

NJ Home

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MONTCLAIR RENO WORTH THE WAIT
CHATHAM FAMILY ROOM GOES COASTAL
TOWNHOUSE GETS ARTIST'S TOUCH

ALL ABOUT
HUE IN
RIDGEWOOD



A modern living room featuring a black leather sofa with colorful patterned pillows. Large floor-to-ceiling windows with dark frames offer a view of greenery. A fireplace with a white marble surround is visible on the left. A gold-colored coffee table and a side table with a plant are also present. A black pendant light hangs from the ceiling.

DESIGNER, PLEASE THYSELF

A historic Ridgewood home was full of possibilities but also challenges, and the client was a tough one to satisfy:

DESIGN *by* **KRISTINA PHILLIPS INTERIOR DESIGN**

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* **JANE BEILES**

TEXT *by* **DONNA ROLANDO**

The family room uses dramatic, European-style, floor-to-ceiling windows to maximize lighting, setting the stage for a flashback to the designer's childhood in the Bahamas with watery blue and turquoise hues and a Slim Aarons island image atop the quartzite fireplace.



THE BUNGALOW-STYLE COLONIAL, BUILT IN THE EARLY 1900s, was in Ridgewood’s historic district within walking distance of downtown. It had once served as a home for traveling Unitarian clergy and it featured a double lot, perfect for a family with gardening ambitions. It was a rare gem, but the previous owner hadn’t polished it much.

Here was a challenge, but designer Kristina Phillips said, “Bring it on.” And not just as an assignment, but as her home and that of her husband Andy and, initially, their three children. That meant that her work would have to pass muster with the toughest possible critic: herself.

The home “was in pretty bad shape,” Phillips recalls, with “almost unusable floors,” but it was also “full of character.” Her task was to remake it without destroying its

charming “cottage” feel—and then to live in it.

Though some areas would have to be gutted, the home had solid bones and offered four floors for plenty of living space. One objective was to reduce the number of “rabbit holes,” her term for the little rooms scattered throughout to no evident purpose, and incorporate logic in the layout. For instance, she had the family room and kitchen trade places, putting the pantry within reach of the cook.

Phillips and her husband went out of their way, where they could, to preserve the original floors, made of North Carolina center-cut pine, using pieces from some rooms to fill gaps in others. And she drew from her own background for different aspects of the renovation: The family room reflects the colors of her childhood home in the Bahamas, and the dining



This page: Mirrored glass and cabinets in Benjamin Moore's Hale Navy work together to wow guests at this kitchen-area bar. Opposite page: The designer was quite serious about the slab she selected to top the kitchen island. The veined quartzite was so thick and heavy the wood had to be reinforced with steel beams.



Don't let size fool you. The dining room with its custom table has seen some lively dinner parties, and the "whimsical" wallpaper is quite a conversation piece.





room's clean lines invoke the style of her Swedish ancestry.

Without fear of wallpaper or bursts of color, she went about creating a space that's traditional with a modern twist and in some ways global. One of its design highlights is the kitchen island with a 3½-inch slab of quartzite so heavy it was delivered by crane and carried by 12 "very strong men," as the designer says. "We call it the blue cheese top because it has all this movement and interest to it."

The chocolate-brown, bent-wood stools had to pass the comfort test. They proved to be a stylish contrast with the white, Shaker-style island base. Contrasts also spread their magic to the slate gray perimeter countertops, which play against the white custom cabinetry with dazzle from the herringbone Carrara marble backsplash. Completing the look are the Simon Pearce pendant lights on the coffered ceiling and stainless-steel Wolf and

Sub-Zero appliances—including a double oven for Andy, who besides having a green thumb loves to cook.

The vintage oushak rug with its pop of navy links to the Benjamin Moore Hale Navy cabinets with Asian-inspired brass hardware in the adjacent bar area, featuring a solid antique mirror, a 2-inch-thick white countertop, a wine fridge and refrigerated drawers. Its convenient location puts cool drinks always within reach of the backyard.

