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INTERVIEW WITH AMY ZOLIN, CLARITY HOME INTERIORS | PHOTOGRAPHER CHICHI UBIÑA

Vacation Vibes

A new home welcomes
HIGH-END DESIGN for a
laidback lifestyle





this spread: This new summer/weekend home was painted in selections from Benjamin Moore: Stonington Gray on the exterior with Floral White on the trim and shutters.



above: The family room opens up to the expansive patio and pool. Floor-to-ceiling windows and doors on the first floor create an indoor/outdoor feel.

This home has an interesting backstory. Yes, it does! The client works in the city, has a place in Palm Beach and summers in Rowayton. He owns the historic home next door, and he bought this property because he wanted to build a new house here where he could live during the summer and on weekends while keeping the historic home as a guest house. He's using both homes to entertain.

You can see the connection created between the two. Even though the properties are small, there is definitely a meandering feeling between them. They have two distinct personalities—one is historic, one is new—but the landscaping creates this great sense of synergy. That's really difficult to do, and it's amazing how the landscape professionals were able to do that. This project was a wonderful collaboration between the client and the entire design team.

Did the historic house influence the design of the new one? It's funny, but they actually don't relate to each other. After we finished the new

home, we added shutters to the historic house and painted it the same color, but we didn't use the original house as a point of reference. The client had a completely different vision for the new home.

What was that vision? He wanted a ton of light, and since a few of the rooms would have water views, he wanted to take advantage of that. He loves St. Bart's, so that was the overall influence with the high ceilings and the beams. All in all, he wanted to create a lifestyle with this house, where he could be completely casual. With the furniture, I blended sophistication with a little more of a retreat, laissez-faire vibe. We both understood high-end fabrics and high-end furniture, but it still had to look laidback. My goal was to come in and start blending the architecture with the lifestyle he wanted to be immersed in.

What colors were you drawn to? We wanted white and fresh, but I love color, and he was fine with me including some pops. The first-floor bookshelves we designed are red. Upstairs, there are pops of yellow in the

master—an Hermès pillow he found in St. Bart's that is on the bed started the conversation. In the guest bedroom, I wanted a crisp green that had a tropical feeling as a nod back to the island, but with a Connecticut vibe. But whites and neutrals were predominant, and the oak floor gave us a soft palette. The use of floor-to-ceiling windows on the first floor was a great architectural detail from Beinfeld. We didn't want to take away from that, so almost all of the window treatments are sheer.

Did anything in particular launch the overall design concept? When we were first meeting the client, I was listening to the things he liked. I looked up in my bookcase and saw this Christian Liaigre coffee table book. I gave it to him and said, "Is this the feeling? Is this what makes you happy?" It was really about luxury, and he took that and loved it. So, I decided to paint the beams black in the living room and did a very high-gloss black front door. You can see the black furniture in the living room is just with simple whites. It's layers of texture; nothing is fussy. In the family room, I picked soft tones of linen in light blues and grays and mixed them up for the pillows. None of them match; there's a different fabric for each pillow. I wanted that not-too-put-together look.

Did you incorporate any existing furniture? No, we started fresh with everything, except for the kitchen, where there are three vintage bar stools the client already owned. We pretty much made everything and customized some furniture, and we bought some Christian Liaigre pieces.

How did you approach the living room as the home's first impression? Since you walk right into that room from the front door, you needed a starting point to be in the room. The matching consoles on either side of the door gave me that pausing moment, a place where the client could put down his keys or a guest could place a gift. I wanted those consoles to function as the entry into the room, but the first thing you see when you come inside is that gorgeous stucco wall. I love that there isn't a big mantel or a heavy, ornamental fireplace. It's really clean, without any surround. Beinfeld also added a very thin, floating piece of metal above it in the stucco, and it gave it such a chic look; it looks like something you'd see at a resort. I loved the texture of the stucco versus the shiplap on the ceiling and the walls. Because you have to pass through this room while using it as a living space, I also needed to create walkways. The space was really well-proportioned from an architectural standpoint.

below: The family room is furnished with a custom sofa and metal coffee table, both designed by Clarity Home Interiors, as well as two Latin chairs from Christian Liaigre in a Designers Guild linen. Lamps from Circa Lighting sit on a custom table that can be pulled out and expanded for dinner parties.





above: The kitchen was designed by Amy Zolin of Clarity Home Interiors and Bruce Beinfield of Beinfield Architecture and supplied by Nukitchens. Standouts include the Zephyr hood, Wolf range, Sub-Zero fridge, Julien sink, and faucet from Brizo's Litze collection. Caesarstone's Cloudburst is on the counters, and white dolomite polished marble from Connecticut Stone covers the backsplash. Hardware from Top Knobs, a set of Anders pendants from Circa Lighting and the client's own vintage bar stools complete the look. **right:** In the guest bedroom, the custom bed features a headboard in Schumacher's Zebra Palm fabric, and the European box pillows are in Schumacher's Nolita Embroidery on white linen. A pair of Kubrick ottomans from Highland House are in a green Schumacher linen, and the custom flat-weave black-and-white rug is by Clarity Home Interiors.





above: The living room welcomes you inside with a high-gloss black front door and matching ceiling beams. A pair of custom chairs sits on one side of the custom coffee table, and a Verellen Gregoire sofa in Romo's Oyster linen is on the other. On the stucco wall, a custom bronze mantel floats above the fireplace, and sheer window treatments by Hartmann & Forbes filter in light. Points of interest include the client's black-and-white photography of St. Bart's and the artwork over the sofa from Clic.

