THE ARTS ISSUE

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Art Blanche



When I was a freshman in high school, I received my first C. The assignment: to draw a self-portrait. As a near-perfect student, I felt defeated. *How do you grade art?* I thought. *Isn't it subjective?* I saw the advanced shading techniques of my classmates and understood: I didn't have the talent to be an artist. I shied away from creative expression other than writing (telling stories was always my forte), until recently.

Four years ago, I was enrolled in a visual communications program at an arts university, in Florence, Italy — known for its prestigious fashion, arts, communications, and culinary programs.

During my studies there, it was the first time I, then a postgrad student, felt free of the stress of maintaining a perfect GPA. Instead, I felt empowered to flex my creative muscles, whether it was in magazine design, photography, or web-coding classes.

Art touched my every day there. Spontaneous trips to Dante Alighieri's house and visits to exhibitions featuring artists such as Monet and Pontormo were regular. I developed skills as a photographer and illustrator. I wrote and designed a book on Renaissance art. I felt energized by the omnipresent creative energy. After all, where better to enjoy the osmosis of innovation than where masters like da Vinci, Botticelli, and Michelangelo made their indelible marks?

I realized there that art is personal and that anyone can create something out of nothing. I learned that art, by definition, is the expression of skill to create works that will be appreciated for their beauty and/or power and that craft is not meant for only those who are naturally gifted. "Art" doesn't even have to exclusively mean fine art: writing, cooking, and music are all meaningful ways to apply imagination — and interior design is no exception. Beautifying the home is an invaluable skill, one our community has graciously shared with our publication year after year.

Inspired by innovation, I present to you The Arts Issue. Never before have we published an issue dedicated to local artistic talent. But what better time to focus on the beauty and joy the creative community brings us than during what to many have been the darkest of hours?

I write this note one January morning at 3 a.m. I'm not a night owl, but these days, I am more amenable to embracing creativity when it strikes. I hope this year, you will be too.

Gina Valentino

Gina Valentino
Editor

PHOTO BY STEFAN RADTKE



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By Laura Joseph Mogil • Photography by Stefan Radtke

Global Brand, Local Talent

Farooq Kathwari, Ethan Allen's CEO, president, and chairman discusses his career and the changes he's seen in the interior design industry over three and a half decades.



New Rochelle resident Farooq Kathwari vividly remembers his youth in the mountains of Kashmir, where his grandfather brought him into his family's arts-and-crafts business at the age of 13. Honing his keen eye for beautiful design, along with his marketing and business acumen, Kathwari embarked on a long journey that would lead him to become the, CEO, president, and chairman of Ethan Allen Interiors, a position he's held since 1988.

Kathwari, 77, has been the driving force behind Ethan Allen's ascension to one of the top furniture companies in the world, with some 200 design centers located in North America and 100 overseas. Founded in 1932 as a manufacturer of Early American/Colonial-style furnishings, the company has greatly expanded its design styles under Kathwari's leadership while continuing to offer the high-quality craftsmanship it has been known for since its inception.



Left and below:
Ethan Allen's CEO, president, and chairman Farooq Kathwari with his team at the brand's Hartsdale location. The company celebrates 90 years of innovation this year.

Looking back on his career, Kathwari says, "When I came to New York at age 20, I somehow got a job as a bookkeeper, although I had never seen a calculator in my whole life. My grandfather wanted to help me earn some extra money, so he sent me 12 wicker baskets of Kashmiri arts and crafts and told me to sell them and just send the cost back." This helped Kathwari pay for the business degree in marketing that he received in 1968 from New York University (which he attended at night).

Kathwari then climbed the ranks on Wall Street — starting as an analyst and becoming CFO of Rothschild & Co. by age 27 — all while selling his imported Kashmiri arts and crafts. In the early 1970s, one of his associates introduced him to Ethan Allen cofounder Nathan S. Ancell.

Kathwari says Ancell spoke to him about the company's hand-embroidered Kashmiri crewel fabric for its upholstery fabrics. "[Ancell] said they never came in on time and that there were lots of problems importing them and asked me if I could help. I had no idea, but I said yes. He gave me a sample, and long story short, I got into the fabric business," says Kathwari. A year later, he helped Ethan Allen out again by finding and importing rugs from Romania and India.

In 1973, Kathwari was invited to partner with Ethan Allen in a joint venture called Kathwari Ethan Allen, or KEA. "My offices and warehouse were located in a former bowling alley in Larchmont," he says. Kathwari traveled the world, including Italy, India, China, and Portugal, importing goods for KEA.



In 1980, Kathwari merged his company with Ethan Allen and became a vice president. He rose to become president in 1985 and CEO in 1988. Kathwari's vision has brought many changes to Ethan Allen, starting with an ongoing expansion and update of the company's offerings in furnishings and accessories. Reflecting today's demands, the company currently has products under three styles: Classic, Country and Coastal, and Modern. "We've given people the opportunity of selecting products with a variety of styles but continue to maintain our focus on great design, great quality, and something our customers can live with every day," he says.

Kathwari has also made a company commitment to producing more than 75% of its products in North America, in an effort to retain control over quality and craftsmanship. In addition, the company has chosen to promote interior designers from within the company to manage its stores, as a means to run them as all-in-one, whole-home custom-design centers (many Ethan Allen retail stores had been licensed by family businesses before their owners retired and sold their shops to the firm).

Under Kathwari's leadership, the company has also placed a major investment in new technology. "About 10 years

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back, we said we'd help our interior designers by giving them PC tablets, so they could work with the clients in the design centers and in their homes. Then, we installed big touchscreens in the stores so that clients and designers could work together and discuss different design options with our 3D Room Planner technology," he says. This 3D technology, which has an online version for customers, became even more essential when COVID-19 hit and enabled Ethan Allen designers to continue to do business with clients on a virtual basis.

While Ethan Allen's headquarters are in Danbury, the company's 12,000-square-foot Hartsdale store is very close to Kathwari's heart. "This spring, we will update the building and freshen up the outside and inside. In addition to the furnishings, accessories, and design-technology products (as well as workstations filled with samples of custom fabrics, leathers, and finishes), there will be new lighting, rugs, and outdoor-furnishing studios. We will also have all the new product lines that have been held up for the past year and a half because of COVID," says Kathwari. "I live here; it's one of our flagship locations, and over the next few months, you'll see how we're going to take it to the next level."

Looking to the future, Kathwari says he has frequently been inspired while having breakfast or getting coffee at the BLD Diner in Larchmont. "About a year back, I did a plan on a napkin for a 30,000-square-foot design center," says Kathwari. "People were shocked because technology has enabled us to reduce, not enlarge, the size of our design centers. Then I said, 'No, I want a virtual design center, so our designers will have the ability to work with clients and take them through a virtual tour of the entire store.'" When launched in the near future, clients will be able to see everything they need to decorate their homes, from bedroom sets to living room lamps, in a virtual space.

Laura Joseph Mogil is a freelance writer residing in Briarcliff Manor. She has written about art and design for a variety of publications, including Westchester Magazine *and* Westchester Home.





