake Bay, the spot has beautiful west-facing views of the water and sunsets. The house, on the other hand, although structurally sound, was dated and unappealing with glass sliders, a tacked-on carport and a massive glass sunroom. The house did not celebrate the water or the natural landscape. It needed an expert's touch.

The couple called David Jones, principal of David Jones Architects, to re-imagine the house. As longstanding clients of Jones (this project is their fourth with the architect), they were confident that he would design a home worthy of the tranquil waterfront setting. A seasoned architect well versed in all things Classical, Jones specializes in new homes and additions using site-appropriate traditional styles. For its exceptional work in proportion, materials selection, honest craftsmanship and attention to details, the firm has won over 20 design awards, including two Palladio Awards, as well as recognition from the American Institute of Architects Washington Chapter and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

While visiting the site, Jones and the clients took a walk on the grounds and looked back at the house from the water, at which point Jones said, "You know, this house would be much better as the main house – it has better views." The decision was made that this house would become the couple’s personal retreat.

With economy and sustainability in mind, the couple chose to use the existing footprint instead of demolishing the house. By choosing to recycle the old building, they would not only save on building costs, but would also save materials from ending up in a landfill. Jones began to redesign the exterior to reflect the Southern Colonial Revival style seen in the Tidewater region.

Jones relocated the pool off to the side of the house and designed a pool/dining pavilion for the area. All photos: Robert Laumen
The original house was a low sprawling ranch (above), which did not take in the views or light. Jones gave it a Southern Colonial Revival facelift by raising the roof, adding dormers, shutters and appropriate columns to the front façade (top).

"The client wanted a traditional home with Classical elements, and the revival style lends to that end nicely," says Jones. The front of the house was transformed into a quintessential five-bay Colonial with wings flanking the sides of the center massing. Jones raised the roof to accommodate a new master suite on the second floor, allowing for a steeper pitch to the roofline. Three new dormers and a balustrade over the existing porch give focus to the front of the house. A two-story pedimented porch and raised chimneys create a stunning waterfront facade. To unify the look, Jones had the existing brick walls clapboarded and wood trim painted white, while new shutters and the wood shingle roof give character to the home.

The floor plan also needed some serious updating, as the clients wanted to rearrange the existing rooms for better flow and entertaining. Jones reoriented the main living areas to the view, creating one large symmetrical living room/dining room that opens to an expansive porch – all directed toward the water views. Five sets of French doors with sidelights and transoms create a glass wall that floods the room with natural light. The new space is anchored by fireplaces at either end, creating a focal point for the two distinct spaces. Painted pilasters and beams visually anchor the space and the painted beadboard ceiling offers a casual informality to the space. The raised roof also allowed for higher ceilings in the newly configured living and dining space.

The clients wanted open the layout areas to the water views; the living and dining room now flow into one another and a series of French doors reveal the tranquil setting.
Above: Jones transformed a dated sunroom into a spacious family room located just steps from the new pool pavilion. Oversized windows and French doors fill the casual space with natural light throughout the day.

Left: A blue slate terrace runs the length of the main living area and offers an open-air extension of the living space.

The kitchen was moved into the wing just off the new dining area. Jones chose not to use upper cabinets. The uncluttered walls give the room a larger feel as well as a more traditional look. For dish storage, Jones designed three matching cupboards reminiscent of something you might see in an old country cottage. Dual sinks placed under windows offer water vistas. The countertop is a handsome marble. The walls are painted a soothing blue. A spacious family room with French doors also faces the water and overlooks the pool area, which once interfered with the vistas from the main living spaces. Jones proposed the pool be moved to allow sweeping down the lawn to the tributary. A new pool pavilion offers shade from the summer sun while allowing breezes to flow through. The redesigned space is an asset rather than an eyesore—and the couple couldn’t be happier with their Colonial Revival retreat by the water’s edge. — Nancy E. Berry

Nancy E. Berry is the editor of New Old House magazine and the author of two books on design. She lives in Yarmouth Port, MA.
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Natural Progression

A new house on the Connecticut coast honors the site's previous occupant.

In 2007, Peter Zimmerman Architects (PZA) began the design process for a new home that would replace a 150-year-old Georgian on a tree-lined street in Fairfield, CT. The clients, longtime admirers of the Berwyn, PA-based firm’s award-winning Pennsylvania stone farmhouses, sat down with principal Peter H. Zimmerman, AIA, to discuss a program that would not only accommodate their family, which includes two teenage children, but also cater to their future needs.

"Knowing that it wasn't appropriate for their site, the clients didn’t come asking us to build a Pennsylvania farmhouse," says Zimmerman. "Instead, we discussed how these farmhouses were so appropriate for that region and what kind of house would be historically appropriate in a similar manner where the clients were building.”

Fairfield is located on the Connecticut coast, about an hour drive from New York City. During the 18th century, unemployed boat builders in the region constructed houses for supplementary income. As a result, many of the area’s 18th- and 19th-century residences were built with wood and featured detailed interior millwork. "In Pennsylvania, there wasn’t that same tradition," says Zimmerman. “They were farmers who were much more adept at working with stone.”

Zimmerman notes that Pennsylvania farmhouses grew like telescopes while New England farmhouses did the reverse. “There is what I call a ‘head house,’ which is the main mass that fronts the street, and then it tended to extend out the rear to connect to barns,” he says. “These additions and masses that were added show the clear articulation of different volumes. The fact that they are not all designed and built with the same detailing and scale indicates that there would have been an older house. As the family became prosperous, they built formal masses at the front; subsequent additions were built later as multiple generations lived in the same house.”

After discovering the existing 150-year-old home was unsalvageable, Berwyn, PA-based Peter Zimmerman Architects designed this new house in Fairfield, CT; it includes a series of additions and porches toward the rear that suggest organic growth through the past century. All photos: Tom Crane
The multiple porches are constructed of mahogany and topped with lead-coated copper roofs. Doors are layered with dense paint so they appear to have been painted over throughout the years.

