

# Brit Box

The design of a historic Greenwich Colonial imports the best of England to Connecticut, no passport necessary.

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Interior Design: Lee Ann Thornton and Allie Macaluso, Lee Ann Thornton Interiors



When 17<sup>th</sup>-century captain John Smith deemed this corner of the colonies a part of New England, he was onto something. The state now known as Connecticut abounds with British charm from village

to hillock. But for designer Lee Ann Thornton's clients, a further whiff of Old Blighty was required for their late 1800s Greenwich Colonial.

"They're traditional people at heart, but they have a fun spirit, so a timeless, fresh approach was truly the right thing for them," Thornton says.

As you might have guessed from their layered and pattern-rich abode, the clients are Anglophiles, right down to their pet corgis (Queen Elizabeth II's favored dog breed). "The owners love visiting England and have a beautiful antiques collection, much of which is English," shares designer Allie Macaluso, Thornton's colleague and daughter. "Overall, they have a very British sensibility, which gave us a cue as to the direction we were going to take with all of the color, happiness and chintz. This was a dream brief for us because it's how we love to decorate, too." Adds Thornton, "It became evident that these clients wanted their house to feel enveloped. Think 'Cozy' with a capital C!"

And that it is. The house already shared a bit of DNA with any Cotswolds cottage in that its rooms were intimate in scale—especially the bedrooms on the second floor. There, the designers deployed a range of space-maximizing tricks, from ripping out closets to covering up a window. "Anything to grab a little extra wall space," Thornton says.

But what the sleeping quarters might lack in square footage, they certainly make up for in sumptuous design. Each epitomizes the beloved Jane Austen quote that "there is nothing like staying at home for real comfort." Textured wallpaper from London's own Guy Goodfellow wraps the vaulted ceiling in the primary, where a canopy bed is notched charmingly between two built-in shelves stocked to the brim. "The room is literally wrapped in books and beautiful items.

It's a jewel box," Macaluso comments. Nearby, a daughter's room is awash in a cossetting flurry of pattern on pattern replete with ruffle-edged lampshades and a pastel wallpaper flitting with birds. And, for the guest bedroom, everything from the bed skirt to the window treatments is adorned in the same floral print, with a recovered family heirloom settee tucked into a fairy-tale alcove. "We wanted it to feel like a gorgeous hotel room in London," Thornton says.

Moving downstairs, the public spaces showcase a similar mastery of pattern mixing, albeit with more physical and visual room to breathe. "I'm from Los Angeles, which has this gorgeous aesthetic where things are soft and welcoming, but very clean," Thornton shares. "That sensibility mixed with the divine charm of English interiors is kind of our sweet spot."

Key to bringing an element of cleanness to this home is the duo's use of parallel lines and strict borders, which provide a sturdy juxtaposition. Take the whimsical floral drapes across the family and breakfast rooms, whose vertical edges are trimmed with a red-striped cotton tape. Or the lighting program—a medley of linear fixtures in crisp black finishes. Wall treatments too work to introduce a more contemporary perspective, from the mudroom's milk-white shiplap paneling to the family room's cool-toned grass-cloth wallcovering to the living room's gleaming blue paint job, which introduces the boundless, expansive feel of the Malibu sky into the home's collected milieu.

There and throughout, the clients' storied antique pieces mingle with joyful fabrics and flourishes, resulting in "a layered look with an old soul," Macaluso says. A prime example: In the breakfast room off the kitchen, the clients' existing brown-wood Windsor chairs "didn't feel as warm as we wanted," Thornton says. The fix: custom dressings. "To channel that very English look, we added seat cushions and slipcovers with tiebacks. Now, they look like they've been around a long time, and that was a big impetus for this project. We wanted it to feel like the house had owned these furnishings for many years." ■



A glossy coat of Farrow & Ball's Parma Gray wraps the living room, where a sofa upholstered in a Lisa Fine Textiles floral perches alongside inlay nesting tables from John Rosselli & Associates. The botanical prints are from Ornix Gallery.



A Cowtan & Tout wallcovering cozies up the family room, where a sofa from Rooms and Gardens mingles with Rose Tarlow Melrose House armchairs in a Bennison Fabrics print. The drapes are a Carolina Irving Textiles linen.







**Above:** The lengthy silhouette of the dining room's The Urban Electric Co. chandelier casts a soft glow over the span of the table. Slipcovers and cushions of Carolina Irving Textiles fabric adorn the Windsor chairs. The sconces are Vaughan.

**Opposite:** In the living room, an heirloom oil painting balances a Michael Smith for Jasper shelf-turned-bar cart topped with a Christopher Spitzmiller lamp. The Noir seat is upholstered in a Lisa Fine Textiles print.







**Left:** A hand-painted mural by Shelly Denning adorns the wife's bathroom. The aged-brass Waterworks sink ties to the Ann-Morris Inc. sconces. An Urban Archaeology medicine cabinet strikes another classic chord.

**Opposite:** "We wanted it to feel like a tree house," designer Lee Ann Thornton says of the primary bedroom. A Soane Britain pendant hangs from ceilings covered in a Guy Goodfellow Collection wallpaper. A Namay Samay fabric carries across the bed canopy and Roman shades.







**Above:** Raoul Textiles' Madeleine fabric blankets the guest room's walls, bed skirt, canopy and drapes. "Using the same pattern throughout actually made the room feel bigger," Thornton notes. The lamps are Christopher Spitzmiller and the ceiling light is Coleen & Company.

**Opposite:** Custom shades of a Namay Samay textile adorn a pair of Galerie des Lampes sconces in a cozy nook. The settee is a family heirloom recovered in a Holland & Sherry fabric.