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Meera Agarwal

Starburst Into Spring

Acrylic on canvas, 12″ x 12″; $180; *meeraworldart.com*

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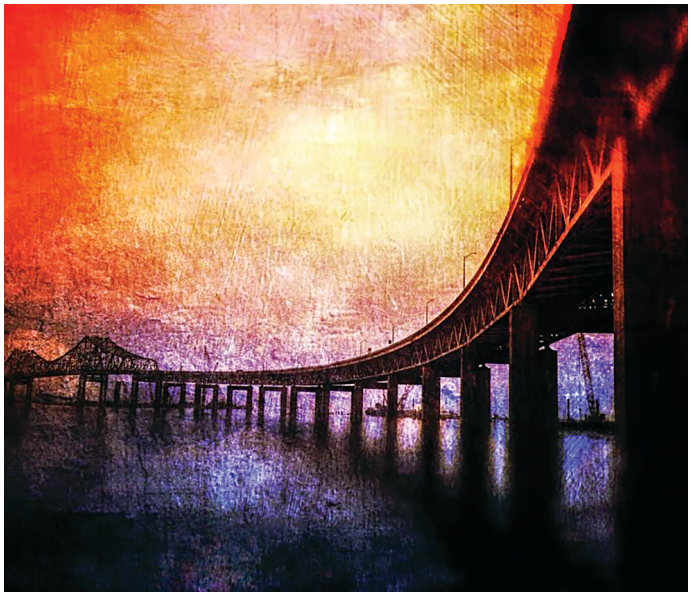


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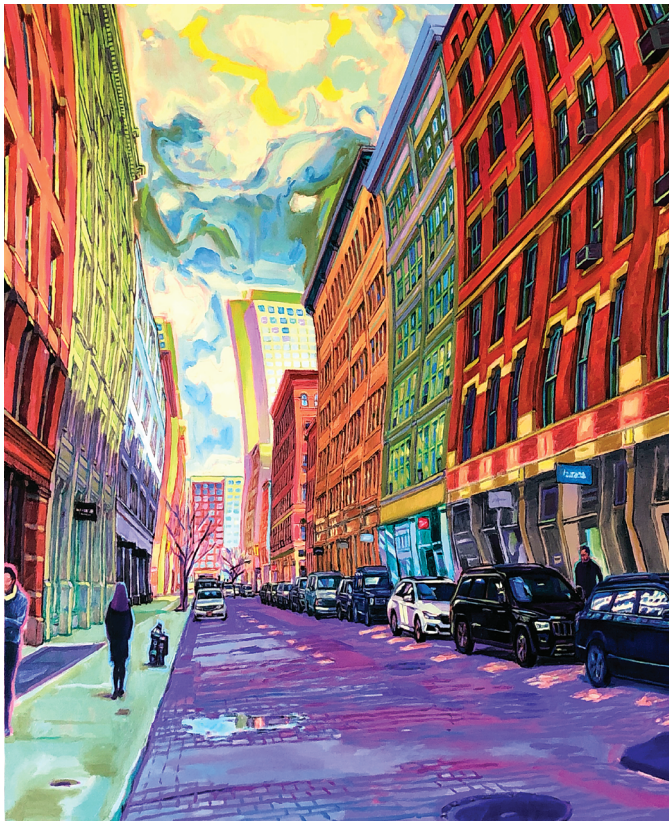


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Jodi DeCrenza

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By Jena A. Butterfield • Photography by Cristina Portale Coco

Outdoor Oasis

A Rye backyard receives an upgrade to become an attractive, recreational space for the whole family.



Of all the pandemic-influenced design trends taking the world by storm, a pumped-up outdoor living space is perhaps the most sought-after. For a busy family, with two teenagers, living in a traditional Colonial in Rye, the ask was for an outdoor space that would serve as an extension of their living room.

Enter Ania Dunlop, from Rye-based Home for Zen Interiors, whose passion for nature and organic form translates to a predominantly modern aesthetic that's rich in texture and often layered with peaceful neutrals and pops of color.

This backyard project got underway in June 2020 and was Dunlop's first following the COVID-19 lockdown ("Just when everybody started hanging out outside," she says). Despite new pandemic-imposed challenges, like long wait times for lumber, Dunlop was able to create a backyard sanctuary where different generations could utilize the space simultaneously. "The backyard is not very large, but we gave them so many places to hang out," she says. "Now, everybody wants to be there."

To highlight the yard from the interior of the home, the space on both sides of the doors (from the living



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room to the patio) was extended, and Marvin doors were installed. This strategic combo provides a broad sightline from both interior and exterior perspectives.

While the bucolic outdoor space did originally have an arbor-and-bluestone patio, it felt outdated. Working with contractor Fernando Marques and landscape designer Mary-Liz Campbell, Dunlop decided to start from scratch. Light-gray pavers from Techo-Bloc were brought in to cover an area much larger than the original patio. The pavers' large-scale size was conducive to creating a continuous feel from the interior. Shades of gray and clean lines give the space a more contemporary aesthetic, and a new pergola was constructed and painted Benjamin Moore's Wrought Iron to create a more intimate, contained space.

Beyond the patio, Dunlop created another area for gathering. "I didn't want to do pavers again," she says. Instead, she used white pebbles, for a soft, dressed-up look that contrasts nicely with dark Adirondack chairs and the black-painted firepit that anchors the space. Dunlop wanted that area to be completely different and fun while also being a creative way to do something high-end.

A sectional from RH, styled with pillows from Serena & Lily, helps define the lounge area. Dunlop avoided a white Sunbrella fabric, opting instead for a light-gray tone, to complement the more modern vibe. She then brought in fun elements, like a fire table and beautiful black planters from McArdle's Floral & Garden Design in Greenwich, as well as striped planters from Sarza in Rye. "I love using plants and planters and introducing people to that natural environment," she says. The chair in the lounge area is constructed from rope and comes from Australian company Harbour Outdoor. Since the piece is visible from all sides, Dunlop wanted to source something with obvious architectural detail.

A custom outdoor kitchen flanks one side of the patio and leads into an elevated bar, which Dunlop surrounded with stools from RH. The built-in grill and refrigerator are encased in textured stone, also from Techo-Bloc. The texture provides visual interest and helps define the material as separate from the smooth patio pavers, a clever design trick also accomplished by the use of ombré cement side tables from Lulu and Georgia. On the other side of the patio, a dining table and chairs from RH give the family yet another way to gather.

The boho-style Marina outdoor hanging chair from Arhaus extends the space to the far reaches of the yard. "I felt like we needed something in that area," says Dunlop, who also wanted to create a whimsical, not-so-structured moment. The largely neutral palette gets a splash of color with a pillow from Sarza, which echoes the pop of pink in the potted flowers. Dunlop says she's known for her love of dipladenia. "It's fun to have those go-to plants in the summer," she says. "It's my secret that I'm releasing to the world."

The design elements of this multifunctional yard allow the family to revel in fresh air all year long. Dunlop attests that in the dead of winter, the cozy firepit and fire table offer necessary heat and the outdoor kitchen and pergola allow for a lively entertaining space in the dog days of summer.

