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INTERVIEW WITH ROBIN HENRY, ROBIN HENRY STUDIO | PHOTOGRAPHER ERIC PIASECKI/OTTO



Living Color

Jewel tones, vibrant patterns and **IMAGINATIVE SOLUTIONS** revive an **OLD HOME** for a **YOUNG FAMILY**

What is your history with these clients? I actually met the wife through my husband—they're in the same industry—so I had known the couple socially for a while. They're a young couple, and when they moved out of the city, I helped them with their first home in Larchmont. At the time, they had two small children, and after having their fourth child, they needed more space. There's a beautiful section of Larchmont called the Manor, right off of the water, with old Victorian homes, and my clients found this gorgeous old house. The previous owners had lived here for about sixty years and hadn't done much of anything to it, except install carpet on the living room ceiling! [*Laughs.*] It was a blank slate, and it was something where you really had to get in there and work on it a bit. But my client has a lot of energy, and she loves color and pattern.



left: In the entry, a settee, covered in Svenskt Tenn's La Plata fabric, sits underneath a chandelier custom-designed by Robin Henry Studio and made by Shades From the Midnight Sun. A portrait above the settee creates a witty moment. **above:** A second-floor balcony with arched openings was enclosed and turned into an office.



left: The front porch with teak flooring is furnished with plenty of seating for relaxing. **below:** Opposite the settee in the entry, a custom-made console by Robin Henry Studio is topped with antique mercury glass lamps from Sutter Antiques. Windsor chairs on either side are capped with coverings designed by Robin Henry Studio in a Marine Chan Textiles fabric, and a collection of 1930s watercolors by landscape architect Charles Lay float above. **opposite:** In the dining room, Marthe Armitage's Oakleaf wallpaper in a custom color was installed above the chair rail, and Maya Romanoff's Ajiro Sunburst in Polished Maple is below. Underneath a 1940s Italian chandelier from Hamptons Antique Galleries, Chippendale side chairs from Hickory Chair Pearson in Rialto mohair in Celery from B. Berger gather around the table. Midcentury Danish cabinets flank the fireplace, and new production William De Morgan tiles adorn the surround.







opposite: The dining room's seating area is outfitted with a custom Vladimir Kagan-style banquette by Robin Henry Studio and made by Stitch NYC. Covered in Holland & Sherry's Chamonix wool in Maroon, the sofa is accented with throw pillows custom-made by Deborah Johnson-Ball in Schumacher's Cubist fabric in Peacock. A pair of mohair-and-brass ottomans from 1stdibs are pulled up to a cocktail table by Robin Henry Studio, and a Sommerard triple arm floor lamp from Circa Lighting is nearby. **below:** A table, draped in skirts made by Stitch NYC in Groves Bros.'s Marianne fabric in Ocean, displays cork planters from Chairish and a vintage ceramic art plaque. Double-armed bronze fleur-de-lis sconces frame a vintage Pointillist painting from Chris Hebert Design Group. **right:** The powder room is enveloped in hand-printed Fancy Ashlar wallcovering in colorway C from Adelphi Paper Hangings. A Gabriella mirror in Sapphire Blue from Bungalow 5 adds another dose of rich color, as do the Coleen & Company's Tassel sconces in Peacock. The existing sink was fitted with a Barber Wilsons faucet set.



She's decorated a few homes now and knew what she wanted. We had collaborated on their previous home in Larchmont as well as a house they have in Litchfield County, so this was my third project with them, and we renovated the home together.

What did that entail? We completely opened up the third floor—which was just an attic—and we got three bedrooms, a playroom, two bathrooms, a little library at the top of the stairs and an office on that floor. We continued the main staircase up to this floor, and that let in so much light. Another big part we worked on was the entire back end of the house. We kept the living and dining rooms as is, but the new butler's



above left and opposite: In the kitchen, Benjamin Moore's Providence Olive on the custom cabinetry sets the tone, and a backsplash from Delft Tiles is above the range. A Barber Wilsons faucet was installed at the sink, and lighting includes a 1750s French wrought-iron-and-porcelain chandelier from Hamptons Antique Galleries and Skidmore Classic Cloth-Cord pendants with opal scalloped shades from Rejuvenation. Serena & Lily's Riviera counter stools offer seating at the custom island. **above right:** Custom cabinetry in Farrow & Ball's Hague Blue lines the new butler's pantry. Brass countertops and backsplash gleam in the sunlight, and a Barber Wilsons faucet is an elegant touch. An antique Kalabagh rug from Vintage Persian Rugs offers a dose of pattern.

