



RETHINKING A *Vintage* Victorian

Digs Design Company breathes new life into an antique home's interiors.

BY LENORE CULLEN BARNES • PHOTOGRAPHY BY NAT RHEA
Interior Design: DIGS DESIGN COMPANY

Above: Designer Jocelyn Chiappone used Farrow & Ball's "Borrowed Light" on the walls and incorporated furniture with clean lines to give the home a modern seaside vibe.

BACK IN 1900, when this Victorian-style home overlooking Greenwich Bay in Cowesett (Warwick), Rhode Island was built, mariners' families scanned the horizon for a glimpse of their ships returning home. Today, the residents tend to enjoy the view with considerably less angst than their predecessors.

Modernizing while restoring

Owners Kristie and Giovanni Feroce loved the setting, but knew some work would be required to bring their 112-year-old home to a comfortable condition for their family of five. They turned to Jocelyn Chiappone, interior designer and owner of Digs Design Company, to tackle the task of restoring the home "to its original grandeur, while providing a modern feel and comfort level," said Chiappone. Although the home had "great bones and space," rooms weren't being used to maximum potential and some elements were simply outdated. Chiappone succeeded in striking an imaginatively conceived balance of the desired grandeur, livability and comfort.

"She was amazing at bringing new ideas, pushing my comfort zone a little, but sticking to what I was looking for regarding character," said Kristie.

Chiappone asserts that "a designer is only as good as her team," and credits contractor Paul Norbury, painter Ryan Somers and photographer Debby Krim in helping her achieve the desired outcome. "You can have the best ideas as an interior designer, but unless you have the team to execute them, it doesn't matter," said Chiappone. "You have to have the workmanship and quality."

Reinventing the bathrooms

Birthing those ideas began with the gutting of two bathrooms, which were then ushered into the 21st century in distinct style. "We created a bit of a jewel box in the powder room," Chiappone said. "We painted the walls, ceiling and trim in the same high gloss cream. It's a beautiful backdrop for the embroidered curtain and hand-carved bone mirror."

The team transformed the third floor, from what Kristie describes as "kind of an artist's studio with a rusty unusable bathroom," into a "beautiful living space" for her almost-teenage son.

At right: A cocoa bead chandelier and high-gloss aqua-colored ceiling paint add drama to the dining room. Below: A stunning wet bar with a marble backsplash and mahogany countertop links the dining room and living room.



"We added a nautical feel in the son's bath with driftwood inspired tile flooring, crisp white wainscoting and a porthole mirror," said Chiappone.

A modern take on beachy

In the living room, blues and creams set a serene and sophisticated ambience. The inviting wall color is "Borrowed Light" by Farrow & Ball. A lacquered coffee table and geometric carpet provide contemporary accents while metallic fabric on the ottoman bench and a "mod" print on the sofa pillows add punch. "Photographs by Debby Krim are the perfect complement to the monochromatic space," said Chiappone.



A dramatic wet bar links the living room to the dining room. Custom cabinetry was raised to a higher than normal height to showcase the stunning backsplash of Carrara marble in a textured herringbone pattern. The mahogany counter, hammered apron sink and leather basket-weave and nickel cabinet hardware reinforce the elegant tone.

In the kitchen, a mother-of-pearl backsplash adds sparkle to the predominantly black and white color scheme. The cushion on the new custom banquette is finished in a durable, bleachable outdoor woven fabric and a chalkboard pendant adds light-hearted detail.



Above: The kitchen features a mother-of-pearl backsplash and a striking black and white color scheme. At left: The family room, with its blue and white palette, is all about coastal casual.


The family room sports a casual coastal feel rooted in a classic navy and white palette. Built-in bookcases and cabinets in the family room were tired, but not obsolete. “Rather than replacing them, we reworked them by adding beautiful picture lights, inset doors and a custom upholstered tack board above the desk,” said Chiappone.