The original design scheme involved stripping the existing house back to its original root structure and building a series of additions toward a new PZA-designed barn. However, after the construction phase began it was determined that the structure was unsalvageable: The footings and foundation were inadequate, and would compromise the structural system and basement spaces of the program. Rather than replicating the existing house, PZA took cues from its proportions and scale, reused its footprint and reinterpreted the archetype.

The main elevation is composed of two central Georgian masses with the formal entry positioned at the center; the two bays at the right were set back slightly to reduce the formality of the façade. The central masses are complemented with fluted corner pilasters, brick chimneys, half-round window dormers, windows with heads and mahogany shutters as well as a Classically-detailed soffit, fascia and rake. These elements correspond to the formal spaces in the interior and are juxtaposed against the simpler exterior profiles of the additions, which house the casual living spaces. “There is a clear architectural hierarchy of both the massing and the detailing throughout the house,” says Zimmerman.

Exteriors are sided with ½-in., beaded, clear mahogany clapboard, the roof is finished with cedar shingles and the foundation base is salvaged stone. The multiple porches are constructed of mahogany and topped with lead-coated copper roofs. Doors are layered with dense paint so they appear to have been painted over throughout the years.

Through the Federal-style main entry, which is highlighted with sidelites and a transom made of 18th-century antique glass, the foyer and stair hall (the stairway features fluted balusters and hand-carved brackets) lead to the library, living room and formal dining. The formal living areas contain architectural details, such as crown molding, pilasters and wainscoting, which integrate with the millwork surrounding fireplaces, doors and windows.

In the living room, the window surrounds feature splayed panel jambs and are positioned lower than the chair rail and wainscoting.
Above: Windows and doors in the living room feature splayed panel jambs to allow for maximum light exposure.

Right: The windows are positioned lower than the chair rail and wainscoting to accommodate for larger openings; the header and pilasters surrounding the casing maintain Classical proportions.

to accommodate the larger openings. "We came up with an architectural device by placing a head and pilasters on the window casings for a Classically-oriented design and splayed the jambs to maintain the Classical proportions," says Zimmerman. "By splaying the jambs we're also increasing the aperture of the window opening and are able to bring light much deeper inside the house."

The balance of light plays a role in the floor plan as well. For instance, each hallway terminates with an opening and the corridor extending from the foyer circulates through the dining room to allow for two sides of windows. "By bringing in the natural light, we're able to raise the ambient light levels in the interior so they are similar with the exterior," says Zimmerman. "That's important because if we have similar light levels the windows become transparent and the eye extends right out to the landscape."

Toward the rear, a butler's pantry and additional stair hall separate the formal rooms from the casual living areas. While salvaged oak floors were used throughout, the details in these spaces are noticeably simpler. In the kitchen, which acts as the main hub of the house, wood beams were used in lieu of crown molding and white painted cabinets were placed next to oak cabinetry. At the center, the island was inspired by a kitchen table at the Breakers in Newport, RI, and was fabricated out of antique chestnut with a marble top; the wood was stained to match seamlessly with the floors.

Upstairs, the bedrooms follow a similar layout. The master suite, consisting of a bedroom, sitting room, master bath, dressing room and closet are at the front while the children's bedrooms are located at the rear. The corridor connecting the two areas has ample natural light and the rear stair hall ascends to a large plate window.
Above: The kitchen island was inspired by a table at the Breakers in Newport, RI; it is topped with marble and constructed of antique chestnut stained to match the salvaged oak floors.

Windows for this project were supplied by New Brunswick, Canada-based Norwood Windows & Doors. Other key suppliers include Montgomeryville, PA-based Timberlane (shutters); New Haven, CT-based Reclamation Lumber (wood floors); and Plymouth, CT-based Chestnut Specialists (antique wood); Brooklyn, NY-based Architectural Grille, Elkhart, WI-based Kees Architectural Division, Leominster, MA-based Reggio Register, and Suwanee, GA-based Price HVAC supplied the cast-iron and painted registers installed throughout.

Zimmerman’s success in designing a home that both meets the owner’s expectations and satisfies the existing property’s local reputation is attributed to his adherence to four criteria: marrying the clients’ lifestyle with appropriately scaled and proportioned architecture; respecting the cultural and historic landscape of the site; building with indigenous and natural materials so structures last at least a century; and as with many 18th-century residences in the neighborhood, accommodating future generations.

“Our inclination was to build something that was very reminiscent of what had been there originally,” says Zimmerman. And unlike its predecessor, the hope is that the new house will be renovated rather than razed after a century of use. — Annabel Hsin

The enclosed wraparound porch next to the family room was positioned to take advantage of garden views.

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A new French-inspired house along Lake Michigan fits in amongst its neighbors.

When an early-20th-century French Style home in Winnetka, IL, succumbed to structural failure in 2003, the owners had four main goals for their new home on the site: to honor the previous structure; to appear as if it had been there for decades; to provide a traditional plan with modern amenities; and to be environmentally responsible. To fulfill these criteria, the family turned to Lake Forest, IL-based Melichar Architects.

Sixteen miles north of Chicago, the village of Winnetka is nestled comfortably among the affluent North Shore communities along Lake Michigan. An eclectic mix of historic houses, a few dating to the mid-19th century, makes up the pedestrian-friendly neighborhood. The oldest survivor, the Schmidt-Burnham House, was constructed in 1837.

For Melichar Architects principal Diana Melichar, the success of fitting into the context of an established neighborhood hinges on site, scale and style. "The neighborhood is filled with fine historic architecture, and we wanted to make sure that our home didn’t stand out as new construction," she says. To accomplish this, Melichar and her team created a formal front façade featuring carefully selected, timeless materials.

Top: The west-facing, symmetrical front façade features hand-molded brick in the cove detail, recessed window surrounds and water table base. All Photos: Barry Rustin
The front entry includes custom millwork panels and traditional, urn-style spindles on the staircase; French doors in the second-floor stair hall allow natural light into the space.