Jena A. Butterfield is a lifestyle writer and frequent contributor specializing in interior design. She lives with her husband and son in Yonkers.

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The State of the Artists

These talented creators proffer unique collections to beautify the region.

BY JESSICA JAFET, LAURA JOSEPH MOGIL, STACEY PFEFFER, AND LAURIE YARNELL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEN GABRIELSEN

Westchester County is brimming with talented residents in various industries — especially in the arts. Meet this bright selection of local innovators, helping to elevate and beautify the community with their original creations.







Christopher Rios

PAINTER AND MURALIST

As a student at Somers High School, Christopher Rios was focused primarily on sports, but he was also interested in art. "My art teachers were always encouraging and made me feel like a standout," he recalls. Recruited to play lacrosse in college, it wasn't until he was a junior that he declared his fine-arts major. "I knew it was hard to make it in painting as a real job, but I had a passion," he says. After moving back home to his parents' basement after graduating from college in 2016, Rios experienced a crisis of faith. "I felt really lost and kind of anxious," Rios recalls, "so I started using my art as therapy, painting every night until 3 a.m." while listening to hip-hop, country, and rock music.

Rios began working local day gigs, installing glass showers and removing oil tanks to support himself. He adopted the work ethic he had developed as an athlete and applied it to his art, seeking to constantly improve.

The Somers resident sold his first paintings at sports memorabilia shows. He would paint athletes, like former Yankees Bernie Williams and Don Mattingly, who he knew would be there, have them sign his work, and then sell them to attendees. He started building a reputation, and his paintings were purchased by celebs such as Ice-T, Coco, and other athletes, including Dwight Gooden and ArDarius Stewart.

"I remember just telling myself to stick with it, to keep working and it will pay off." He also sought therapy to better his mental health. In a fortuitous twist of fate, his therapist's husband was a professional painter who volunteered to teach art to underprivileged kids in the Bronx (Rios' home for the first eight years of his life). He became Rios' mentor. Rios, in turn, helped work with his mentor's young students. His mentor helped him get back to basics and fine-tune his craft.

With his art, Rios wanted to go bigger, literally and figuratively. "My dream is to paint big murals in New York City," he says. In 2019, he got his first commercial commission — a 3′ x 4′ mural of an intricate lion for his client's garage. As his client grew his business, Rios created increasingly larger versions of the same lion for him for each new and bigger space. (The most recent is 15′ x 20′.)

Around that time, he created murals for local



businesses Iconic Lash Lounge in Yorktown Heights and Reveal Hair Studio in Rye. In March of 2020, his supportive parents offered the brick side of their Katonah home for him to paint a mural featuring Bob Marley, Babe Ruth, and Frank Sinatra. He then created a mural for a restaurant in Connecticut. After posting his finished results on Instagram, more commissions followed.

Inspired by Picasso, Andy Warhol, and Jackson Pollock, Rios' work features painted portraits of well-known figures in sports, music, history, and pop culture. Color is added from a combination of airbrush, spray paints, house paint, and acrylic paints. Incorporating abstract techniques and mixed media, he describes his style as a combination of realism and pop art. Favorite murals of his include one in front of the Yorktown Library, honoring the five residents of the town who died during 9/11; another at Camp Smith in Peekskill, dedicated to WWI hero Sgt. Henry Johnson; one at Somers High School; and several for an Atlanta hotel.



In addition to his commercial commissions, Rios has created murals in residential homes. He also creates canvases in the same media. "Being able to make someone else's vision come to life and see their joy" is his favorite part.





Aimee Hofmann

Painter

Tuckahoe resident Aimee Hofmann started her career as painter in a manner that is very different from most professional artists. A native of Queens, Hofmann received her business degree from New York University and then worked in marketing in Manhattan for a few years.

Hofmann was happily married and planning for a family when her life completely changed in 2006: At age 29, she was diagnosed with transverse myelitis, a rare inflammation of the spinal cord that left her partially paralyzed. During her two-month hospitalization for the condition, she participated in an art-therapy program and started painting right from her bed.

"When I found out I would never walk again, it was one of the scariest times of my life. I felt like someone punched me in the stomach. However, when I painted in the hospital, it took me to a place of peace, and it kept me present," says Hofmann. "Painting gave me a voice and an outlet to express myself, especially after the traumatic experience that I went through."

One of the first things Hofmann did when she got out of the hospital was to buy canvas, paints, and brushes. An avid swimmer before and after her paralysis, she began painting bodies of water. "While my work is more abstract now, I continue to paint in a lot of hues of blue. It's one of my favorite color palettes to work with and a reflection of the freedom and peace that water gives me," says Hofmann. As of late, she has been experimenting with other colors, including red, for its boldness, and violet, for its drama.

Always keeping a positive attitude, Hofmann continued to grow in both her artistic and personal lives. She and her husband have two children, and she just recently completed her first marathon on a handcycle last October. While always committed to her painting, she waited to pursue art as a business until late 2019, right before the pandemic started. "That's when I started a more disciplined art practice, committing to painting every day and sharing my work on my website and on social media," says Hofmann.

She has been selling her work online and was commissioned to create pieces for her growing base of patrons. In addition, she has recently exhibited at the Rye Arts Center, the Blue Door Art Center in Yonkers, and the Carriage Barn Arts Center in New Canaan. Her work will be on display at the Jamestown Art Center in Rhode Island in a group show opening March 18.

Hofmann's art continues to evolve, and she has created a number of new painting collections. She says she gets inspiration from nature and music, as well as from fashion, often getting ideas from her own wardrobe for color palettes. "I'm also inspired by nostalgia of the '80s, because that's when I grew up, and I love that it was so full of bright neons and pastels," says Hofmann.

Her latest collection is titled Verve: Unfiltered. "It's visually a lot more edgy and raw than my past collections, which have had more of a feminine style," she says. "It took courage to create this collection because I stepped out of my comfort zone. In the past, I would stick to one brush for the whole painting. This collection uses all kinds of tools, from a palette knife to the wheel from my old wheelchair, which I use to create track marks on the canvas."

"I've been letting the different paint consistencies react with each other, pouring and throwing the paint and seeing how the paint interacts and mixes organically on the canvas. It's a reflection of me letting go and embracing the beauty of imperfections," says Hofmann. She calls it a combination of grit with grace because it has her signature swirl designs, but this time around, she has deconstructed and broken them down.

"For me, the swirls are symbol of continuity and how life goes in twists and turns and upside down, but in the end, everything comes full circle. That's true in what I've been through in my past and what the world has been through with this pandemic," she says.





Simone Kestelman

Sculptor and Multimedia Artist



Simone Kestelman grew up in Brazil, in a family with four girls. She was always running around and full of energy. When her mother was advised that she should involve Kestelman in art to give her something to focus on, she enrolled her then-10-year-old daughter in a class teaching how to paint plaster saints. She so excelled at painting the saints' eyes that her adult classmates asked her to paint the eyes on their saints too. It was the first time she made money from her art.

When she wanted to study art in college, her father told her to pick another profession. "Good women don't study art," she recalls him saying. So, she studied economics and worked in that field for 10 years before turning back to her first love. She established an art studio, where she offered classes to about 500 students and sold art products.