Did the client have any preferences for the kitchen? He wasn't involved in the design of the kitchen, but he did like the materials. I picked out the wood color, cabinet style and countertops. He didn't want to deal with stains, so we used a quartzite on the counters. I didn't want the kitchen to look too industrial, so the tile for the backsplash is a marble. I designed the kitchen with Bruce Beinfeld, and it was supplied by Nukitchens.

Since the family room opens up to the patio and pool, were there any special considerations for this space? We didn't use any indoor/outdoor fabrics, but we had everything fiber-sealed so the client doesn't have to worry about anything. He wanted a dining table in this space, but I said, "You can't fit a table in here!" But he really wanted to be able to move the furniture and have a dining table, so I designed and made a custom trellis table and put it behind the sofa. It's just a sofa table right now, but when you bring it out, both sides come up, and you have a full 86-inch table. He loves it, and he keeps chairs stacked in the garage for when he has dinner parties. We were creative to fit what we could in here. We had to lay out things differently, but the scale of the room is really good.

Beinfeld did the beams in the ceiling, and that uniform pattern going across really adds to the structure. We didn't put shiplap in here, but we wanted to carry that same feeling, so ceiling details were important.

I see a built-in desk in the guest room. The client can work there if he needs to, and he has a water view. There is a refrigerator, a pullout printer and plenty of space for his computer. He wanted it to be so that if a guest stays in this room, it doesn't look like an office. Everything is custom—the rug, the bed, the upholstery. He was happy for me to take some risks in places, like the Schumacher palm print on the headboard. I also love the ottomans at the end of the bed, where a guest could put a suitcase. The client also had some art at the other house, so I grabbed those prints and put them up behind the bed. This room isn't overdone; it's very inviting.

And what about his master suite? I wanted to continue the black-and-white scheme, but I didn't want the harshness of black beams up here. I wanted it to be light and airy, and the client loves canopy beds. Everything was custom in here. I don't really decorate with gray, but this was a space

“My proudest moment was taking a description of the **LIFESTYLE** he wanted and **CREATING** that for him.”

—AMY ZOLIN





opposite: A pair of consoles provides a point of entry from the front door into the living room. Custom red shades on Lucite lamps offer a pop of color in the black-and-white space. **left:** The master bath is covered in 24-by-24-inch floor tiles; the shower floor, walls and ceiling are faced in Grey Mist polished marble; the shower curb is a slab of Bardiglio; and the custom vanity designed by Clarity Home Interiors is topped with Aurea Paragon, all from Connecticut Stone. Plumbing is from Rohl's Lombardia collection from Torcco, lighting is from the Finch and Milan series by Tech Lighting, and the freestanding tub is from SLIK Portfolio. **below:** The light and airy master bedroom is furnished with a custom bed and end tables as well as a bench by Vanguard in Holland & Sherry's Ellington fabric in Citron. A white Minka-Aire ceiling fan is above, and a custom silk-and-wool rug is underfoot. Lamps from Circa Lighting are perfect for nighttime reading, and a Sandra Jordan Prima Alpaca throw in Sunshine and Heather Grey and an Hermès pillow offer sunny bursts of color.

where gray was a nice neutral, and the Hermès pillow gave us that hit of yellow. For the master bath, I went with him to look at tile and stone. We didn't want anything traditional, and I found pictures of some mosaics that scale, and he loved them. I wanted the shower to look like a plinth, so the base is mitered so it looks like a block of stone. I designed the vanity, and Connecticut Stone fabricated the top so it looks more like a solid slab. It's no fuss, so it won't stain. I was talking to the client about resale, and I put some lavenders in the room so he could see that it could be a feminine bath as well as a masculine one. It's a spa-like retreat.

What do you love most about this home? It feels clean and fresh, but it still has lots of personality. I think it's easy to design something clean and fresh, but it's hard to put personality into that. And it can be challenging when everything is new. You don't want it to look like a showroom; you want it to look like the client, and this house looks and feels like the client. When you see the home without the layers, you see black and white and red, so it was nice to go "shopping" next door and find things for him. He wanted to leave all of his clutter behind, but he still wanted to have things that were his. That was my proudest moment—taking a description of the lifestyle he wanted and creating that for him. —*INTERVIEW BY LAUREN FETTERMAN*

Resources:

Interior designer: Clarity Home Interiors, Greenwich; 203-340-2468; clarityhomeinteriors.com
 Architect: Beinfield Architecture, South Norwalk; 203-838-5789; beinfield.com
 Landscape architect: Richard Hartlage, Land Morphology, Seattle; 206-443-2120; landmorphology.com
 Landscaper: Chris Harvey-Smith, Create-A-Scape Garden & Maintenance, Norwalk; 203-866-0178