“It required some finesse to balance the large program and front elevation, as we didn’t want the house to become too long and overwhelm the site,” says Melichar, noting that the simple brick exterior draws upon French domestic architecture. The front façade, which contrasts with an informal rear façade, features tall French casement and transom windows, arched-top dormers, traditional lanterns, a wrought-iron balcony railing and a stained-mahogany front door with a hand-carved limestone surround. The hipped roof is finished with variegated slate.

While the homeowners originally wanted the side façades to be symmetrical as well, Melichar says that after much discussion, they realized it would be difficult to have absolute symmetry on all façades without sacrificing the functionality and integrity of the floor plan.

Inside, the formal living room and dining room flank the front entry space and overlook the front lawn. Towards the rear, an informal kitchen – the hub of the plan – and a large family room open to the backyard. The first floor also includes a bedroom suite for the homeowners’ aging parents and a garage extending to the rear. The second floor has a master bedroom suite, four children’s bedrooms, three bathrooms and a laundry room. Both the attic and basement are finished.

The interior features hand-scraped wood floors, paneled wood doors, custom millwork panels and built-in shelving, and Classically-inspired tiled bathroom floors and walls. One of the home’s three fireplaces utilizes a marble surround salvaged from the previous house on the site.

While Melichar says that new construction typically has fewer constraints than renovation, this project was not without its challenges, including the need for extensive soil borings to ensure the existing ground was capable of supporting a new structure.

“The floor plan was also laid out with consideration to several large old trees on the property,” says Melichar. “In fact, the village requested that the floor plan be flipped from its original design in order to save one more tree. Closet to the new structure, a large oak tree needed to be protected – so the foundation was hand dug and the tree roots were pruned by hand.”

To satisfy the homeowners’ desire for a green home, Melichar Architects incorporated products and procedures to create an eco-conscious living environment. “We followed the guidelines of the Chicago Green Homes checklist, in addition to providing construc-

The kitchen, which features soft-white cabinets and a stained wood floor, is the central hub of the house.
The family room and kitchen look out onto a bluestone courtyard terrace; the rear façade is less formal than the front.

Completed in March 2010, the French Manor Home satisfies all of the owner’s goals, including a traditional plan, modern amenities and green components.

Key manufacturers and suppliers for the project included Marvin Windows and Doors of Warroad, MN; Christopher Peacock Cabinetry (kitchen and butler’s pantry cabinets); Montgomeryville, PA-based Timberlane, Inc. (custom shutters and hardware); River Falls, WI-based Designer Doors (custom overhead garage doors); Chicago-based Atelier Jovence (limestone mantel); Restoration Hardware (interior hardware and lighting); and Camden, NJ-based Von Morris (interior hardware).

Although Melichar reports that the house isn’t fully furnished and decorated yet, the family already feels right at home. They are on the same site the homeowner grew up on and within walking distance of the children’s school, shopping, the library and the train station. And the house itself fits in seamlessly with its neighbors. “We think that we accomplished that goal, as passersby don’t recognize the home as being different than the 80-year-old homes surrounding it,” says Melichar. – Will Holloway
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State of the Art

By Gordon Bock

Whether you call it a revival, reincarnation or simply rebounding recognition, furnishings of the Arts & Crafts era are back in vogue even more than when this proto-modern ethos first caught fire just over a century ago. Though the movement's architects and artisans set out to reform the Victorian products they found derivative in design and poorly made, they were also bent on creating a new, holistic aesthetic that integrated houses and their contents. To them, well-designed furniture and finishes offered relief from the faster, more technological lifestyles of the early-20th century. Lighting and wallcoverings were among their most enduring creations, and since it's not always obvious how these share the same design DNA as bungalows, mossy-green ceramics and oak chairs, here are a few clues on what makes a piece Arts & Crafts.

Light Fixtures

Lighting was perhaps where Arts & Crafts designers made their most original and longest-lasting impact. In the way of William Morris, the English Arts & Crafts visionary who found design integrity in medieval handicrafts, lighting makers took their inspiration from pre-industrial materials, techniques and forms, but recast them for a world being transformed with electricity, streetcars and suburbia.

"Part of the beauty of Arts & Crafts lights lies in their simplicity," says Tom Richards of Old California Lantern in Orange, CA. "They have a 'straight line' style that, like the furniture, has an almost masculine honesty. They're made out of metals — particularly brass and copper — that are inherently beautiful, and become even more so when they have a patina."

The incandescent lamp perfected by Edison in 1879 not only released lighting fixtures from the constraints necessary for open flames — chimneys and flues, safe distances from walls and ceilings — but it also made irrelevant any reference to the mechanics of historic lighting, such as oil and gas fonts and arms, at least in theory. Even though electricity was available during the Art Nouveau and Aesthetic Movement fads, it was the designers of the Arts & Crafts movement who really grasped electricity's potential and turned its early limitations into advantages in the following ways:

Shower lights. With the open flames of candles, oil or gas, it would be almost impossible to dangle a collection of lights from chains, but that's just what the Arts & Crafts did in a novel fixture called the shower light. Showers were commonly four or more lamps in art-glass shades, but groupings of individual metal lanterns were equally popular. Chain lengths were typically staggered to enhance the shower notion, and the individual lights could be clustered or set in-line — a versatility that gave them a reputation for being able to manage light.

Lanterns. Perhaps the movement's one concession to historical lighting is its infatuation with lanterns. Loosely medieval in form and construction, lanterns are round or rectangular fixtures made of hammered copper, brass or iron topped with conspicuous wide-brimmed caps. Open at the bottom, they had amber or green art glass to diffuse light at the sides and decorative vents and cut-outs in the metal. Furniture magnate Gustav Stickley offered many in his catalogs alongside table lamps and metalware.

Sconces and Newels. The idea of mounting a light fixture on a wall began with candles, and became a natural for gaslights. Arts & Crafts
lanterns made an easy leap to sconces too, but it was really the Prairie School designers, such as Frank Lloyd Wright and George Elmslie, who took the electric sconce to its modern limits. Their geometrical art-glass boxes and globes hugged walls with only modest vents top and bottom to evacuate heat — so much so they blended with the building itself.

