

Sense of Place

The marshland setting of a Connecticut home inspires a sweeping, fresh-as-an-ocean-breeze redesign.

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Interior design: Grace Rosenstein, Atelier Roan

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ntil recently, this couple's classic shingle-style home in Norwalk, Connecticut, felt lacking, despite everything it had going for it. There was ample space and sunlight, impeccable bones and a

sensational setting on a peninsula in the Long Island Sound. What was missing, however, was inviting interiors tailored for their large, blended family. A solution presented itself when the wife fortuitously met designer Grace Rosenstein at a gathering for mothers with young children. Impressed by her know-how, the homeowners turned to Rosenstein to deliver a comfortable, considered scheme optimized for togetherness.

When the designer first visited the house, she admired its clean lines and open floor plan—but it was the waterfront location that made the biggest impression. “I was blown away by the site,” she recalls. Thanks to a renovation several years prior, the home was outfitted with floor-to-ceiling windows and sliding-glass doors, immersing its indoor spaces within the picturesque surroundings. “The winding canals, the blue water, the wildlife—it’s so natural and beautiful. We took those views and ran with them as our jump-off point,” says Rosenstein.

Her first step was to assemble a color palette whose soft, coastal tones echo those found outdoors. On the ground floor, which had previously been appointed in cool shades of white and gray, the designer began by “warming up the walls with milkier variations on white. Subtle differences like that made a big impact,” she notes. Throughout the residence, cream tones are joined by oatmeal, sage and mist, with a little cognac and whiskey thrown in for good measure. Natural textures further serve to connect the interiors to the environs: Linen, alpaca and bouclé fabrics strike an organic tone, while touches of woven rush caning, rattan, jute and sisal nod to the reeds and cattails beyond the windows.

Wood furnishings play another leading role in the design. Working from square one (the

owners made the bold decision to get rid of their entire existing collection), Rosenstein partnered custom pieces with vintage finds whose patina give the house a warm, aged and approachable feel. This is true of the oak spindle stools, which add a beachy flourish to the all-white kitchen, and of the primitive accent tables dressing down the living area. So, too, with more sophisticated additions, such as the pair of midcentury modern Guillaume et Chambron armchairs in the great room and the Louis Philippe sideboard in the entry. Meanwhile, in the dining room, wood detailing takes the form of *faux bois* wallpaper. “That room is separate and quiet, so we wanted more of a cozy library feel—somewhere you can entertain, but also do homework or take a call,” the designer explains.

Rosenstein's keen understanding of the homeowner's lifestyle proved equally valuable when organizing the open-concept great room, which now features two separate yet cohesive seating areas. “Without walls, rooms are more expansive but less homey. I wanted the furniture arrangements to create moments of intimacy,” she says. At one end of the space, she designed a casual zone—comprised of a large sofa and two sets of upholstered chairs gathered around a television—while still carefully facilitating flow to the adjacent kitchen and outdoor living spaces. The opposite side of the great room, which encompasses a sun-drenched rotunda, has a dresser, entertaining-ready feel. There, a curved 1950s sofa recovered in a hand-printed fabric depicting birds, butterflies and botanicals anchors the area. “If the sofa had been done in a solid, you wouldn't have this effect,” she notes. “That pattern took a lot of selling, and it made a huge impact.”

But while the designer's bolder selections commit to memory, it's the artfully curated sense of quietude that makes this project such a success. From its tonal layers of mist, sea and sand, to the many linen sheers that dance gracefully in the breeze, framing each window like an oil painting, the finished result is, in her words, “a little pocket of paradise.” ■



The entry of this Norwalk, Connecticut, house commands attention, starting with the substantial antique Louis Philippe buffet serving as a catch-all for keys and everyday items. A white ceramic lamp from Vaughan and a resin mirror from Mecox Gardens offer visitors a first glimpse of the neutral palette employed throughout.

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The homeowners spend much of their time in the living room’s more relaxed side, where views of the Long Island Sound are framed by drapes of unlined Rogers & Goffigon linen. A custom oak coffee table is surrounded by ample seating, including lounge-worthy upholstered pieces from Highland House Furniture and vintage rush armchairs.



Above: Renovated prior to Rosenstein's arrival, the sleek, white kitchen was designed to melt away in deference to the views. Pulling a warm, organic thread through the space, the designer employed choice wooden details, such as the oiled maple counter stools from Fair NYC.

Opposite: The only space on the first floor with four walls, the dining room is made to feel extra cozy with a *faux bois* wallpaper from Nobilis. Authentic wood furnishings include Hollywood at Home's rush-back dining chairs and an oak trestle table. A textured jute-wool rug from Armadillo joins the warm palette.

The serene primary bedroom takes its cues from the landscape. The mist-colored sea-grass wallcovering is from Cowtan & Tout and the aged-pine dresser is from Kathy Kuo Home. A 1940s Danish Modern chair is reupholstered in Holly Hunt velvet.

