

next

Forward-thinking Design from New England Home

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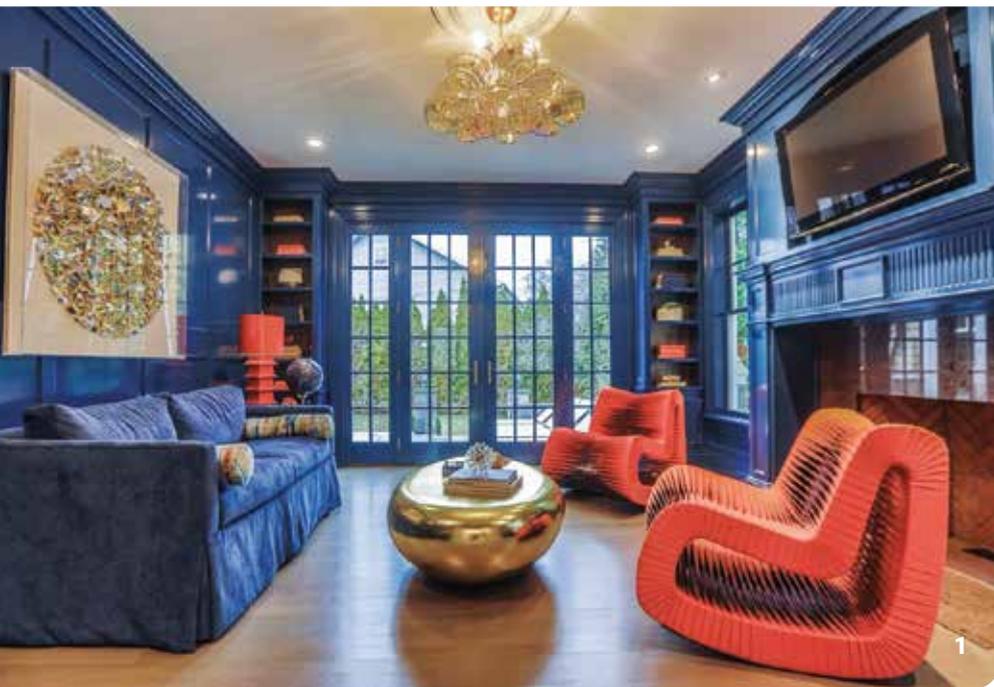
make a statement

bright ideas for stylish living



Not What You'd Spec

Here's how clever designers turn a bland box into something special. by DEBRA JUDGE SILBER



from boring to bold ↗

1 SHIFT OUT OF NEUTRAL

Home sellers like to present a blank canvas, but once the keys change hands, the paint cans come out. "Adding color to a room allows you to inject personal touches, depth, and mood," says Greenwich, Connecticut, designer **Andrea Sinkin**, who uses color—especially in high-gloss—to embolden woodwork as well as walls. "It takes a beating and is easy to clean," she says. In a recent project, she painted dark wood bookshelves bright blue and added blazing orange chairs to turn a former home office into a family-friendly library.

2 ADJUST THE FIT

Homeowners moving from urban digs, where space is at a premium, often don't realize that the seemingly cavernous spaces in suburban homes will eventually

close in on them. "When you come from the city, your perspective on space is very skewed," says **Melissa Lindsay** of New Canaan, Connecticut, based Pimlico. "It doesn't take long for that perspective to shift." Suddenly your delight at having a mudroom—any mudroom—is replaced with the realization that the space isn't up to the task. Reconfiguring, and sometimes enlarging, such spaces to accommodate a new family's needs is often Lindsay's first job. While she's at it, she likes to promote domestic tranquility (i.e. organization) with an oversized framed board for notes, celebratory photos, and other postings.

3 GET PERSONAL WITH ART

"The easiest way to personalize a space and add a lot of soul is art," says Greenwich, Connecticut, designer **Lauren Cuneo**. It's also a great way to



2



3

↖ *art as inspiration*

get started—as some recent clients did. Days before hiring her, they purchased a painting by Atlanta artist Sally King Benedict (above) for their empty living room. Cuneo used it as inspiration, splashing its colors around the room. But don't buy just any art, Cuneo cautions. "Buy what you love even if it means you have empty walls for a while."

SOURCES Laura Cuneo, LC Home Interiors, Greenwich, Conn., lchomeinteriors.com; Melissa Lindsay, Pimlico Interiors, New Canaan, Conn., pimlicointeriors.com; Andrea Sinkin, Andrea Sinkin Design, Greenwich, Conn., andreasinkindesign.com

go bold on drapes ↷



5



6



7

add barn doors! ↷

4 ADD ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST

"Adding shiplap to a wall, a custom barn door to enclose a room (above), or applying a millwork design to a bare wall makes it yours," says **Sarah Weiland**, owner of Tusk in Westport, Connecticut. Rowayton, Connecticut's **Elena Phillips** sometimes incorporates bookcases (reclaimed wood adds a sense of time, she says) and pumps up moldings, which are often undersized or lacking in spec homes. "I love crown because it helps define the space," says Phillips, who likes to paint trim a contrasting color for additional impact.

5 ADD WINDOW WOW

One way to add personality to a space without big alterations is bold window treatments, says Farmington, Connecticut-based **Jeanne Barber**. Their impermanence can be a plus: in one recent project, "The husband wanted to make sure we didn't do anything too wild or personalized that would affect the value if they were to sell," Barber says. "So, we kept the walls and ceiling neutral and went bold on the drapes. It's something they can take with them if they move." Barber used acrylic window hardware to focus attention on the fabric, not the hardware.

6 THINK DIFFERENTLY INSIDE THE BOX

When clients told **Fiona Leonard** they wanted their house "to feel different from everyone else's," the Darien, Connecticut, designer immediately "started thinking of unique furniture layouts to make the home feel unexpected." Channeling the couple's fondness for intimate gatherings, she eschewed the traditional sofa, making a cluster of comfy chairs around an ottoman the focal point of the living room.

7 FLIP THE LIGHTS

Builders aim to light a space, not make a design statement, notes **Weiland**. She suggests swapping out fixtures in main living spaces first to set the tone for the house. "A great light can transform a space that feels like nothing special to something that reflects you," she says. In the kitchen, Weiland recommends eye-catching island pendants, and in the dining room, splurging on a statement chandelier. After swapping out run-of-the-mill (read: bland) fixtures, **Phillips** turns her attention to the ubiquitous can light ("Swiss cheese on the ceiling," she calls them) by substituting pendants wherever practical. **👉**

pendant perfection ↷

SOURCES **Jeanne Barber**, Camden Grace, Farmington, Conn., camden-grace.com; **Fiona Leonard**, Fiona Leonard Interiors, Darien, Conn., fionaleonardinteriors.com; **Elena Phillips**, Elena Phillips Interiors, Rowayton, Conn., elenaphillipsinteriors.com; **Sarah Weiland**, Tusk Home + Design, Westport, Conn., tuskhomeanddesign.com