Electricity also made practical the newel light, which perched on the post that ended a staircase. Though attempted in the gaslight era, and all but passe by the 1930s, newel lights were the peak of lighting clan for Arts & Crafts houses because they were such an unmistakable melding of fixture and building.

**Van Erp Lamps.** In a class by themselves are the bulbous, hand-hammered, copper and brass table-lamp bases most associated with the artisan/designer Dirk Van Erp. Originally created from war-surplus cannon shell casings, these sensual, sculpted lamps are in the ancient metalworking traditions of urns and vases, but in Erp’s hands have their own, elfin, organic identity — indeed, they are often called mushroom lamps.

**Shades.** While the glass globes and chimneys of gas and oil lighting had to protect and augment an open flame, the shades of Arts & Crafts fixtures were designed for a nearly opposite function. In the 1880s and ’90s, the marvel of electric light was so astounding, as well as limited (about the output of a bathroom night light), that electric lamps were typically left naked. This was fine outdoors and for railroad stations and theater lobbies, but in the intimate rooms of houses, early unfrsted lamps cast a harsh glare and shadows — a problem that worsened after 1900 with better filaments. On top of this, designers of Arts & Crafts décor loved the deep shadows and pools of light created by candles — not that they wanted actual candles, just the rich ambiance and warm, painterly effect they created.

Shades of art glass and mica provided both answers. Art glass was already widely used for decorative residential windows and readily adapted to light fixtures by most major Arts & Crafts designers. Mica, the other widely used shade medium, is a natural rock that when processed with shellac could be cut into thin translucent sheets. Mica was light and incombustible, and when lit from behind it gave off a warm, amber glow with an organic pattern that ideally suited Arts & Crafts interiors.

“To understand lighting fixtures built in the early 1900s,” says Ralph Ribicic of Glendale, CA-based Mica Lamp, “one must realize that the needs electrical illumination supplied then were not the same as required by today’s homes. The magic of the Arts & Crafts interior is the warm, hearth-homey glow that vibrates off the rich, wood interiors, earth tones of tiles and ceramics and the natural leather of furniture — dark interiors to our taste, pure heaven in the 1910s and ’20s.”
The Fairfield Tulip design is part of Charles Rupert Designs’ historical wallpaper collection. Photo: courtesy of Charles Rupert Designs

Materials. Brass and copper — the sovereign metals of the Arts & Crafts movement — are almost universally used to make light fixtures. Iron, the other metal on their par, was heavier but better for outdoor use, frames and supports, and inevitably blackened and hammered to suggest it came straight from the smithy’s forge. Electricity also made wood safe for the construction of light fixtures, and early on it was popular for one-off and custom-made fixtures, whether produced by advanced craftsmen and architects or by do-it-yourself homeowners.

According to Bo Sullivan of Portland, OR-based Rejuvenation, “Arts & Crafts lighting sought to convey a sense of being natural and unrefined. It did not use sophisticated historical styles or get fussy with details. However, it did emphasize the beauty of its materials and celebrate “honest” construction methods — the rivets, hammering, bending and patinas of hand crafting.”

Wallpaper
When it came to wallpaper, the Arts & Crafts movement put yet another spin on a material that had already been morphing for a century in North America. Machine printing developed after 1840 enabled wallpaper to reach much wider audiences in rural areas, as well as cities, than was formerly possible. Earlier wallpapers had been either hand-block prints imported from France and England, or hand-painted silks from China.

“Most often, these were simple repeating patterns or borders simulating the fabric hangings that had previously been used on walls,” says Stuart Stark of Charles Rupert Designs in Victoria, BC, Canada. In contrast, the new accessibility of machine-printed wallpaper fed a taste for revival-style patterns, such as Gothic Revival (which might imitate carved stone or wood grain) or Rococo (bold combinations of flowers and scrolls). By 1870, in most houses wallpaper had become the central decorating element, covering whole walls and ceilings in all-over patterns in almost every room.

During the same period, the Aesthetic Movement popularized a decorating scheme that divided the wall into three horizontal zones called dado, fill and frieze. Tastemakers also began to question the illusionistic and hyper-natural trompe l’oeil effects that had come into vogue during the Industrial Revolution. They wanted to move away from patterns that looked like everything from three-dimensional

The Ins and Outs of Art Glass
Rediscovered for decorative church windows in the latter 19th century, the varieties of translucent and semi-opaque colored glass collectively called art glass became the ideal medium for Arts & Crafts light shades from the very beginning. John LaFarge, Louis Comfort Tiffany and other masters of the “stained-glass” window pioneered the use of distorted glass pieces that were once discarded as waste, such as drapery glass (riddled with varying thicknesses) or opalescent glass (with variegated colors). All types subsequently appeared in Arts & Crafts shades — even as complete pictorial shades when set window-like in lead camees. Frank Lloyd Wright in particular adapted his geometric art-glass window designs to light fixtures by using zinc frames, which were slimmer yet stronger.
By 1870, in most houses wallpaper had become the central decorating element, covering whole walls and ceilings in all-over patterns in almost every room.

flowers, folds in tapestries, carved stonework and landscape views to more two-dimensional designs suitable for a flat wall. It was William Morris who took the medium to new heights with sophisticated patterns of foliage, flowers and birds.

"In terms of design, William Morris brought us back to nature, and we rested with Arts & Crafts before Art Deco's modern energy flung us back into strong stylization," says Burt Kallander of Bradbury & Bradbury Art Wallpapers in Benicia, CA. Morris' use of wood blocks and hand-printing made his papers not only a luxury for most American homes, but also highly influential in the decorating world and continuously in production to this day.

By 1900, the fashion for all-over wallpaper was ebbing, but new patterns and papering trends were still mixed in with other, often older, ideas. While the dado may now be a wainscot of wood panels or a simulacrum, such as burlap in a skeleton frame, or eliminated altogether, in its absence the frieze took on new significance.