When she left Brazil in 2015 and moved to Scarsdale, she was determined to focus solely on doing her own work. "I knew I had to revamp myself; no one knew me or my work," she says. She decided to make her new house her "business card" while working from a studio in White Plains. Her new neighbors came to refer to her property, with its many outdoor sculptures, as a "mini-Storm King," an homage to the Storm King Art Center in New Windsor.

Kestelman says her work — with glass, ceramics, and photography — speaks to archetypal themes of life, death, love, violence, and ambition. Her subject matter, she says, "are the things I see, I feel, or the people close to me. I'm a very good observer; I like to see what people are eating, seeing, or discussing." Listening to opera or Gregorian chants while she works inspires her.

During the first year of the pandemic, Kestelman recalls feeling very lonely. "I thought I'd do something outdoors with my ceramic and glass flowers." When one passerby stopped to thank her for her artwork, she knew she was on to something. In 2020, she created her first local outdoor exhibition, *ResiliART*, or the art of resilience, not to sell anything but rather to "bring colors and love and happiness" to the community. Composed of her flowers and striking, contemporary warrior glass sculptures, the temporary installation included 17 homes and the Scarsdale Library, where she set up a field of 100 poppies. Kestelman's 2021 installation, called *#restART*, included 25 Scarsdale homes, and her 2022 exhibition (untitled at press time) is being installed in 15 homes in Bronxville in April.

Ranging in height from 5′7″ to 6′ high, Kestleman's warrior sculptures grew out of her experience in the pandemic. "We had to find a way to fight," she explains. Made of colorful glass, "they are super strong," she says, "and together they show us that individuals are strongest when they accept their vulnerabilities." She elaborates: "I make outdoor art because I want my art to be free, vulnerable, and strong — all at the same time. I want my art to change like the seasons, like we do." Seven of her warriors are currently on exhibit at the Rockland Center for the Arts, in West Nyack. Her work has been widely exhibited in galleries and museums internationally and can be found in the permanent collection of the Newark Museum of Art, as well as private collections in Brazil, the U.S., and Europe.



Peter Rutkowski

PAINTER

As a young child growing up on a farm in Poland, Peter Rutkowski's earliest experience making art was drawing the chickens, trees, and leaves around him by tracing his finger in the dirt. His mother, a painter, bought him a set of colored pencils when he was about 5 years old. "I still remember the smell of those pencils," he says. After completing a five-year art program in high school, Rutkowski worked for a few years as a window-display designer while spending his free time copying paintings by famous masters, like Vermeer, Rembrandt, Monet, and da Vinci.

At age 25, Rutkowski moved to the U.S., settling in Brooklyn, and worked various jobs — as a busboy in Trump Tower and in a screen-painting studio — to support himself. About eight years ago, he received an associate's degree in visual art from Westchester Community College (WCC), where he found a mentor in teacher Carla Rae Johnson. As his work was exemplary, during his time at WCC, he became Johnson's teaching assistant.

Rutkowski specializes in small, traditional still lifes in a modern realist or representational style. Ranging in size from 6″ x 6″ to 12″ x 16″, the smallest take about 8 to 10 hours to complete. "With small paintings, you look at it up close, and it's almost like an illustration in a book," he explains. Rutkowski paints on wood panels rather than canvas because he believes the texture of canvas competes for attention with his brushstrokes. "On wood, there's a cleaner and smoother look, and my brushstroke is the hero," he says.

Rutkowski paints with oils, using an alla prima (aka wet-on-wet) technique, in which layers of wet paint are applied to previous layers of still-wet paint. Using a shadow box he created from an old desk, he creates a sort of miniature stage and puts objects in it before painting. "It's like illuminating the actors who will be on the stage in a play; the objects become the actors."

After reading Hal Elrod's *The Miracle Morning*, Rutkowski changed his schedule to allow for more morning hours to pursue his craft. "Painting is intellectual work, so the brain needs to be fresh," he explains. Now, he wakes at





4 a.m., and after some meditating, reading, and exercise, starts painting in his Hartsdale living room, listening to a mix of jazz, rock ("good for waking me up"), and classical music. Around 7 a.m., he turns to his full-time day job, as a superintendent of a residential complex. He goes back to painting from about 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., and then it's lights-out. Rutkowski says he doesn't paint only to sell ("I just paint to become a better painter"); his work is found in private collections locally and nationwide and has been exhibited at the Salmagundi Art Club Gallery in New York City. He was also a featured guest artist at the Arts at Denver Gallery, in Denver. His goal is to become a full-time artist, start a blog, and maybe create a digital course to help others to learn how to paint small still lifes.

Stefan Radtke

PHOTOGRAPHER

Stefan Radtke has photographed the most exquisite homes in Westchester County and beyond — the kind that grace many elite magazines. Not only does he shoot the exteriors constructed by award-winning architects, he also skillfully shoots incredible interiors. His portraiture features an elite yet eclectic group of people, including journalist Ann Curry and comedians Seth Rogen and George Lopez. But some of his most treasured photos are taken only a few miles from his home, in Rye, of the sun rising over Long Island Sound. It is these Rothko-inspired photos that clients clamor for to adorn their not-so-humble abodes.

Radtke's work is sought-after by leading commercial clients and media companies, yet he did not plan to become a photographer. Working in the entertainment industry in his native Germany, Radtke originally thought he wanted to work in film production. He enjoyed the creative collaborations but realized that film sets were "too complicated, with too many people."







A friend told him to consider studying at the International Center of Photography when he moved to the U.S. in his early 20s. Radtke sent in his small portfolio and soon found himself accepted and enrolled in a portraiture class taught by acclaimed photographer Amy Arbus. "She was a tough critic, but I liked that. She was able to critique without making a big story about it, and she was always to the point," he says. "She loved what I was doing," explains Radtke. Arbus encouraged him to "let go" in his work, which is most evident in his fine-art photography. When he's shooting homes, everything in the composition is micromanaged, and his focus is on capturing the intent of the interior designer or creating images to accompany a story. In contrast to this, his fine-art photography frees him to experiment with his camera. "I may not be focusing or holding the camera completely still," but he loves being surprised by what comes out of this technique.

His fine-art photography requires minimal retouching, but his other photos are processed in-house, at his Port Chester studio. Located in the Ernest Simons Building, a historic former shirt-factory building from 1876, his studio is one of many offices occupied by local creatives across a range of industries, from floral design and textiles to architectural model makers.

Although he has photographed many individuals against a white backdrop at his studio, he prefers to photograph them in a lifestyle environment. "I love to meet people who I would never meet otherwise." For Radtke, the perfect trifecta is shooting interesting people in their carefully curated, beautifully-designed homes, with great artwork on display. "That's when I'm at my happiest," he says.

Eileen Stodut
PAINTER

Eileen Stodut's art captures singular moments, like the glory of those found in nature, while energizing the viewer with vivid color and evoking nostalgic feelings of place and time. The intention, says the painter, is to elicit shared emotions about the mystery of the world around us.

The New Rochelle resident and lifelong artist taps into a common experience, one that occurs when we stop and observe a fleeting detail of our fragile surroundings.

