



Designed to Scale

A rustic-refined aesthetic PLAYS HOST to both GUESTS and PARTIES

INTERVIEW WITH KAREN BOW, KAREN BOW INTERIORS | PHOTOGRAPHER AMY VISCHIO



above center: A custom pillow made by Artistic Upholstery in a Maharam fabric echoes other colors used throughout the space. A vase from West Elm displays beautiful blooms.
above right: A Lostine table pulls double duty as a dining table and workspace. The Crate & Barrel barstools can be adjusted to various heights when eating or doing homework.
opposite: A bench from Lostine can be pulled over to the seating area when company comes.

This is such a beautifully designed space. What's the backstory? I was hired by the clients to do their main house, but the first task at hand was decorating this barn, which had already been built and designed by Huestis Tucker Architects. It was a fresh, existing space that I decorated in conjunction with the main house. It's meant to host guests and cocktail parties—the lower level is used for car storage, but when the cars are pulled out and the garage doors are open, it becomes a dance floor. The clients have two teenagers, so it's a hangout space for them as well.

The main area has room for cooking, eating and relaxing. How did you make that work? Because of the high ceilings and slanted roof, scale was really, really important. The space is asymmetrical, so the furniture layout had to create symmetry. Balancing the weight, going to the right when you walk in, with the furniture to the left near the kitchen, created a sense of symmetry. With the depth between the kitchen and the sofa, we needed

to have enough seating yet also room for the dishwasher to open—it was all about scale, form and function. When the scale is right, it appears effortless, yet there were a lot of nuances that had to be addressed to create a functional space.

So what launched the look and feel? The architecture spoke for itself. It leaned toward rustic, and I wanted to make the space more modern and approachable so it would relate to the main house. Midcentury pieces are smaller and lower, so that's really what drove that choice. I didn't want things weighty; I wanted things to be leggy; I wanted you to be able to see under them for visual clearance.

Was it difficult selecting just the right pieces? Everything was new, but it wasn't easy. I didn't want anything defining the space. I wanted it all to flow, so the chair has soft edges, and the rug is a hide with an organic

A vintage runner injects a splash of red into the barn, and a marble countertop provides plenty of space to cook in the fully functional kitchen, equipped with a fridge, dishwasher and more. A coffee station on one end offers an early morning pick-me-up for overnight guests.

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left: The visual clearance from the seating area to the sleeping quarters provides a cohesive transition between the tones and textures used in both spaces. **above:** A classic Design Within Reach Shell chair was recovered in a custom Maharam fabric that subtly references the color scheme. **below:** A West Elm sectional, reupholstered by Artistic Upholstery, fit the scale needed to strike the right balance. “It wasn’t easy—we had to really look for that sofa—but it was perfect,” Bow says.



“Everyone has the same
REACTION when they
see the space—
‘When can I **MOVE IN?**’”

—HOMEOWNER



shape; a square rug would have been like a stamp—too defined. The sectional itself does that enough, but that’s practical. The little dining table is also airy, so you don’t lose the architecture.

How do the colors you used complement the rustic elements? They’re warm, and they’re textural. They have a rustic-modern vibe with a refinement, with the layering, the depth, the echoing of tones. We presented a couple of different color palettes to the clients, and we went with what they loved.

Sounds like this was a rewarding project in every way. The architects were the stars of this project; they did such an amazing job. I wanted to capture the essence of what they created, but give it a more modern flair. We were just the sprinkles on a really, really great cake. —INTERVIEW BY LAUREN FETTERMAN

Resources:

Interior designer: Karen Bow Interiors, Darien; 914-953-1517; karenbow.com

Architect: Huestis Tucker Architects, Woodbridge and Greenwich; 203-698-1007; huestistucker.com

Upholstery: Artistic Upholstery, Norwalk; 203-849-8907; artisticupholsteryandfabrics.com



top: A Blu Dot bed, covered in a brown tweed and dressed in West Elm bedding, fits perfectly under the nook designed by the architects. **left:** Functional daybeds fitted with custom-made fabric cushions offer a place to sleep or a seat for guests during parties. **opposite:** A round walnut table with an iron base from Design Within Reach softens the sectional’s edges.