"With the changes in architecture as well as decorating taste after 1900, we still see wall-fills, friezes and ceiling papers, for example, but there's more wall space taken up with woodwork, and the ceilings are less elaborate," says Kallander. "The friezes are more often grand landscapes, giving us a sense of place in a natural world."

According to Wayne Mason of Mason and Wolf Wallpaper in Freehold, NJ, wallpaper also made fewer attempts to look like fabric. "In contrast to papers with a silky finish created by applying t alc, Arts & Crafts wallpaper often was completely flat with no sheen at all," he says. "Makers might also print on cardboard-y 'oatmeal' papers that had quite a bit of texture. Such a look went hand-in-hand with the grass cloths and burlaps also used in rooms."

The coordination between building and paper dimensions was changing too, with the scale of matching borders often dictating that certain papers should be used in the largest reception rooms in a home. "Wallpaper borders in the 1890s were usually around 8 in. wide," says Stark "By 1910, wallpaper borders had greatly increased, often reaching 18 or 20 in. widths. Proportionally, these massive borders and matching sidewall patterns were reserved for parlors, libraries, halls or possibly large bedrooms -- so much so that owners of older homes often had to make room for wider borders by lowering their picture moldings."
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Manufacturer of furniture, cabinet, window, shutter & door hardware; brass, cast iron, bronze, wrought iron & steel; new reproduction & antique/reconditioned hardware; fireplace accessories; restoration services.

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www.crown-point.com
Claremont, NH 03743
Custom fabricator of handcrafted, period-style cabinetry for kitchens, baths & other rooms: Arts & Crafts, Shaker, Victorian, Early American & contemporary styles; available nationwide.

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www.cshardware.com
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800-792-2093; Fax: 773-847-6357
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Chicago, IL 60607
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Custom fabricator of door, barn, garage, gate, furniture, cabinet, shutter & window hardware: hand-forged steel, copper & bronze or cast bronze; repair, restoration & reproduction work; fireplace equipment; catalog $5.

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800-558-0119; Fax: 479-444-0406
www.whiteriver.com
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These custom-built bookcases were created by White River.

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www.bearcreeklumber.com
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Carlson’s Barnwood Co.
309-522-5550; Fax: 309-522-5123
www.carlsonbarnwood.com
Cambridge, IL 61238
Supplier of recycled barn-wood planks, re-milled antique flooring, dimensional lumber & timbers in various shades & types: cupolas, porch poles, siding, milled & barn lumber, flooring & paneling in pine & oak.

Carlson’s Barnwood supplied this antique Americana mixed-species inlay and the antique oak flooring that surrounds it.

Chestnut Specialists, Inc.
860-283-4209; Fax: Same as phone
www.chestnutspec.com
Plymouth, CT 06782
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Chestnut Specialists, Inc. Reclaimed flooring from Chestnut Specialists creates an historic environment in this room.

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Custom fabricator of wood carvings; hand-carved decorative moldings, capitals, brackets, furnishings, onlays & mantels; large-scale capacity for residential & religious buildings throughout the U.S. & Europe.

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www.sylvanbrandt.com
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Enkeboll Designs
800-745-5507; Fax: 310-332-2042
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www.architecturalaccents.com
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National supplier of architectural antiques: mantels, doors, hardware, tile, columns, furnishings, mirrors, statuary, fountains, iron railings, gates, chandeliers, sconces & exterior lighting; antique heart pine flooring.

Architectural Products by Outwater, LLC
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www.outwater.com
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Goodwin Associates
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www.goodwinassociates.com
Tampa, FL 33602
Supplier of interior & exterior architectural building products: columns, capitals, balustrade systems, moldings, domes, medallions, metal ceilings & more; polyurethane, wood & fiberglass; stock & custom.

This custom carved mahogany capital from Goodwin Associates tops a marble column.

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This wooden plaster capital was hand carved by the artisans at Agrell.

The replication Greek Erechtheum columns at Chadsworth Cottage, near Wilmington, NC, were manufactured by Chadsworth Columns.

This plaster capital from Felber Ornamental Plastering Corp. measures 6½ in. tall x 6½ in. wide and projects ½ in.
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434-263-4827; No fax  
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Manufacturer of traditional decorative interior & exterior carvings; furniture, mantels, moldings, brackets, friezes, capitals, rosettes & heraldry; original designs & historically accurate reproductions.

This capital was carved in basswood by Frederick Wilbur - Woodcarver.

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www.bearcreeklumber.com
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Supplier of wood flooring, paneling, roofing, fencing, new & recycled timbers & decking; hand-split, machine-cut & fancy-cut butt fire- & rot-retardant-treated shakes & shingles; quarter-sawn clapboard & siding; post & beam.

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www.heartpine.com
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Manufacturer of antique river-recovered heart pine & heart cypress reclaimed from Southern rivers: for flooring, stair parts, furniture & moldings; building-reclaimed wood; custom orders; 15 grades.

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800-924-5684; Fax: 860-927-3911
www.hhardwoods.com
Kent, CT 06757
Supplier of wide-plank flooring: oak, ash, cherry, maple, walnut, southern yellow pine & eastern white pine.

Longleaf Lumber, Inc.
617-871-6611; Fax: 617-871-6615
www.longleaflumber.com
Cambridge, MA 02138
Supplier of antique lumber & flooring: wide-board & random-width flooring; stair parts; custom milling; longleaf heart pine, chestnut, antique eastern white pine & other woods; wide-plank & random-width boards; cork flooring.

Hochstetler Milling, Ltd.
419-368-0800; Fax: 419-368-6080
www.hochstetlermilling.net
Loudonville, OH 44842
Supplier of new barn timbers: oak up to 40 ft. long; planed & rough sawn; 2x6 & 1x6 tongue-&-groove knotty pine.

Lumber Liquidators, Inc.
800-HARDWOOD; Fax: 757-566-0621
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Toano, VA 23168
Manufacturer of hardwood flooring: exotic & domestic wood; Bellawood comes with a 50-year warranty; cork flooring; grilles; maple & cherry butcher blocks; 75 locations nationwide.