Within sight of the kitchen, one can unwind in a Bahamas-hued family room with floor-to-ceiling European windows and a fireplace in the same quartzite that wowed the island. "A little drama in the room" comes from the lighting in the tray ceiling surround, which can take on multi colors for a party effect. The black matte French chandelier is an "iconic" mid-century piece, Phillips explains.



“It’s a little bit of a ’70s vibe in this room with the low-slung leather sofa, the zebra-hide chair and fiddle-leaf fig tree,” she says.

The Slim Aarons’ Bahamas-themed photo above the fireplace “started the inspiration for this room with the turquoise and watery blues, the natural sisal texture of the area rug and, of course, all the light that comes in,” adds the designer/owner.

The library, alias the music room, is “all about color,” Phillips says. Shades of blue and pops of orange abound, not only in the draperies and Schumacher frette-pattern club chairs but also the silk lampshades on acrylic tables flanking the “fun ikat pattern” sofa.

The black-glass-and-brass cocktail table (Mitchell Gold & Bob Williams) is a “little glamour in the room” over a sustainably sourced zebra hide and white wool rug. Brass bamboo frame

vintage prints stand out against the grass-cloth walls. And what would a library be without built-in shelves?

Once the galley kitchen in the clergy home, the dining room is a mix of modern and classic elements, as the chairs reflect with their abstract paint-splatter backs, full-grain leather and fluted legs. Phillips chose the Zoffany wallpaper for its scenic mural of an India landscape, a “whimsical” companion for the picture molding below and on the ceiling.

“We don’t sit in the dining room often, but when we do it’s a conversation piece,” she says. Exposed brick adds texture, while Gustavian-style crystal lighting delivers glam. It’s true the room is narrow and needed a custom table to fit eight, but it serves its purpose in a cozy way: “We’ve had a lot of fun dinner parties here.”

The mudroom with its artichoke light fixture “is a nod to mid-



This page: The designer's college-aged daughter has not outgrown the glamour in her bathroom styled with Matthew Williamson wallpaper and a mirrored wall above the white vanity. Opposite page: Bursting with color, especially blues and orange against neutral glass-cloth walls, the library is where the family likes to listen to records. The Sputnik chandelier adds a mid-century modern flair, and the black glass-and-brass table a touch of glam.



This page: Who says work can't be fun? Phillips' upper-floor office sets the stage for creativity with cloud-inspired wallpaper. Opposite page: The designer's favorite part of her primary bedroom is the custom upholstered headboard in ikat fabric—just the right fit between two windows with Asian-influenced treatments.





century modern,” she says, while the Pierre Frey “Arty” wallpaper delivers the bright delight of a painter’s palate.

“I knew I wanted a statement light fixture,” says Phillips. “I thought it would be fun to walk in the house and see something really interesting.” An original stained-glass window wows the wall above her grandmother’s settee, a piece she inherited and painted blue. Each child had a cubby growing up—because who couldn’t use a hand with organization? A mirror over a long table allows for last-minute touchups.

Phillips’ third-floor office, where all her designs are born, is a place she wanted to be fun, with clouds to “feel skylike and dreamy.” The Cole & Son wallpaper teamed up with Oval Room Blue by Farrow & Ball set the celestial stage, along with a crisp geometric rug and brass-and-glass chandelier (Circa,

like most of the lighting) over her parsons-style lacquered desk. The room’s down-to-earth feature? The floor-to-ceiling built-ins for her design essentials.

Although Phillips once rented design space in town, now her home office gets the job done, and there’s always the plan to relocate to a backyard barn in the future.

Years ago, when the couple took on this renovation project, they craved a challenge. Room by room, the challenge has been met and their lives enriched. Now as they approach the empty-nest stage with only one child left at home, they have no regrets, and in fact their vision is full of projects yet to come.

“This house has a lot of history, and great vibes,” says Phillips. “We’re really happy here.” But happy doesn’t mean done; she concedes that her reno fever won’t be ending any time soon. What’s next? An inground spa tops the list.