

LIVING IN LEGACY

A LEAP OF FAITH, A LIFETIME OF TREASURED PIECES,
AND ONE GREEN VELVET SOFA. IN THIS 1930S CONNECTICUT HOME,
EVERY PIECE HAS A PAST.

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The client's dining chairs were refreshed with custom upholstered pads tied with tassels, surrounding a vintage table rich with history. A dish wall offers another chance to display keepsakes that can be swapped seasonally. "It gives authority to play and be creative," designer Elana Tenenbaum Cline says.



IT TAKES FAITH—OR simply a trusted real estate agent—to buy a house sight unseen (minus a video tour) in the midst of a pandemic, in a state you’ve never lived in.

But that’s exactly what the owners of this Ridgefield, Connecticut home did. “They knew it had good bones,” says architect and interior designer Elana Tenenbaum Cline of Carta Creatives.

The pair had long owned a farmhouse in West Virginia and a primary home in Colorado but were drawn east to be closer to their only child, a daughter living in Brooklyn. “They wanted to be somewhere really rooted in the countryside, but where you could hop on the train and get to the city,” Elana says. “Ridgefield was a perfect fit.”

Now retired, the couple brought decades’ worth of treasured pieces to

Connecticut, including artwork they bought for each other every anniversary. The 1934 house came with its own architectural heritage, and the homeowners arrived with an archive too—“a jigsaw puzzle of 40, 50 years of artwork,” Elana says.

The house itself was traditional to its core, with a cramped kitchen, a formal library, and even a ballroom. “It was very beautiful but dated,” Elana says. The layout was equally antiquated, so Elana came on board not only to tackle the architecture and renovation, but also the interiors. The clients wanted someone to help with the holistic vision, inside and out.

The wife, who had a deep love for antiques, quickly became an essential collaborator. “She was very hands-on in the sense of, ‘Oh, we need a built-in? I’ll find someone,’” Elana says. Once she did, those tradespeople became part of the home’s story. “Every vendor that

The kitchen, anchored by an island designed to feel like a piece of furniture, blends a Nancy Meyers aesthetic with English countryside charm. deVOL fixtures highlight the unlacquered features intended to age beautifully. “We kept it pretty neutral so the heirloom tomatoes, the gardening elements, and the things she’s cooking became the real heroes,” says Elana.

painted a wall or installed something—she knew their name, she knew their favorite foods,” she recalls.

That partnership flourished throughout the project, with the wife scouring her own vast collection as well as vintage shops and Facebook Marketplace for the perfect pieces. For instance, the client found a green velvet sofa, which now lives in the library, at an antique store. She did not get up from the sofa until Elana confirmed it fit in the floor plan. “It was that kind of play that she and I had together—built on trust, but always fun,” Elana says. “And for her, it



owner, who's studying to be a master gardener. "I think she'd memorized Farrow & Ball's green and blue lines," Elana laughs.

Natural textures—rattan, unlacquered brass, and other materials that patina over time—also repeat across the spaces. "When you have a house of this size and complexity, I like having a connecting thread," Elana says.

The kitchen proved to be the most significant transformation. That wing of the house was opened up, from three-and-a-half rooms into one, with French doors leading to the new pool.

The result reoriented the home's daily rhythm. "The kitchen, which used to be an afterthought, became the new hub," Elana says.

The adjacent dining space features another piece with history. The table came from another of Elana's clients, who was simultaneously renovating her own kitchen. "Memories happened at

(above) The inspiration for the library? A man's wool coat, brought to life with the walls and ceiling drenched in Farrow & Ball's Card Room Green and custom Kim Samela swivel chairs upholstered in Holland & Sherry fabric. (left) The powder bathroom is intentionally bold, featuring Morris & Co. wallpaper, a Serena & Lily sconce, and the client's own mirror.

this table, and she was devastated that she had to let go of it," Elana says. It was too long and narrow for that client's new kitchen, with a wear-and-tear vintage quality that stylistically didn't fit either. It was perfect for the Ridgely house though.

During that table transfer, the clients met, exchanged stories, and later shared dinners at each other's homes. "It was such a meaningful exchange," says Elana.

The concept of giving pieces a second life became the home's emotional core. "I feel very lucky that so many of our clients care deeply about the spaces they live in and also about the pieces that go in them," Elana says. "What's so rich and rewarding about this project is because it's from architecture planning down to the towels—literally—and it all came together in such a fun way."

became like a scavenger hunt."

Design-wise, the team aimed for a cross between a classic American, Nancy Meyers style with the charm of an English countryside home. Relaxing shades of blue and green create a quiet continuity from room to room, deepening the indoor-outdoor dialogue. The color palette is also a nod to the home-



Soft green tones and a bird motif carry the home's nature-inspired palette upstairs. "When it's a guest room, people are coming up here to sleep after a day of being together, so we wanted it to feel like a warm hug," says Elana. The space features a ceiling light from Woven Shop and a coverlet from Lulu and Georgia.



In the mudroom (top), a beadboard wall is outfitted with a peg display, giving the space both utility and opportunity to display. Farrow & Ball's Vert de Terre is painted on the walls and a Pottery Barn bench is accessorized with pillows from McGee & Co. Elana wanted the guest bathroom (bottom) to feel like a gift box. Mission accomplished with Rebecca Atwood wallpaper—papered over a door to a storage room to camouflage it—and matching shower curtain.

The formal dining room (top) was a chance to showcase the clients' existing furniture, now set against Lewis & Wood wallpaper. Touches of blue ground the primary bedroom (bottom), from the trim painted in Farrow & Ball De Nimes to the vintage coverlet from Freaks' New York to the ceiling wallpaper by Sandberg.



The entryway sets a warm, welcoming tone for the home, with Farrow & Ball's Slipper Satin complementing the homeowner's vintage botanical prints, an Etsy rug, and a chair from Freaks'.