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877-777-4200; Fax: 631-996-5022
www.hwplf.com
Riverhead, NY 11901
Supplier of wide-plank flooring: old-growth eastern white pine, heart pine, red pine, birch, cherry, walnut, hickory, white oak & maple; custom wood paneling; mills reclaimed lumber from old structures.

This antique reclaimed wood flooring was supplied by Goodwin Heart Pine.

Old-growth maple from Heritage Wide Plank Flooring creates a durable surface with consistent coloring.

This wood flooring was supplied by Housatonic Hardwoods.

This antique heart-pine floor from Longleaf Lumber is in a select flat-sawn grade.

Lumber Liquidators supplied this Bellawood prefinished hardwood flooring, which is available in a variety of wood species and grades.
Non-Wood Flooring

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www.restorationtile.com
Mabelvale, AR 72103
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Carreaux du Nord
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www.carreauxdunord.com
Two Rivers, WI 54241
Manufacturer of handmade art tile for fireplaces, kitchen & bathroom walls & backsplashes & floor accent: many designs, including Arts & Crafts; since 1995.

Subway Ceramics
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www.tile-source.com
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This historically accurate floor was created using 1-in. hexagon unglazed porcelain tile and ½-in. square border tile from American Restoration Tile.

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This terra-cotta flooring was supplied by Antigua Del Mar Tile & Ceramics.

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Crown molding is available from Decorators Supply in many traditional styles.

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Goodwin Associates supplied the polyurethane door surround and crown molding for this room.
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Calendar of Events

NATIONAL PRESERVATION INSTITUTE: HISTORIC PRESERVATION SEMINARS, Now - May 2012. The National Preservation Institute will conduct a series of training seminars for professionals in management, development and historic, cultural and environmental preservation in many cities across the country. Seminars, case studies and small group exercises will highlight state-of-the-art practices in historic preservation. For more information, visit www.npi.org or email info@npi.org.

THE DESIGNER CRAFTSMEN & HISTORIC HOME SHOW, March 9-11, 2012. The Designer Craftsmen & Historic Home Show will be held at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks, PA. This joint event will give attendees a chance learn techniques in historic architectural preservation, restoration and renovation as well as view examples of museum-quality and original artwork and furniture reproductions. For more information, visit www.oldhouseonline.com.

ICAA GUIDED TOUR: THE ARCHITECTURAL TREASURES OF CUBA, April 15-22, 2012. Through the People to People travel program, Cuba Cultural Travel and Classical Excursions have organized a guided tour for ICAA members. The itinerary includes tours of Havana (a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1982), the Capitolio Nacional, Gran Teatro and more. For more information, visit www.classictist.org.

NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION NATIONAL MAIN STREETS CONFERENCE, April 1-4, 2012. Baltimore, MD, will host the 2012 National Main Street Conference. The theme is “Rediscover Main Street.” For more information, go to www.preservationnation.org.

SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS ANNUAL MEETING & EXHIBITION, April 18-22, 2012. The Society of Architectural Historians will host its annual meeting at the Cobo Conference/Exhibition Center in Detroit, MI. The event will feature speaker sessions of new scholarly and critical research, as well as local and regional study tours of the host city. For more information, visit www.sah.org.

CNU 20 CONFERENCE, May 9-12, 2012. The Congress for the New Urbanism will host its 20th annual conference in West Palm Beach, FL. Inspired by the challenges of peak oil, climate change, wealth disparity and the global economic crisis, the conference theme, “New World,” will confront challenges, share interdisciplinary strategies and define problem-solving solutions using New Urbanist principles. For more information, visit www.cnu20.org.


INTERNATIONAL PRESERVATION TRADES WORKSHOP & APT CONFERENCE, September 30-October 3, 2012. The PTN and the APT will host their 2012 annual conferences together at Francis Marion Hotel in Charleston, SC. The event will define a new approach between the preservation trades and technologies. For more information, visit www.iptw.org or www.apti.org.
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Traditional Product Reports
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J.R. Burrows & Co. specializes in hand-printed wallpa-
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The Arts and Crafts-style Apple Blossom frieze in olive
is machine-printed by Bradbury & Bradbury with a
12-in. pattern repeat.

William Morris wallpaper and fabric designs, including
Pink & Rose, are available from Charles Rupert Designs.

This wood-grained pattern in Venetian plaster is
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Foreman Dado is a lush floral composition from Mason
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The blue heron design is part of Old California Lantern’s Birds of Baldwin Avenue collection of solid copper fixtures.

This traditionally styled chandelier was fabricated by the artisans at Period Lighting Fixtures.

The Rockwell fixture from Rejuvenation can be used in residential and commercial applications.
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When contacting companies you've seen in the issue, please tell them you saw their listing in Period Homes.

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Photograph: Spanish alabaster urn lantern with bronze frame for The Homestead Hot Springs, Virginia

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Classical architectural elements from Decorators Supply, such as this mantel, were used to enhance this room.

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This metal-and-wood spiral staircase was fabricated by Goddard Spiral Stairs.

This bronze staircase was custom fabricated by Historical Arts & Casting for a residence in Sacramento, CA.

This railing from Fine Architectural Metalsmiths features French Country-style scrollwork with bronze leaf finials and center rosettes.

This stair was manufactured by Goodwin Heart Pine in river-recovered select heart pine.

This bronze staircase was custom fabricated by Historical Arts & Casting for a residence in Sacramento, CA.

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This Roman-style bathtub is one of the many fixtures available from Bathroom Machineries.

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This repousse copper range hood by Fine Architectural Metalsmiths features a William Morris-inspired oak pattern.

This kitchen island was manufactured by White River.

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This floral appliqué was created by Decorators Supply.

This floral onlay from Enkeboll Designs is available in cherry, maple and oak.

This egg-and-dart panel moldings were hand carved by the artisans at Goodwin Associates to enhance a mahogany wall.

