

furnishing happiness

Karen Bow picks all the right pieces to make this house a custom fit



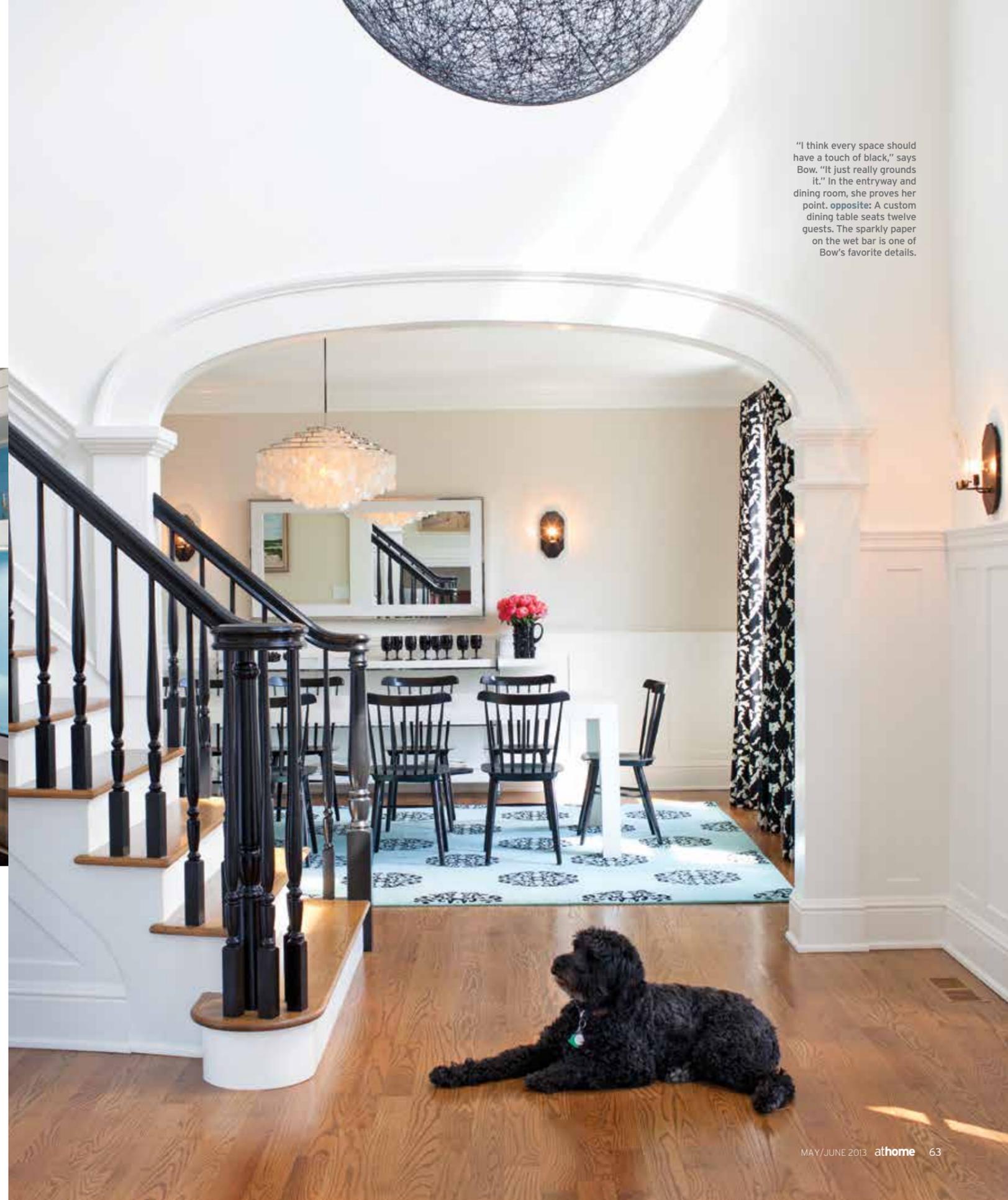
by ESME CHARLES photographs AMY VISCHIO

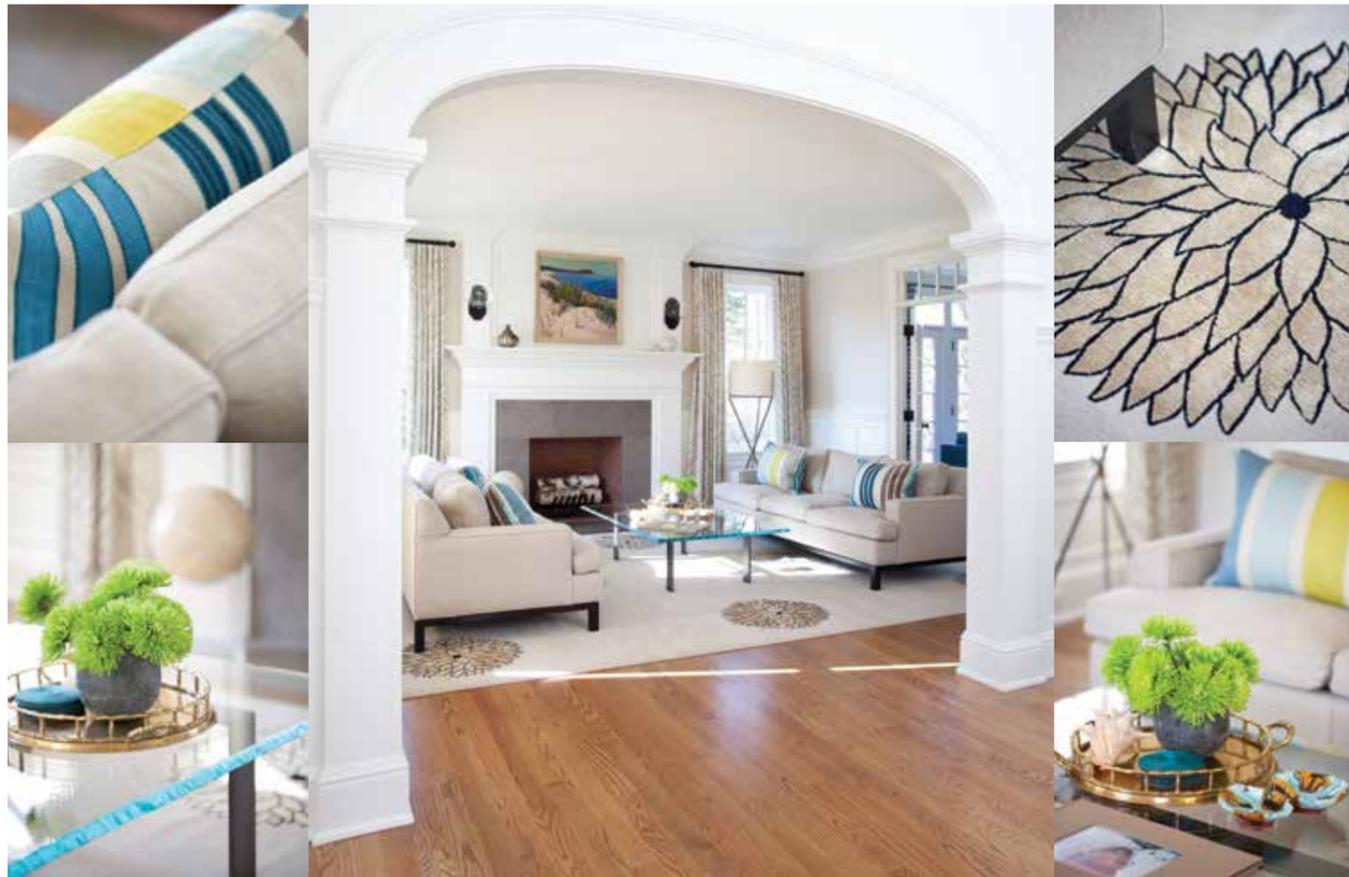
"The devil's in the details," says designer Karen Bow. And this home, on the Darien side of the Rowayton-Darien border, is full of them.

"Whenever I do a project I really work closely with the homeowners. It's important to me that the home reflects them and their needs and their lifestyle," says Bow, who worked with this family (mother, father, their three kids and two dogs) to bring this ground-up construction to life.

The vision for the design was "contemporary farmhouse" with touches of the wife's favorite color, Robin's egg blue. "It was a definite collaboration between the builder, myself and the homeowners," says Bow. "There was a great

"I think every space should have a touch of black," says Bow. "It just really grounds it." In the entryway and dining room, she proves her point. **opposite:** A custom dining table seats twelve guests. The sparkly paper on the wet bar is one of Bow's favorite details.





above: Even Bow's neutral spaces have a lot of interest. In the living room, she used textures and a few colorful stripes to create a friendly, easy space. The glass top of the coffee table was tinted blue to pick up the homeowner's favorite color.

chemistry among all of us, and a mutual respect. It was really a joy to work on this project."

The builder, Dennis Conroy, "was fantastic," says Bow. "He really cared about this family." And with her client, she's formed a bond that will last beyond the completion of this project: "I will be friends with her forever," she says.

The homeowners brought Bow on board in the very beginning, when the house was framed out, and with tape measure in hand, she mapped out the design "in air." That's a feat in itself, but what makes it even more impressive is the fact that nearly everything in the house was custom ordered—from the wallpapers to the dining-room table.

Getting the scale right was part of the reason for that. "It's a large house, but we didn't want to just fill the space," says Bow. "We wanted all the pieces to be practical."