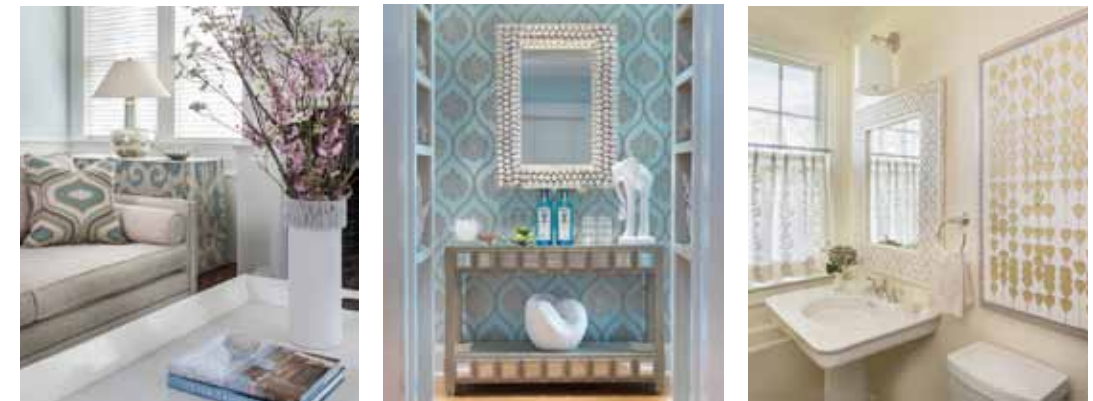
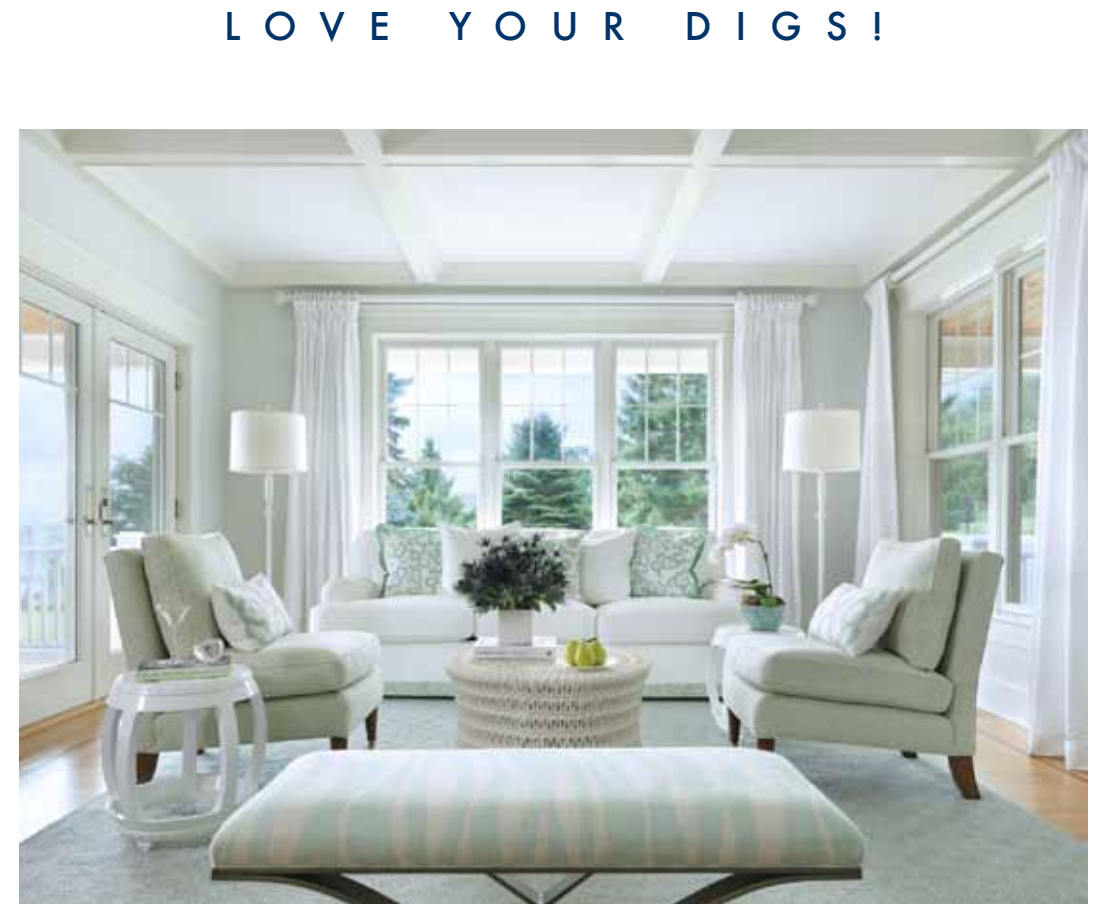
A new piece of art provides a beach-themed focal point, with the bookshelves redesigned around it.

A daring dining room

In the dining room a cocoa bead chandelier takes center stage. The ceiling is covered in a high-gloss aqua shade bringing further drama to the space. Chartreuse accents complement the blues and brass detailing link the mirror, chandelier, sideboard and accessories.

Now, the Feroces enjoy the indoor views as much as the outdoor versions.

“Working with Jocelyn exceeded my expectations,” said Kristie. “It was really a fun experience.” 



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