"I kind of feel that society has given up on this. We are in such a rush every day, we kind of let those teeny moments slide by us, and we don't realize how rich they are," Stodut says. "Those moments are what I try to capture in my paintings — when the flowers are just starting to wilt and go over the vase a little bit, or their colors are starting to fade."

Born and raised in Manhattan, Stodut has been living in Westchester for 20 years and works in such media as acrylic, oil, watercolor, clay, collage, and pastels. She began her career as a textile designer and later became a set designer for the theater. After she earned a master's degree in art education, doors opened for teaching opportunities in New Rochelle, followed by Stodut's current position as an art instructor at St. Philip Neri n the Bronx.

When she is not teaching art to children, the artist can be found in her studio at White Plains' ArtsWestchester, where she says she likes to "create without limits and try not follow any fads," a mantra that allows her original ideas to manifest. Stodut spends upwards of 28 hours a week there, dedicated to bringing her creative visions into vibrant pieces of art. In her studio, she teaches fine arts and digital arts to adults and children.

"I am trying to connect with people," she says. "I use lots and lots of colors when I paint; I hear this symphony that is going on, and it is the symphony of the colors, it is movement, and all of this emotion happens. I hope that is the string that connects me to my audience."







Living in New Rochelle has been an inspiration for the productive painter, with Glen Island providing a gorgeous backdrop with plenty of boat and harbor scenes to draw upon. Such works have found a special audience in Mystic, CT, where she has sold multiple pieces to water-loving clients.

Her entire portfolio is a reflection of the artist's fascination with the beauty and wonder of the natural world: Canvases and murals prominently feature plants and trees, flowers, water motifs, along with wild and domestic animals.

"Animals are very important to me, and I have kind of realized that we are all the same," Stodut says."They don't speak the same language we do, but we're all saying the same thing: We want to linger and enjoy as much as possible — we want to love as much as possible."





Artfully DESIGNED

Home is where the art is for one Bedford Hills family, with a stunning and eclectic collection of modern paintings, prints, photography, and sculpture.

By Laurie Yarnell

Photography by Jane Beiles



Art: *In the living room, above piano:* Mixed-media three-dimensional wall sculpture by Paul Rousso that features a blown-up page of the *New York Times*, using heat infusion on Plexiglas; Samuel Owen Gallery, Greenwich

Upstairs, above balcony: Flower series by Hamilton Aguiar, oil and resin on panel; C. Parker Gallery, Greenwich



Living with beloved art that holds special meaning can transform a house into a home. Such was the case for this 10,000-square-foot Bedford Hills estate designed by architect Jay Levy of Jay Levy Architecture in Bedford Corners and interior designer Kimberly Handler of Kimberly Handler Designs of Greenwich. The home, situated on 20 acres, features "modern interiors with characteristics offering the warmth of French Country design," explains Levy. "The owner wanted a home that was super inviting, modern but warm, had lots of light, and was a great space for family and friends to gather and to hold parties," he says. With three children, ranging in age from tweens to late 20s, the house was designed for family living — but one in which a collection of whimsical and colorful art takes center stage. For this reason, and to let the art pop, Handler chose a subdued yet sophisticated color palette of taupe, gray, and white, with accents in shades of blue and coral, salmon, and rust. "It's the art that makes the rooms really come alive," she says.

Heart of the Home

A state-of-the-art kitchen flows seamlessly into the family room and the 900-square-foot great room, which is anchored by a large-plank white-oak floor with a white-stained satin finish. This open-floor concept offers multiple areas for cooking, dining, homework, games, and just hanging out and watching TV.

Clean and Simple

In the kitchen, the cabinetry is contemporary, with a Shaker influence. Its satin-lacquer finish, says Levy, "really brings out the depth of the Benjamin Moore Polo Blue." By contrast, the backsplash is a simple, white, handmade tile in a subway pattern. The star is the oversized island. Like most of the kitchen, it is made of Champagne quartzite. ("Almost clear and translucent, it's the most spectacular stone I've used and extremely durable," says Levy.) Topped by Tech Lighting's trio of hand-blown-glass Paloma pendants in smoke and fronted by clean-lined Design Within Reach Bottega stools in saddle leather, it's the perfect place to prepare and present casual meals or snacks, or to catch up on paperwork. Another such spot is the timeless Eero Saarinen dining table from Knoll, flanked by Eames molded-fiberglass side chairs with wood legs, both from Design Within Reach. "We didn't want anything too powerful in this space," says Handler. "Clean, simple lines were key."



Art: Kitchen (*right of oven*): Heimo Zobernig, *Untitled* (2015), acrylic on canvas; Galerie Meyer Kainer, Vienna, Austria





Haute Hangout

Spacious but cozy in feeling, the family room features a comfy Como sectional in Kalahari Canyon leather from Design Within Reach. Similar in color to the kitchen-island stools, it ties the spaces together visually. A pair of RH Motorcity swivel chairs upholstered in a charcoal Perennials fabric are topped with custom pillows from Pollack that pick up the color palette used elsewhere throughout the house.

Dazzling Design

A dramatic two-story living room, surrounded by a second-story, gallery-like balcony, serves as an inviting yet airy entertaining space that admits floods of light through the two-story windows. The colors of the room — and the entire home — are drawn from the striking 68" x 92" untitled acrylic painting in azure and copper by Mark Flood, the focal point above the fireplace. The homeowner acquired it many years ago; it reminds him of looking out a window into a blue sky. The ideal room for a big, buzzy party, this living room features ample seating. A pair of sumptuous Stratus sofas by RH are covered in Indigo Vintage Velvet and topped with custom pillows (a hint of metallic adds texture and interest). A pair of salmon-colored James chairs by Williams Sonoma Custom are upholstered in Marais fabric by Cowtan & Tout. A pair of Arteriors Home Wimberley ottomans upholstered in a neutral hide provides added seating, and Home Darby accent tables, also from Arteriors, are scattered throughout as perfect spots to set down a Negroni or plate of canapés. The space is anchored by a subtle geometric area rug in creams and gray by RH. "Size and scale were everything with the area rug," says Handler. "It had to be big enough, but not too bold or overpowering, to serve as groundwork for such a large space."

"It's the art that makes the rooms really come alive."

–Kimberly Handler, Kimberly Handler Designs

Statement pieces include the oversized Pouf Capitonne from Suite NY tufted in camel leather ("This was one of the first pieces we found for the space, and the scale was spot-on," explains Handler) and Horchow's Eldon floating console, a handcrafted piece of smooth, brown oak with antique mirrored doors that evoke a midcentury vibe. An iconic Arco floor lamp with marble base from Design Within Reach arcs over the sofa, adding height and drama in a scale that works well with the space. The custom bar, painted in Benjamin Moore's Polo Blue, features a three-dimensional Escalia mosaic backsplash and sexy CB2 Lucite bar stools, custom-upholstered in Kravet's retro coral-colored Alejandro fabric, a cut-velvet ikat. The bar table is a custom piece from Aronson Woodworks, in their Claize finish and is water resistant. Handler explains, "It is the perfect spot for putting drinks, because you do not need coasters — it is kind of indestructible."