This cypress ceiling was created using reclaimed timber from Goodwin Heart Pine.

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Living Wright

_Saving Wright: The Freeman House and the Preservation of Meaning, Materials, and Modernity_

by Jeffrey M. Chusid

W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY; 2011
256 pages; hardcover; 200 black and white photographs; $55
ISBN 978-0-393-73302-0

Reviewed by Eve M. Kahn

Practically everything Frank Lloyd Wright touched has become a modern-day money pit. Fallingwater and the Guggenheim have never stopped needing shore-ups. The Robie House in Chicago and the Westcott House in Springfield, OH, have undergone expensive recent rehabs. Bright-eyed new nonprofits have formed to turn other problematic Wright buildings into museums; in Illinois alone, the Bradley House in Kankakee and the Laurent House in Rockford were just saved from potential developers and are going on public view.

Somehow Wright's clients, even the ones who had to sue him over construction problems and money disputes, still found him irresistible. "He was a very great man, a man who had much to give to the world, and I felt we were very fortunate to get his services," Sam Freeman, a Los Angeles jewelry salesman and real estate broker, told a radio interviewer in 1969, after four decades of living in a Wright house he had commissioned.

The subsequent occupants of Wright houses likewise manage to forgive him, even as the place has fallen down around them. Jeffrey M. Chusid, now an associate professor of historic preservation at Cornell, has never stopped studying and admiring his 1980s faculty quarters: an apartment in the Freemans' house. His new Norton book explains how the building was designed in draft after draft and nestled on a steep Hollywood hillside, and then how it was used and altered and why it aged so poorly.

Freeman and his wife, Harriet -- a dancer and arts patron -- both died in the house, in their 90s. They had continually helped to pay their bills by renting out parts of the building. That is, people paid rent for decades for the privilege of suffering that sound uninhabitable.

Here are excerpts from Chusid's litany of problems: "cracks in floors, walls, and ceilings ... plants growing all over the exterior ... damage from both dry-wood and subterranean termites. Cockroaches, potato bugs, spiders, and mice rounded out the nonhuman residents of the house. ... Venetians were peeling off furniture, electrical outlets were sparking or dead, walls bore black stains, efflorescence, or damp patches. Windows sagged ... The garage had lost its doors ... the most vulnerable fascias were held together with cloth tape. ... it took seventeen buckets to staunch leaks during a rainstorm."

Wright himself laid the groundwork for much of the eventual decay. He experimented with complicated roof planes and two-story, scarcely reinforced windows, set in "textile blocks" cast from concrete in aluminum molds. Their sand and cement mix had never fully cured on the construction site, it was ill suited anyway to Los Angeles' temperature extremes and acid fog and suffers from "porosity, softness, and friability," he adds. As if all that was not hazardous enough, the block wythes are perfect spaces for termites to build mud tubes.

When the design process began in 1924, the architect had told the Freemans that the prefab house parts would snap together in three months, on a $10,000 budget. Instead, construction dragged on for more than a year, and the cost reached $35,000. Chusid hilariously quotes dunning letters from materials suppliers and subcontractors, with phrases over and over like "kindly favor us with a settlement" and "May we please be favored with your remittance."

Frank Lloyd Wright had put his son Lloyd in charge of the project; the father meanwhile gallivanted with his second wife, Miriam Noel, who allegedly abused drugs and suffered from mental illness. Lloyd Wright wrote and telegrammed, pleading with his father for decisions and money. Frank Lloyd Wright replied with defensive and pretentious pronouncements, blaming the delays and cost overruns on incompetent site surveyors and America's "shoddy and sham that passes for civilization."

The Freemans were broke by the time they moved in. They too blamed the delays and expenses on Lloyd. They romanticized the architecture; Harriet would always show off her living room with sweeping views and declare, "This is the most beautiful room in the country!" A 1953 newspaper article quotes Sam finding the bright side of not having enough money to put in furniture for years: "Most empty rooms are cold cubicles, but our sparsely furnished living room came alive for us with space forms."

But the Freemans were not so besotted with the "very great man" that they ever hired him again. The couple had an open marriage of sorts. There was no master bedroom, just his and hers suites. Harriet had a long affair with the architect Rudolph Schindler, and he added to the house and made alterations 40 times before his death in 1953. After that, the Freemans brought in other bold-faced Los Angeles architecture names including John Lautner and Gregory Ain. The couple also rented rooms to celebrities, among them the bandleader Xavier Cugat and the actor Claude Raines.

In 1986, Harriet bequeathed the house to the University of Southern California, which has used it for housing and hands-on historic preservation study. Repairs were made in phases for the last few years. A giant blue bag was wrapped around the house, so that it could be fumigated deep into the textile blocks. Then the 1994 Northridge earthquake nearly leveled it. When the quake struck, a student living there fled to the sound of "thousands of textile blocks groaning as they moved," Chusid writes.

Drastic overhauls have been required, amid preservationists' arguments over how much historic fabric should be removed for changes and upgrades. Lloyd's son Eric Wright was called in for consultations, as the crews tried to save as many textile blocks as possible. These days, koi swim again in the entryway pond, and 38 humidity monitors around the house transmit a stream of data to USC. But the walls are still missing blocks, and the daring two-story windows still need work; Chusid diplomatically describes the fenestration as "a technical problem that is likely to challenge the preservation of Wright's aesthetic vision for the building."

Chusid supplies a sub-chapter titled "Experiencing the House" that reveals why the house matters enough to save. Only someone who lived in the deeply flawed house for a decade would be able to produce this rhapsodic description of a walkthrough: "Like a branch floating in a stream, we are propelled farther through the narrow channels and then released to enjoy a pool of stillness."
Building Smaller and Smarter

By Stephen A. Mouzon, AIA CNU LEED

There are likely countless details to building smaller and smarter, but only a few game-changing principles that reduce size across the board. These key principles unlock size reductions that wouldn’t happen otherwise. This is more important than ever today because nobody is saying “money is no object” anymore. Every client has real choices to make, and at the core, they all come down to this: Do you want it bigger, or bigger? Make it bigger and the quality goes down. Make it better and it must be smaller.

