

CTC & G

Connecticut Cottages and Gardens

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ARCHITECTURE!



Straight Lines

In the living room, a pair of Mandy Graham lounge chairs face off against a daybed and sofa through Michael Del Piero Good Design Hamptons, all situated on a sisal and suede rug from Merida Studio. The pendant is from Apparatus Studio. See Resources.

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

Sissy+Marley's warm minimalism fills an Old Greenwich home
BY DAVID MASELLO | PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARCO RICCA

Not unlike the canvas of a painting, the Sissy+Marley mother-daughter design team of Chelsea Reale and Diana Rice always sign one of their finished projects. While the homeowners won't find the designers' actual penned names on a wall, what Reale and Rice always leave beyond is their "look"—signature elements that reflect their aesthetic. "Thankfully, most of our clients, like this young couple, come to us because they like our aesthetic," says Reale, who has worked with her mother, Diana, since 2011 from their Brooklyn studio. "When the clients found us on Instagram, during the pandemic, shortly after they moved from a Manhattan apartment into their new home in Old Greenwich, they were already in love with the way Diana and I often use ebony and white in our projects, a dynamic that results in bold moments."

Another signature of Sissy+Marley that reveals itself in a complete project is a subtle imbalance. Look at one of the designers' finished rooms, and it's likely you will see a painting hung off center above a fireplace, objects and books on shelves that are not precisely balanced, furniture that is positioned to the side. "When you place something a bit off center," says Rice, "it makes both the object itself and what surrounds it feel not exactly typical. All the elements feel more interesting. It seems common to center something, but we make it common not to."

Soon after moving into their home, the couple knew it was time to stop sleeping on the floor. While their children had beds, the husband and wife—he a physician, she an attorney—had left their city digs so quickly that they hadn't brought much furniture. After a spell on a mattress on the floor, they commissioned Reale and Rice to furnish the five-bedroom home, a brand-new spec residence designed by Beinfeld Architecture. One of the major changes the interior designers made—in concert with their longtime architectural collaborator, Jesus Aguilar of Studio Ater—was to add a mudroom. "We made

sure that design-wise, the new space would fit aesthetically with the existing house," Reale says. "The couple needed that room for their kids, who are always running in and out with backpacks and boots that need to be taken off."

As for choosing the furnishings, the experience of this project was typical for Reale and Rice. "Chelsea and Diana recommended pieces they personally saw and tried out," says the homeowner. "They never shy away from giving you their unfiltered advice and opinion—and it's refreshing to work with a team that is decisive and has a definite 'view.'" Indeed, Reale and Rice are used to this dynamic, whereby they present their findings to the clients, who then let the designers go about their work unencumbered. "Our job, of course," explains Rice, "is to take to the next level the decisions that have been made. We're always so grateful to have clients exactly like these who have such trust in our vision."

While the homeowner curated the artworks—notably antique portraits—in the home, Reale and Rice curated all of the furnishings and accessories, down to the books on the shelves. "There were a few pieces we weren't sure of during the initial presentation," says the client, "but after exploring a couple alternatives, we ultimately came back, every time, to their first choice. Those are now some of the pieces that we love the most."

Perhaps the most exhilarating signature element of the designers, though, is their methodology about the presentation of the finished house. The so-called Big Reveal is a well-orchestrated event of theirs. "The clients were due to be away for week," recalls Reale, "and so we used that time to put everything into place. The children weren't there for the moment, but the homeowner later sent us lovely photos of the two children seeing their new rooms for the first time, with them bouncing happily on their new beds. As the homeowner adds, "The joy we feel now and the feeling we had at that first sighting hasn't changed with the passage of time." *

AS SEEN IN
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Creating Balance

(THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) A Space Copenhagen shearing stool provides seating at a Blackcreek Mercantile & Trading table in the primary bedroom. A chair and ottoman from B&B Italia and a Cassina stool fill a corner of the primary bedroom. The home office is equipped with a desk and bench from Mandy Graham. In the foyer, a vintage portrait hangs over an Oja Design demilune table from March. In a guest bedroom, a Loop wardrobe from

Design Within Reach is complemented by black-oak-and-leather hooks from Unison Home and a low stool from Blackcreek Mercantile & Trading.

Stylish Dining

(OPPOSITE PAGE) In the dining room, a white-oak table from Blackcreek Mercantile & Trading is surrounded by Carl Hansen chairs, while a chandelier from Apparatus Studio provides a sculptural presence. The mirror, made of ebonized oak and blacked steel, is from Yucca Stuff. See Resources.





“They were already in love with the way Diana and I often use ebony and white in our projects, a dynamic that results in bold moments”



Gathering Space A blackened-brass light fixture from Apparatus Studio illuminates the kitchen island (ABOVE). In the family room (OPPOSITE PAGE)—which melds with

the kitchen—a long, narrow trestle table is set with Carl Hansen chairs, while a Hans Wegner Circle chair beckons alongside the fireplace. See *Resources*.



In Repose

(THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) A leather sling desk chair through Fair Design is paired with an ebonized oak vanity in the primary bedroom. Sawkille's Meditation bed through Fair and Pinch Design's side table from the Future Perfect are used in the primary bedroom, where the rug is from Armadillo. In a guest bedroom, a Workstead sconce is complemented by

a Pinch Design side table. Lostine's Hugo Barbell floor lamp makes a statement in the guest bedroom. The primary bathroom boasts Sissy+Marley's custom millwork.

Kid's Play

(OPPOSITE PAGE) A Room&Board Fort steel bunk bed sports bedding from Crate&Barrel. The Peak wallpaper is from Marley + Malek Kids. See Resources.