Stylish Sanctuary

The sleek primary bedroom is minimalist in design. Continuing the soothing, neutral color scheme with pops of color, it features a dramatic Adler tufted bed from RH, an Asian-inspired vintage night table topped with a Paula lamp from Arteriors, a gray ash Stevens bench in plat-



Art: Great room (*above*): Painting by Mark Flood. Library (*right*): Jozza, *Hearts*, acrylic painting; Crown Fine Art, NYC



WFH Well

The office serves as an organized and elevated spot for Zoom meetings. Function meets design with a vintage glass-and-wood desk; Design Within Reach Eames executive chair; two Kelsey Stools from Interlude Home, (they feature a striking combo of zebra wood, gray velvet, and brass); and a cream-colored Oviedo chaise with a midcentury silhouette from RH. A futuristic, four-tier chandelier from Circa Lighting provides a mobile-like point of interest overhead, and a custom geometric area rug in taupe and gray from Fayette Studio ties it all together.

inum boucle, also from Arteriors, and a Teak Warehouse Elle chair accented with a rust-and-black kilim pillow. A burnished-silver Mill lantern by Circa Lighting and custom bed pillows in Pollack's Zsa Zsa fabric complete the soothing feel.

Fun House

This lively playroom is an inviting space for gatherings and sleepovers. Seating includes a cheery, red, egg-style chair, a comfy gray Spun chair by Design Within Reach, and lightweight charcoal seating elements by Lina Furniture, which, says Handler, can be easily moved around and configured in several different ways, making them ideal for a multipurpose play space. Other design elements include the built-in bunk beds with gray, animal-skin-like bedding topped with golden-yellow and deep-turquoise pillows and the multi-hued graphic area rug from FLOR. Comprising a series of individual carpet tiles, they can easily be replaced if one becomes stained — a plus for a playroom. A giant stuffed polar bear keeps a friendly watch. The surfboard, decorated in a vibrant Campbell's soup logo adds an Andy Warhol vibe.





ART: Tim Bessell, Andy Warhol surfboard (Campbell Soup), hand-painted on surfboard; Samuel Owen Gallery, Greenwich





Spa-like Oasis

For a spa-like feel in the primary bath, Levy selected a crisp, white color scheme. The walls are made up of different-sized, smaller-scale rectangles of white marble that are finished in four different ways — hammered, striated, sandblasted, and smooth. "The result is this incredibly textured wall with different shades," Levy says. The generous soaking tub, also selected by Levy, is by Victoria & Albert. Handler added, among other elements, a trio of bleached-teak natural stools from the Phillips Collection; a white, natural-hide area rug; and a Finch chandelier from Arteriors. "It has little branches, so I loved how it related to the wood stools," she says.



Sculptures Stand Guard

Art: Lloyd Skinny Male and Lottie Skinny Female bronze sculptures, Phillips Collection





Top-Notch Viewing

The cozy media room is where the family binges on TV series such as *Gossip Girl* and *Downton Abbey*. It is equipped with versatile, camel-colored Lovesac seating that can be configured in several ways to accommodate all. A La Strizza bench with bolster pillows in cream leather from CB2 offers another seating option, and custom pillows in Anacapri Paradiso fabric from the Kravet Collection add a retro '70s vibe, with accents of avocado, mustard, turquoise, and gray.

Art: Media room: Selections from CB2's black-and-white photography collection, which features music, film, and fashion luminaries, including Brigitte Bardot, Mick and Bianca Jagger, Karl Lagerfeld, and Yves Saint Laurent.

Dining Alfresco

The homeowner wanted several options of areas in which to dine. This clean-lined, screened-in porch, featuring the Terrance table with a reconstituted stone top by Serena & Lily, is one of his favorites for temperate afternoons and evenings. To create a "comfortable, relaxed but interesting feel," Handler chose a mix of seating: Verona outdoor end chairs in espresso from Palecek at each head of the table; Luca chairs in espresso, also from Palecek, along one side of the table; and an outdoor bench from RH along the other.



En Plein Air

The inviting back patio offers a shaded area to sit and relax or dine outdoors. The seating area features a gray couch from RH Modern's Aviara Teak Collection — topped with fun, graphic pillows in bright yellow, cobalt blue, and white — and a pair of Palecek outdoor open-weave wicker swivel stools. Handler chose two Rockport Square gray-and-white-striped ottomans from Serena & Lily to act as a coffee table. The Terrace Round dining table with a reconstituted stone top, also from Serena & Lily, is surrounded by Lucca outdoor chairs by Palecek.

The Team

The design of this home was a harmonious collaborative effort. Architect Jay Levy designed both the house itself and its built-in cabinetry and surfaces in the kitchen, all seven bathrooms, and all five fireplaces. Interior designer Kimberly Handler selected all the furnishings, wallcoverings, window treatments, lighting, and paint colors. The artwork owned prior to moving into this home was selected by the homeowner and Michiel van der Wal, an independent art curator. Art acquired specifically for this home was procured by interior designer Kimberly Handler in conjunction with various Greenwich galleries. Selection and placement of the art was a collaborative effort between the homeowner and various professionals. P. Morrissey Contracting was the contractor.

The AVANT-GARDE

Designer and art dealer Gilles Clement transforms a Purchase home for a family of five into an internationally inspired jewel box, complete with a covetable art collection.

BY GINA VALENTINO





In the living room, an Il Pezzo Mancante lighting fixture, mixed-media artwork by Natalia Kldiashvili, and hand-selected accessories create a luxurious feel.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GILLES CLEMENT DESIGNS

When you spot a Colonial in the suburbs, you might expect to see a particular design scheme within. After all, it makes sense for the exterior to match the interior, right?

Au contraire, says accomplished designer Gilles Clement of Gilles Clement Designs in Greenwich. "It doesn't matter where you live; it matters who you are. A lot of people get caught up in 'Oh, I live in Westchester County, or I live in Greenwich, so I have to respect the architectural style' — and it's not true." While he admits that a home with a completely different feel from others in a neighborhood might be a harder sell, Clement contends, "It doesn't mean you can't do it."

Clement's creativity and predisposition for bold decor are what set apart his distinct design, which is infused with European flair and global influences. The Parisian native is also an art dealer and owns an eponymous gallery in Greenwich. "My look in Greenwich is pretty ballsy — you know, let's just say the truth," Clement says, bluntly. As such, he is accustomed to a particular type of client, one he typically expects to persuade when it comes to daring decor.

"Art is the soul of the home."

So, when a shopper entered his gallery a few years ago and purchased a striking Visionnaire console on a day that he wasn't there, he was intrigued. "It's not a common piece at all, and it's pretty pricy. Usually, I sell these kinds of pieces through my design projects. It's very unusual that someone would walk in and buy that."

Continuing, he says, "Someone who understands that certain sensibility, without there being any sales or educational help to understand the look and why it's so great, piqued my curiosity to meet her."

He went with his movers to the client's home in Purchase. A delivery that was supposed to have taken 15 minutes lasted three hours. "We sat down and started talking," says Clement. "This is how I found out she needed much more than the console." She was seeking to renovate her home.