Expandability. The biggest impediment to building smaller and smarter is the lack of a clear expansion path. People fell in love with the Katrina Cottages, but the first generation of designs didn’t expand very well because exterior walls were so quickly eaten up with closets, baths, and cabinets. The very first design move in a smaller and smarter design should be to locate the Grow Zones so that homeowners see clearly how they could expand if their needs change.

Double Duty. McMansions might have three or four places to eat. NASA calls that redundancy. If you’re on the way to the moon and one system fails, your life depends on having a backup. But a house doesn’t go to the moon. Early American homes did the opposite, with single elements doing many jobs. The “keeping room,” for example, was where all the housekeeping was done. Anything that didn’t happen in the bedroom or the outhouse happened in the keeping room.

Light on More Sides. Smaller rooms can be more delightful than larger rooms if there are windows on more than one side. Bedrooms can be extraordinarily small, for example, with windows on three sides.

Outdoor Rooms. Excellent outdoor rooms can be built and furnished for a fraction of the cost of interior space, and when you entice people outdoors, they get acclimated to the local environment and don’t need as much conditioning when they return indoors, slashing their utility bill. They also need less indoor living space if they have outdoor rooms they can use for several months of the year.

Light Wings. Don’t just build a smaller footprint, but build an especially thin footprint so the house is only one room deep wherever possible except in the northernmost states, where the plan should be more compact to conserve heat. The thinner plan will be longer, and can better help to enclose the outdoor rooms.

Walk to the Grocery. If you live close to the grocery, you’re probably living close to other necessities of life as well. And if the street in between is walkable enough, then you’ll likely enjoy the fresher produce so much that you soon find yourself buying groceries by the meal, rather than by the week. That will lead to walking to buy other necessities in smaller quantities as well, so you’ll need less storage space throughout your house.

Bed and Breakfast Benefits. Do everything you can to see that a bed and breakfast opens near you. If so, you’ll save tens of thousands by not building the guest suite, which will save enough on your mortgage to pay your guests’ bill at the inn if you want to.

Silver Bullets. If we hope to build radically smaller and smarter, where a client would choose to live in half the space because they like it better than the bigger, less intelligent house, then we need a few silver bullets that save far more than half the footage. For example, consider which seats fill up first at restaurants. It’s the booths, right? A comfortable booth for six people can easily be designed in 36 sq.ft. or less. Seat those same six people in a dining room with adequate space to serve around them, and it takes about 180 sq.ft. Why not give people what they’d really prefer in a fifth of the space? And in the spirit of doing double duty, the booth can double both as a light-duty home office and as a homework station with just the addition of appropriate receptacles.

Children’s Realm. The bed alcove is a special type of silver bullet because it has an extra benefit: it allows the sleeping enclosure to be curtained off at night. This means you can cut the thermostat down ridiculously low on winter nights, and your body heat will likely keep your alcove warm. The master bed alcove might open into a larger bedroom, but it’s possible to put all the children’s bed alcoves around a single “children’s realm,” which saves a lot of footage versus individual bedrooms and baths. Because privacy is achieved with each alcove’s curtains (wardrobes are built into each alcove) the children’s realm doesn’t need a door, and the computer can be located at a table where parents can see where their kids are surfing.

Compartmentalized Baths. Build baths with compartments for the toilet and shower, so that more than one person can use them at a time. A single properly-designed compartmentalized bath can serve the entire children’s realm, whereas you’d likely need another bath if one kid can lock the door and keep the others out. Compartmentalization works great for the parents’ bath as well, because there are some things that shouldn’t be shared.

Furniture vs. Closets. Ever notice how early American homes often had much cleaner floor plans than today’s homes? If you study them carefully, you’ll notice it’s because they weren’t burdened with today’s assortment of clothing and utility closets. Instead, clothes were stored in furniture such as armoires, dressers, and chests of drawers. This allowed the rooms to be much cleaner, and the inside and outside walls to each be better composed. This also allowed rooms to be repurposed over the years as household needs changed. What once was a bedroom could become a study, for example, simply by changing out the furniture.

Armoire Advantages. There are other advantages to furnishing instead of closeting: By the time you frame the wall for a wall closet, install the sheetrock, the door frame, the door, the hardware, and the door casing and baseboard, and then paint it all (except the hardware, of course) you’ve spent enough money to build an armoire that stores every bit as much as the plain sheetrock closet, and looks much better. And the walls of the armoire can be as thin as 1/4 in. instead of the 4 1/2-in. sheetrock walls (assuming 5/8-in. sheetrock.) So you’re saving 4 in. of floor space at every wall. Add that up across a house and it’s a notable difference. But those aren’t all the advantages. There is no need for the armoires to be taller than eight feet, while the ceiling might be nine feet, ten feet, or higher. So your perception is that the room is larger when it’s furnished with armoires rather than gunned up with closets that run all the way to the ceiling. Need the equivalent of a walk-in closet? No problem... just design two facing armoires.

Don’t Waste an Inch. The attitude of recovering every cubic inch possible leads to a plethora of patterns, including Booth Seat Shelves, Kitchen Corners, the One-Item Deep Pantry, Box Spring Drawers, Under-Bed Baskets, the Book Bench, the Reach In Closet (where you still have closets), and several things you can do under the stairs.

Open Walls. The most radical result of the “don’t waste an inch” attitude is to open the interior walls where possible. Use wood boards instead of sheetrock on one side, then leave the finish off the other side and build shelves between the studs so that every interior wall becomes a shelving unit. Boarded walls are much more interesting than sheetrock, and allow the attachment of shelves, pegs, hooks and even fixtures and appliances at any point, stud or not. Eric Moser began this train of thought in 2001 with the Idea House at Habersham. I did my first open-wall design with Katrina Cottage VIII. We now do this on all our new designs; it’s incredibly charming and radically space-saving because you can store so much stuff in the walls.
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