pantry used to be the home's entire kitchen, and where the kitchen and back pantry are now was an in-law's apartment, so we blew all of that out. Because of the flow of the house, the new kitchen isn't huge, but it's a really cozy size with every amenity and two pantries. The one off of the dining room, the butler's pantry, has their beautiful glassware, booze and a coffee station, and the back pantry is for provisions and the freezer. Those were the large things we did, and we renovated the bathrooms as well. The clients also wanted a real mudroom in the front of the house, which is unusual, but it didn't make sense to eat farther into the driveway by doing a whole mudroom, and the front door is the most convenient place to come inside the house. On the exterior, we updated the roof and the siding, and there was a small balcony on the second floor that wasn't often used, so we enclosed it and turned it into an office for the wife.

What were the clients' main priorities? The first floor has the traditional living room/dining room situation, and the client wanted those to be completely child-friendly so the kids could use every room in the house—that was a big part of what we were looking to do. The rugs in the living and dining rooms are made of polypropylene so they can handle spills. In the dining room, there are a pair of chests flanking the fireplace that hold computers, and the kids sit at the dining room table and do their homework, or they set up an easel there and paint. They really, really use these rooms. There is a large playroom in the basement, and they now have a big playroom on the third floor, so there are a lot of places for the kids to go.

Did you have a particular starting point? The little sofa in the entry belonged to the client's grandmother, and we brought it from the previous house I decorated for them; it had been in the living room in the same



this page: The formal living room doubles as the casual family gathering area. The generous sectional, custom-designed by Robin Henry Studio, features a base covered in Vanessa Arbuthnott's Nordic Stripe Reindeer in Raspberry, cushions in Holland & Sherry's Savile Row Windsor Tweed in Jessie, and trim in Buckby Braid in Poppy Forest from Lee Jofa. A 19th-century French pine-and-gilded mirror from the Antique and Artisan Gallery graces one wall, and a vintage painting purchased from Peridot Antiques at High Point is on another. Rather than white, Henry chose to use color on the walls—C2 Paint's Beehive was paired with Hyman Hendler's red grosgrain ribbon trim.





above left: A pair of whimsical deer lamps from Artistic Porcelain are displayed on the living room fireplace mantel, painted in C2 Paint's Dorian Gray. The artwork above is a 1969 oil on canvas, "Automne" by Gabriel Godard from Doyle New York. **above right:** Robin Henry Studio custom-designed the closets, pendant light and trellis in the new mudroom. The trellis is backed with Japanese chiyogami paper for a fun touch, and the pendant light was made by Shades From the Midnight Sun.

fabric. We knew we wanted to put it in the entry to keep that area light and bright. I would say the color scheme throughout came from the client's love of jewel tones. The dining room table and chairs were from their previous house as well, so we had those to work with, too. It just developed from there.

So how did the rest of the dining room come together? The oakleaf pattern on the walls is a Marthe Armitage wallpaper, and I thought it made a beautiful backdrop and related to the exterior. This space is a central room in the house, and it gets all of this light all of the time, so I wanted to relate it to the exterior in some way. I contrasted it with the paper below, which looks like marquetry. That's something you would see in the dining room in an old house like this—woodwork on the bottom with wallpaper above the chair rail—so we reference that idea in a fun way. The tiles around the fireplace surround are Victorian tiles, and it's a pattern that has been around

since the 1800s; the colors are amazing. With the seating area, we wanted something more modern to drive home the point that what we're doing here is really playful, so I like the juxtaposition of that.

When designing the new kitchen, what did you focus on? The client cooks all of the time, so she had a lot of ideas about how she wanted this space to function. As I mentioned, it's not a huge space, but often when we design new kitchens, they're almost *too* big. This kitchen is sort of intimate; you can hold court here while you're cooking, and everything is close by and manageable. The Lacanche range was important to her, and we added the arched window over the sink. Because it's a small room, we didn't want the island to be big and bulky, so we custom-made it to appear more like a piece of furniture and gave it a simple, plain English look. We also put terracotta pavers on the floor and used limestone as a border to define the kitchen area.