And opting for custom pieces is also sometimes the only way to get exactly what you want. "She entertains a lot, and wanted a dining-room table that seated twelve," says Bow of her client. Anything they could find on the market was either too short or too wide, so they opted for a custom-made piece.

It's these details that make the space, says Bow. A well-thought-out project becomes even better with those little finishing touches and pieces that are *just* right: The paper on the wet bar that twinkles in the light; that one-of-a-kind dining table with sufficient seats for large dinner parties; the custom wallpapers that add a little more interest and fun to the house (like the one-of-a-kind lobster wallpaper in the mudroom, and the silvery custom paper in a first-floor powder room that features a "W" monogram in its pattern).

In the office, which has a more masculine feel to it, vintage pieces and a graphic Hicks carpet—a variation on Robin's egg blue—give it a classic vibe, and the bookcases are closed off so they can be used for real storage without worry about keeping everything neat.

The dining room is a masterpiece of impactful simplicity: Clean lines, pared-down color palette, but together all the components—including a custom rug, mirror, table and sideboard—strike a bold note.

The glass-topped coffee table in the living room was custom made with blue-tinted glass. The family room sectional, ottoman (which has storage for the family's cozy blankets) and cabinets are all custom too, for a perfect fit.

"It's not a **SHOWPIECE**; it's a home that people **LIVE** in."

—KAREN BOW



There is a great flow to this house, created by both the layout and the cohesive design. "In each room the eye travels," says Bow. "I love the uniqueness and individuality of the spaces."



The kitchen, a 2012 A-List finalist, is classic white with a few personal touches like the blue backsplash and wishbone chairs. Hints of black in the light fixture and bar stools keep everything grounded. **opposite:** Just off the kitchen, the color palette continues in the family room, with striped curtains and custom furniture.



The powder rooms feature clever custom wallpapers, including a monogram design (left) and a lobster motif (right). **below:** The office takes a more masculine view on blue, with a mix of darker shades, plus a pop of orange in a vintage lamp. **opposite:** Double doors open onto a patio.



It's clear that the designer and her clients had a lot of fun working on this house, but Bow's favorite details may be in the twelve-year-old daughter's room. Working with her to create her dream bedroom was one of the best parts of this project for Bow. "It's really very special to be part of helping someone have a dream room," she says. The designer used fabric from Egypt for the duvet and curtains, and the custom wallpaper features a trellis of paintbrushes.

Bow makes a point of consulting with the kids when designing their rooms, and that includes the two brothers in this house. "The

boys had a strong point of view, and I followed their lead," says Bow, "but they had the final say." In one of their rooms, a Jonathan Adler bedside table, CB2 desk, custom bed, and club chair from the family room made the cut.

And as she shows in the kids' rooms, Bow is a designer who loves to layer—colors, patterns, texture.

"A lot of my projects have a lot of color. But it's so gentle and so happy and serene, because I layer color on top of color on top of color," she says.





In one of the boys' rooms, a custom-made bed is flanked by a two-tone Jonathan Adler bedside table and a club chair that was previously in the family room. The desk is CB2. "They were really easy going, but they knew what they wanted," says Bow of the boys.



In the other boy's room, a similar graphic rug and matching club chair complement a blue and orange color palette. This bed, like all the beds in the home, is custom-made.





"If I had to pick a favorite room, it would be this one," says Bow. The family's only girl got her dream room with a palette of blue, pink and purple, and her very own powder room with a pretty mirror and blue mosaic tile. A close up of the custom wallpaper reveals the paintbrush pattern.

Taking the same colors and patterns throughout the house creates a truly cohesive design that sweeps through the spaces, giving the home a fantastic flow from one room to the next—and it also keeps the color in check.

"It's important that the eye travels effortlessly so that nothing feels jarring. When you work with color it's important to not feel like it's an Easter egg house," says Bow.

Subtle touches of black and navy also serve to anchor bolder hues, and Bow likes to use these grounding colors in the same form throughout the house. Here, the lighting (all custom ordered), iron-work, doorknobs, and curtain rods are dark.

In the mostly white kitchen, black stools and a black light fixture keep the blue hues of the wishbone chairs and backsplash from visually floating away.

This home is a masterpiece of design details, but the important thing is, "it's happy," says Bow—the people, the décor—and it's a place where the family can kick back and enjoy the company of family and friends.

"This home reflects the people that live in it. They're young; they're active. It's not a showpiece; it's a home that people live in." And thanks to their designer (and builder), they're living quite stylishly. 

RESOURCES

Karen Bow, Karen Bow Interiors, LLC, 914-953-1517

Builder: Dennis Conroy, Castlegate Corporation, 203-470-0179, castlegatebuilders.com

Carpenter: Rich D'Angelo, Angel Custom Woodworking, 203-755-1064, angelwoodworking.com

Wallpaper hanger: Rich Mead, Rich Wallcovering, 203-223-8621

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