Clement says he found an appreciative muse in his client. "She lived in Manhattan for many years and always had strong interest in design — as much in fashion as in home. She's someone who's very keen and curious about the beauty and aesthetics one can become amazed by in this world," he says. "She already had matured a certain taste over the years on her own, just by lifestyle. She travels a lot. She went to Europe. She stayed in a lot of beautiful boutique hotels." As a result, his client reacted strongly to his gallery. "She wanted to buy the entire store; she couldn't believe how much she loved it."

Clement's gallery reflects his affinities as a designer: He is known for mixing old and new, respecting a home yet reinventing it in a contemporary fashion. His curated art collection, like his design selections, has international influences. His gallery brims with artists like Georgian-born David Datuna, London-based Debra Franses Bean, French natives Clement Kamena, American creator Devorah Sperber, and Canadian Curtis Cutshaw. Clement describes his design style as transitional and contemporary: "opulent and luxurious but definitely transitional and contemporary." And the art, furniture, and decor he houses at his gallery reflect that feel.

Of his clientele, Clement shares, "I feel that once they appreciate that sensibility on that aesthetic design level, there is a large chance that they will feel the same way about the art. With the exception of perhaps two percent, my clientele end up purchasing art from me at the end."

He adorned this Purchase home with exquisite art in the form of mixed-media works, lighting fixtures, and furniture.

The jumping-off point for the home, a Visionnaire console, from Italy, decorates the hallway. Created with black, beveled glass, it has chains waterfalling on both sides. "It's very bold and a very special character piece," Clement shares. He adds that he has a lot of respect for American clients for their willingness to educate themselves about art and aesthetics. "I wouldn't be surprised if, in Paris, someone buys this console. But here, I am. It was really intriguing to

PHOTO COURTESY OF GILLES CLEMENT DESIGNS



In the foyer of this Purchase estate, a sculpture by Edgar Askelovic greets guests, along with a spectacular chandelier.

***Below*: The Visionnaire console connected the designer and client, allowing for the renovation of this Purchase home. *Right*: The kitchen features intricate design details and accomodates the large family.**





me that I didn't need to be involved in this one sale to convince the client why it's so great — that she loved it so much on her own."

Above the console is a three-dimensional rendition by Clement Kamena of Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, part of the French natives' Jar Memory series. It's no coincidence: Clement Kamena are Gilles Clement's parents, Serge Clement and Marina Kamena. "They interpreted their own version of [Vermeer's oil painting]," explains Clement, "so you can collect the art in the jar. Their entire concept [for their Jar Memory series] was to take masterpieces of art history and close them in jars so that people can collect the jars and own a part of art history. It's very well painted and very well realized — not because it's my parents. Trust me, if I didn't love their work, they wouldn't be in my gallery.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GILLES CLEMENT DESIGNS



I would never jeopardize my artistic integrity.

"I really like their work," he continues. "It's in complete sync with my perspective, which is kind of normal, because we are from the same family, so we kind of share the same vision on certain things, especially when it comes to the arts and aesthetics."

Surrounding the artwork in this home are two pendants by Italian lighting company Terzani. Each pendant has seven balls of handblown crystal.

In the living room, family ties continue. The lighting fixture is from Il Pezzo Mancante (the owner of this Italian-based lighting brand is the brother of the owner of Terzani). The chandelier in the living room is made from handblown crystal balls. Between each crystal junction to the black metal rod, there is a little circle of polished nickel. Clement says, "It's like a double-finish chandelier because it has polished nickel and black powder-coated lacquer rods." Light shines through the crystal from the rod. "The light shines through the crystal from the rod." Brightly, Clement says, "It's really spectacular in person."

Clement Kamena's Jar Memory series is again found here, with a representation of Jeff Koons' *Diamond*. Clement felt this piece was the right scale, color, and vibe for the room, and the multifaceted diamond serves as a unique focal point. "You can get intricately lost in it. It was interesting to see how they could take a sculpture and make it feel three-dimensional, through the painting."

Additional artwork in the living room includes a piece from Natalia Kldiashvili, a Georgian artist fascinated by the life of Coco Chanel. On the sides of the

“It doesn’t matter where you live; it matters who you are.”



starburst are newspaper clippings, magazines, and documents from the 1940s–60s that chronicle the life of Chanel. The left side is in French; the right side, English. All the pieces in and around the logo are collages: accessories, buttons, fashion items, to tie the mixed-media piece together.

The luxurious rug in the space was made in Nepal from genuine silk. Of the metallic blanket, Clement says, “It’s really cool because the way it falls onto things, it breaks into little triangles, so it gives a really interesting feel and look.” Clement often will purchase fabric (“the more unique, the better” he says) from vendors and create distinctive throws and blankets in his workshop. The distinguishing Klismos chairs are “Hollywood glamour style,” made from black piano lacquer. Clement explains they have a “very feminine shape and very masculine finish. It’s unusual.”

Feathers — adorning the living room’s pillows (real rooster) — are Clement’s signature. The homeowner’s personal art collection complemented this. In the powder room, a photograph of a woman wearing a garment with ostrich feathers elevates the space. Clement says his client inquired before they started the project if they should incorporate the fashion-forward image in the home’s new design. “I said yes, absolutely,” recalls Clement, and he curated the powder room around the image, taking into account the black and ivory hues and the model’s golden tresses, translating the color palette to the decor, despite the square footage.

While some counter that dark paint has the potential to close up a small space, Clement declares: “A powder room doesn’t have to feel grand… feel grand in style, yes; feel grand in space, no.

“For me,” he continues, “it was more about creating a jewelry box, something really pleasant and sultry and chic and sophisticated.”

To accomplish that sophistication, the designer chose a mosaic brass-tile floor, which complements the Maison Valentina vanity. From Portugal, the vanity features a mix of lacquered and brass balls (the top is imprinted wood on brass). A gold sink and faucet complete it. The photo inspired unexpected design choices. “I know the black toilet is a little ballsy. I know some people hate them. But for me, a white toilet there would make no sense — it would bring attraction to the toilet because it would have contrasted with the wallpaper and black wall. I never try to bring attention to a toilet, so the

PHOTOS: (*LEFT*) COURTESY OF GILLES CLEMENT DESIGNS; (*RIGHT*) BY TREL BROCK



The dining room features video art from MARCK, along with exquisite furnishings.



black in this instance was the proper choice." Elaborating, he says, "It melts with the design, and it's discreet and sophisticated." The wallpaper, handmade in Japan with real gold leaf, is by Studio Zen. The diamond-shaped lighting fixture hails from Holland.

Stylish lighting is an essential characteristic of Gilles Clement Designs: "A good interior design job is made of a lot of small things that create the puzzle, and everything is important, but lighting, in my opinion, is probably the most important," he says, adding, "a lot of the lighting fixtures I choose are very sculptural, very artistic, made by artisans. Most of them come from Europe." His propensity for viewing lighting as an artist statement is evident in the home's grand kitchen. Prior to the reno, the kitchen was outdated and lacking functionality, says Clement. The client, who sought a contemporary and luxurious feel for the space, was Clement's inspiration. "I wanted to give her lighting that looked like jewelry, because she has a lot of amazing jewelry. I wanted to carry on her sense of fashion and her sense of glamour throughout the kitchen."