“I love the idea of
**GRANDMA-MEETS-VICTORIAN-MEETS-JAPANESE-
MEETS-MIDCENTURY** and making it all work.”

—ROBIN HENRY





opposite: The master bedroom enchants with an ethereal canopy bed custom-designed by Robin Henry Studio. Panels of Barry fabric in Soft Blue from Gray Lines Linen cascade down from the corners, and a Napoleon III-style bench from the Antique and Artisan Gallery, covered by a vintage cotton suzani from Marine Chan Textiles, sits at the foot. George Kovacs's Save Your Marriage lights hover above the headboard, and mahogany campaign-style brass-trimmed side tables serve as nightstands. **this page:** The reworked master bath is a vision in cerulean. Mosaic House's Tanger S tile is underfoot, and Benjamin Moore's Yarmouth Blue is on the walls. Tooled brass Middle Eastern artwork from Peridot Antiques presides over a Waterworks tub fitted with Barber Wilsons hardware, and an inlaid Syrian Islamic chair from the Antique and Artisan Gallery offers a perch nearby. A Todd polished brass mirror from Made Goods is a point of reflection in the serene space.



“What’s so great about these **OLD HOUSES** is that I feel like this era of house-building had a **DEEP UNDERSTANDING** of **HOW PEOPLE USE THEIR SPACES** and **MOVE THROUGH THEM.**”

—ROBIN HENRY



opposite: The wife’s office, once an outdoor balcony, receives a burst of color from the Rosa Pink wallcovering from Imogen Heath, and an Eames soft pad management chair from Herman Miller is pulled up to the custom desk. Matchstick blinds custom-designed by Robin Henry Studio with tassels by Samuel & Sons were made by Stitch NYC, and the vintage Italian Stilnovostyle chandelier is from the Antique and Artisan Gallery. **above left:** On the second floor, one of the children’s bedrooms features a “Hershey’s Kiss” bed custom-designed by Robin Henry Studio. A midcentury modern lacquered desk from Post Modern Home and a marshmallow stool from Kinder Modern are set up for homework. Farrow & Ball’s Pale Powder is a touch of softness on the walls. **above right:** In the second-floor bath, Oscar de la Renta’s Hedges wallpaper in Sky adds a vibrant pop of green accented by wall and floor tile from American Restoration Tile. Kohler’s wall-mounted Brockway sink is illuminated by Rufus sconces from Rejuvenation; a Root stool from Terrain holds towels.

The living room needed to be both an entertaining space and a family gathering one. How did you balance that? This room is the only formal living space, so it had to function both ways. The client said, “Our kids are going to be in here, so we need to make space for them.” That idea was at the forefront, and we decorated around it—like using a family-friendly fabric on the sofa—while keeping the feeling a bit more upscale. Because of the overhanging porch, this room can be a little dark. A lot of people would be using this room, watching TV, and furniture would be up against the windows, so we needed to find a way to keep the room bright. I find

that if you use a bit of color on the walls rather than white, the room looks good in all types of light throughout the day and evening. Since this space doesn’t get a ton of light, we used color for that reason. I thought curtains would seem heavy, so I opted for matchstick blinds, which I treated like a Japanese sudare blind. They’re outlined in contrasting fabrics, and we put tassels on them to make them a little more upscale. We used them in the dining room as well to tie the spaces together.

Tell me about the master suite. This room was a little strange and a little



opposite: The husband's office, tucked into an eave on the third floor, is wrapped in Charlotte Kalamkari wallcovering by Les Indiennes, with Farrow & Ball's Blazer on the window trim. An Italian hand-blown glass pendant from Blithewold Home crowns the room, and a signed Dyrlund midcentury modern rosewood desk with brass mounts offers ample workspace. Indian chik blinds in the Sidha design from Joss Graham were used as window treatments and to conceal a built-in bed and an office supply nook.

right top: The children's library gets its "treehouse" feel from Donald Kaufman Color's DKC-102 and a Daisy rug designed by Gunilla Lagerhem Ullberg from Kasthall. A Napoleon III-style chair from the Antique and Artisan Gallery is covered in Pierre Frey's Samba Estragon outdoor fabric. **right bottom:** The third-floor playroom's window seat, in Karapinar fabric in Riviera from Jim Thompson Fabrics, is topped with Colombian molas fabric made into cushions by Deborah Johnson-Ball. A Dots area rug in custom colors from Vermilion Rugs is another playful addition.

