AMERICAN CLASSIC

A NEW ENGLAND HOUSE EMBRACES TRADITION BUT RELAXES THE RULES.
FOR SUZANNE KASLER, DESIGNING INTERIORS IS LIKE COMPOSING MUSIC. SHE CREATES A PLEASING HARMONY BY LAYERING AND JUXTAPOSING COLORS, PATTERNS AND TEXTURES WHILE ALSO INTERWEAVING EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN TRADITIONS with twenty-first-century sensibilities. The majestic Greenwich, Connecticut, house she decorated for a couple and their four children strikes a captivating chord in its own distinctive variation on that theme.

“The owners wanted a beautiful home with a youthful freshness,” says Atlanta-based Kasler. “The interior also has a timeless quality that will serve their evolving lifestyle as the children grow up.”

Harrison Design Associates created the New England Colonial-influenced structure, enhancing its formality with a Doric portico and a regal domed entry. Generous use of indigenous fieldstone on the front facade gives the clapboard house the venerable air of having been built many decades ago, yet the interior’s openness feels refreshingly modern.

“To meet the family’s needs, we updated classical American architecture with contemporary features,” says Bill Harrison, a fellow Atlantan. “We used a flowing floor plan and lots of windows to maximize natural light. We also designed ten- and eleven-foot ceilings, which are higher than you

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would normally find in a New England Colonial."

Both inside and out, the house displays a congenial blend of understated elegance and ease. "The overall look is stylish and sophisticated yet warm and inviting, like the owners themselves," says Kasler. "I want people to feel good and relaxed in their home, which should be a reflection of who they are."

While custom furnishings and English, French and American antiques draw the eye, Kasler's virtuosic use of color dazzles. Rich splashes of tangerine and blue-green dovetail with her trademark layering of pale neutrals. In the master bedroom, blue-green tones—in the cove ceiling, fabrics and porcelain lamps—provide an inviting romantic softness. Mirrored bedside chests add an understated glamour.

A sprinkling of patterns repeats in the hand-painted wallpaper in the dining room as well as in a floral-print wing chair in the family room. Kasler's signature sartorial details—such as nailhead, bead and ribbon trims, plus pearl buttons on a silk taffeta chair—enhance visual interest. "It's all about details."

She revels in playing with the scale of larger objects—like the tall wingchairs and smaller chairs that keep company around the breakfast room table.

The secret to such fresh touches, Kasler says, is editing. "It's about knowing which things to add or take away from a room so it looks and feels collected—not decorated—as though it has evolved over time."

Kasler believes in the use of a single element to give a room impact. "A beautiful architectural feature or one great object, such as this house's hand-painted wallpaper in various spaces, its limed-oak paneling in the library or its antique Oushak rugs, can make a bold statement and tie everything together—like memorable notes in a classically inspired composition."
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