Clement adeptly accomplished this by personally designing the chandeliers that anchor the space. "Originally, I had the starting inspiration point from Brand van Egmond, from Amsterdam, but that brand's lighting was very expensive, and my clients wanted something they could get faster. They asked if I could do a version of it that was appropriate in scale to the islands. I came up with my own version and had them custom-made in Canada."

Also custom-designed was the cabinetry, built in Clement's workshop. Piano lacquer with brass inserts in the molding make them unique.

Clement says, "I've done so many kitchens in the past in silver-and-white and silver-and-gray, and I like to reinvent myself." To reflect his client's stylish vibe and execute his penchant for cutting-edge design, he selected a backsplash that is a mixture of solid brass and Nero Marquina marble.

For the family of five with frequently visiting grandparents, Clement doubled the size of the kitchen, to roughly 750 square feet (including the nearby breakfast nook) and reconfigured the space for more practical use. He opted for two islands, seating six, and the breakfast nook seats an additional six. (The kitchen wasn't originally suited to host that many people; "I had to work my magic to break the walls, some load-bearing," says Clement.) The islands are Calacatta Gold Ultra Quartz. "Very few people still do marble islands or countertops, because of the maintenance," Clement elaborates. He shares that the islands are special because they have waterfall edges, and they are angled. "This

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GILLES CLEMENT DESIGNS

is something I've honestly never seen," shares Clement. Two of the four corners of each island are angled on a diagonal, because when he expanded the kitchen, one of the walls was protruding. The wall with the ovens and warming drawer protrudes farther out than the other wall. "I carried that angle on the edge of the islands, so not only is it very functional when you walk because they are perpendicular to each other; it is also a design that is unique and a novelty, which is always nice."

The floor features oversized tiles: 36" x 48" Italian ceramic, with Calacatta Gold Ultra veining. The kitchen opens into the breakfast nook, which dons an impressive chandelier from Italian luxury brand Paolo Castelli. The ceiling is custom silver-leaf finish, and the Roman shades are a sheer fabric intended to pick up the veining on the Calacatta floor. "The idea was to mix the greige that's on the floor and the countertop with the Roman shade and introduce this gold." Clement says that not many kitchens featured gold when he started designing this project a few years ago. "I've always been at the forefront of using brass in my design. It's always been challenging introducing clients to it because brass has the connotation of being a traditional material. At the time, I was one of the first ones to create and make pieces with brass when everybody was doing polished nickel and chrome."

The nook is complete with Portuguese finds: brass chairs and a Nero Maquina round table with brass leaf on the top and brass on the pedestal.

The opulence continues in the dining room. The chandelier and sconces are by Terzani, wallpaper by Elitis, and the fabric of the curtains is by Gretchen Bellinger. The table and chairs are custom; the fabric of the chairs is by Romo Zinc. The rug is by the designer himself. Here, the art is elevated to a new level. Rather than typical still art, Clement selected video artwork for this space, by MARCK from Switzerland, which is best appreciated in person.

Elsewhere on the first floor, Clement added an opulent bar, laundry room with ample storage and two washers and dryers, and a mudroom with a study area.

While the family doesn't often enter and exit through the foyer, it shines bright like a diamond. The floor is marble (Clement agreed to incorporate marble here rather than quartz, because "Ninety-nine percent of the time, the family comes through the garage like everyone else in any other house. Because it's not a high-traffic area, I thought marble was the way to go for this one, and black with white veins is really what I wanted because it is consistent with the design of the kitchen and all the rooms we'd redone," shares Clement. The real



***This page and opposite*: The designer took cues from the artwork above to create an elevated aesthetic in the powder room.**



The breakfast nook off the kitchen offers additional seating for a large family. *Opposite page*: The bar features a bold design.

standout here is the sculpture by Edgar Askelovic, a Millennial artist from Lithuania. The life-size sculpture, inspired by Jean-Michel Basquiat, is part of Askelovic's Rihanna series (he gifted the Grammy Award winner with a handcrafted silicone sculpture of herself for her 30th birthday). Clement acknowledges, "It's a really unique and interesting piece. I wanted to do something unique and not have to again put some flowers or a vase and just try to be innovative by putting something that's unexpected" in the space.

Also unanticipated here is the choice of lighting. "I wanted the chandelier to waterfall really low because most people would put the chandelier all the way up," he says. "I often break the rules with the heights of lighting. [Like in the living room, whose fixture waterfalls right on top of the cocktail table.] These are very unusual heights, but I do it because I feel that very often lighting is a great way to anchor a setting. If the lighting is too high, you lose that," he adds. "In this case [the foyer], the metal chandelier falls literally an inch over the sculpture's head, which was curated for that purpose. It makes it very interesting and an unusual introduction to the house when you arrive."

In the foreground is David Datuna's Black USA Flag. Part of the Georgian artist's well-known Viewpoint of Millions series, the mixed-media piece features Datuna's signature technique of using optical lenses over large-scaled layered, collaged, and painted images, with the surface both concealing and revealing the work below. This work by Datuna, a treasure, adds to the esteemed collection of this Westchester estate.

Clement recognizes that there are many important art collections and art enthusiasts in Westchester, and through his design firm and gallery, his focus is to create elegant spaces with mood-enhancing art, in both the traditional sense and through decor and furnishings.

"We live in a difficult world, with a lot of struggles and challenges to overcome every day. For me, your home is really the place you are able to recharge and feel safe. I think it's a very important part of our lives, our homes, and I believe that making your environment more beautiful has a gigantic consequence on your mood and the way you feel about yourself.

"I believe that by creating a beautiful environment for people, it improves their lives," the designer continues. "A beautiful environment needs substance. Furniture, lighting, wallpapers, and fabrics are part of that process of embellishment and of fulfillment. Art can fulfill the need of someone aesthetically and intellectually and emotionally. Art is the soul of the home."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GILLES CLEMENT DESIGNS



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By Gina Valentino

A Cheery Adieu



Interior designer Ariel Okin, of her eponymous firm, moved to Westchester during the pandemic and decorated her own home in her signature "traditional with a twist" style. The entrance to this bright and lively mudroom, on the side of the house, is the one most used by the family. "I'm not afraid of using color — that's something my firm is known for," declares Okin. "I wanted the mudroom to feel joyous and inviting. The Closet Stripe wallpaper and Breakfast Room Green paint in a modern eggshell finish [both from Farrow & Ball] give the space punch without being overwhelming." For accessories, Okin incorporated a durable (yet affordable) jute rug by Himalaya Rugs Company, as her family has a dog and a toddler. The checkered fabric on the bench seat, in Smithton Weave from Schumacher, offers a contrast of textile and color, which Okin says makes her happy. "The console table is from my capsule collection with Society Social. We brought the mirror and pendant [both from Serena & Lily] from our apartment in Manhattan," says Okin, adding: "Color is peppered throughout the house, with lots of blues, greens, and yellows, so this space introduces the color story for the rest of the house."

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