chopped up. With a fireplace and windows everywhere, there was no bed wall, which made it a bit tricky. We opened it up as much as we could, and we put a small seating area near the fireplace. There was only one spot for the bed, so that's why we hit on the canopy idea. The windows behind the bed have simple Roman shades that mesh with the wall color, so the bed is pulled away from the windows a bit to make it stand alone in a way. We did what we could with a small, unusual space to make it something awesome. The master bath was a warren of a dressing area and bathroom and very old-fashioned. We took all of that out and opened it up. That blue is a really pleasing color; it's not too aggressive. You can spend a lot of time in there and still feel good.

How did you determine the ideal layout for the third floor? It was a puzzle getting all of the various spaces into it. The main staircase ends at the green library, which is the stair landing, and then there is a long hallway, where the other bedrooms and bathrooms are, that ends with the green playroom. Because the landing was a decent size, we chose to make it the children's library with all of their books. That's why this house is so great—it has so many nooks where you can put all of these great spaces in. I love the green up here—that was a little hard to bring the client around on, but we worked on it together and landed on this vibrant shade; it's so wonderful. You're on the third floor, and it makes you feel like you're in a treehouse. The husband's office is tucked into an eave up here, too, and it has a "bonus" bed in it—I would love to have a bed in my office! Sometimes someone will sleep up there when the clients have extra houseguests. We put shades over it and rolled them halfway down to make it cozy, and the shades opposite the bed hide another nook with office equipment, and there's another small closet. You can just put the shades down and pretend it all doesn't exist!

Was the client game to try anything? She's adventurous and has a lot of confidence, and she really likes this kind of vibrant fun...this is her, in a nutshell. This is how she likes to live, with all of the color. We joked that the kitchen was like our *Downton Abbey* moment—we were really into the olive/camouflage green, really traditional materials and dark counters. We wanted to work with the bones of the house and make it work in a fun way; we were on the same page about that.

Does any particular piece or element stand out for you? I love the light fixture in the entry; I love the mudroom; I like the Japanese elements,





above left: One of the attic baths is clad in American Restoration Tile on the floor and walls and fitted with Barber Wilsons hardware and a custom mirror. Carrera marble tops the custom vanity, and the tub is from Sunrise Specialty. **above right:** In one of the third-floor bedrooms, a built-in bed unit custom-designed by Robin Henry Studio makes the best use of space. A striped Cabin wool blanket from Faribault Woolen Mill and a Toast UK mohair throw in Warm Ochre dress the bed; a Zouak painted table from Berber Trading corrals reading material. **opposite:** In another attic bedroom, a canopy bed, custom-designed by Robin Henry Studio, is nestled in a nook. A light blue mohair throw from Putnam & Mason is draped across, and Night of the Skylarks wallcovering from Tapettitalo surrounds the room.

like the polypropylene rugs that we made look like tatami, the sudare blinds and the chiyogami paper behind the trellis in the mudroom. I loved the idea of grandma-meets-Victorian-meets-Japanese-meets-midcentury and making it all work. The house, to me, feels like *Cheaper by the Dozen*. It's this big, rollicking house filled with people and color and light and life, and that's what we tried to bring out. What's so great about these old houses is that I feel like this era of house-building had a deep understanding of how people use their spaces and move through them. Today, a lot of those details are lost or fall by the wayside—we want to open everything up and make it bright, which is great, but the wisdom of the design and the way this house is put together is so satisfying. It's set up perfectly for entertaining—there's a lot of space and a lot of light. Everything about it comes together so well.

What is your favorite part about this house? How well it functions. Old homes get a bad rap; people think they don't function for the way people live today, but I think this house functions better. You can be in the kitchen with the door closed, the kids can be watching TV in the next room, and no one is bothered by that, but at the same time, it breathes, and there are a lot of connections. The house has to absorb all of these people, and everyone needs to have their own space, and this house does that really well without making you feel closed off from anything. I think that's the miracle of this house. —INTERVIEW BY LAUREN FETTERMAN

Resources:

Interior designer: Robin Henry Studio, New York City; 646-409-3099; robinhenrystudio

