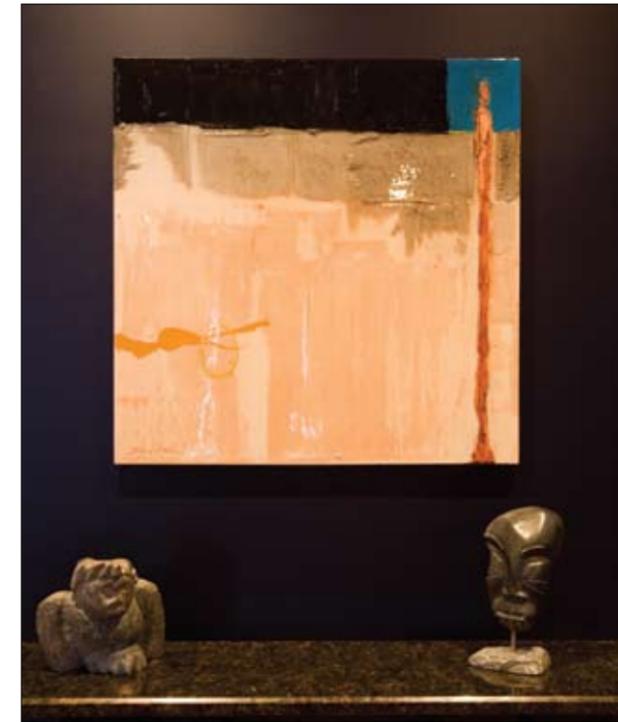




Platforms above the main staircase prompted purchase of sculptures depicting the four seasons; art plays an important role throughout.



Book Smart

Suzanne Novik interweaves a couple's love of books and art into a liveable home

Thomas Jefferson said, "I cannot live without books." The owners of this contemporary colonial in Westport, Connecticut agree. So much so, that an accent pillow in their beloved library is stitched with the quote. The couple's passion for books, evidenced by their massive collection, was one of interior designer Suzanne Novik's first discoveries, and one of her biggest design challenges. Honoring the couple's passion for the written word while remaining true to her art, Suzanne incorporated a large array of books without compromising visual balance and ambiance.

LEFT Working within a scheme of natural elements, the designer created a comfortable and inviting family gathering place.

OPPOSITE Muraled walls set under a dark navy ceiling bring the outdoors into the dining room.



The Westport house is truly a home. The second— but not secondary—requirement of the owners was that Suzanne's designs be very 'liveable'. Today, the family of five enjoys using nearly every room, everyday.

Suzanne, a former art teacher whose special gift was inspiring students to find art and design in their everyday lives, began her interior design business in 1994. Not surprisingly, she was delighted with the homeowners' third requirement: to incorporate their growing collection of art and sculpture into her room designs.

"I love it when clients have collectibles that they want to showcase," says Suzanne. "These particular homeowners are loyal patrons of a favorite gallery in their native Canada, so they not only had collected pieces, they also insisted on finding additional pieces to complete room designs. They worked within color palette and size parameters, and because they were so aligned with my room designs, they made thoughtful choices."

The family room, just off the kitchen, was the first to undergo transformation. Sun-drenched and anchored by a rounded fieldstone fireplace, it offered the opportunity to bring in elements from the outdoors. The designer chose a natural color palette with earth-toned furnishings, including an airy





LEFT U-shaped seating in the media room is set on the diagonal for easy viewing, and casual cocktail tables multi-task as footstools.

RIGHT Separated from the media room by French doors, the library features natural paneling and a coffered ceiling which provide serene haven.

BELOW Shape and texture in shades of taupe and gray define the home office. A Boyd double-shade chandelier provides drama.



organic print, mossy colored mohair and shades of taupe. The room, sans television, (found instead in the home's media room) prompted her to design the circular seating arrangement, which adds warmth and invites conversation. In order to visually balance the weighty stone fireplace, built-in bookcases backed by wood-toned bead board hold family treasures, and of course books. Above the fireplace hangs one of the couple's new art acquisitions, selected by them specifically for that spot.

"I like to have a bit of drama in my designs," says Suzanne, "and there should always be something unpredictable." Welcome to the dining room; perhaps the most unusual room in the home. The vision for this room took flight on Suzanne's first visit, having found in the otherwise empty room, one lone object—the client's telescope. "What is a better symbol for bringing what's out 'there' in closer?" she says.

Suzanne offered several design ideas for the room, but it was the suggestion of a mural that instantly intrigued the owners. The existing white wood panels now provide the perfect framework for the custom, hand-painted mural that surrounds the room. Local artist Ken Scaglia painted the mural on pieces of canvas, which were then applied like wallpaper. The design delivers a fresh-as-air, outdoor motif by expanding the feeling of the outdoors beyond that of the room's three windows. By setting the entire room beneath the surprising dark navy



ABOVE An antique tapestry provided inspiration for the soothing color palette of the master bedroom.

RIGHT A cleverly transformed nook becomes a welcomed addition to the master bedroom dressing area.

'sky' ceiling, complete with a wash of silvery hand-painted stars and a dripping star-like chandelier, Suzanne captured the drama of a real night-sky. At the request of the owners, there is no floor covering in the room. Instead, the room is grounded by the orbit-like round table. The table is unpredictably traditional, as are the accompanying navy mohair covered chairs, also punctuated by silver. The telescope remains a conversation piece.

The media room beckons with the promise of comfort and relaxation. Choosing a muted color palette, walls are awash in the same navy blue as the dining room's ceiling. The color again provides a dramatic backdrop for the main event—watching movies. By setting the large TV into the expansive, angled wall of built-in bookcases, any negative impact of electronics is minimized. Positioning creates the perfect focal point for the large, U-shaped seating area which is set on the diagonal. Outfitted with a brown leather sofa and love seat, and two upholstered chairs, there is plenty of room and easy viewing for everyone. Stump-shaped cocktail tables multi-task as footstools.

Flanking the fireplace and television are floor-to-ceiling book cabinets. "Not all books are pretty," says Suzanne. So in keeping with the owners' wishes, many 'treasured friends' sit behind the custom cabinet doors. Painting the cabinets with a light strié effect softens their otherwise imposing expanse. Adding visual relief and interest are the opposing vertical and horizontal open shelves, perfect for displaying family treasures.



Ultra-suede window shades and the custom checkerboard pattern rug complete the 'screening room' mood.

An octagonally shaped little girl's room presented the perfect opportunity for Suzanne to play with sunshine. Yellow walls beneath a hand painted fabric canopy, depicting dappled sunlight, blue sky and puffy white clouds offered the perfect backdrop for the room's butterfly themed décor. Believing that children's rooms should be designed with 'room to grow,' Suzanne's concepts are delivered in youthful sophistication. The lively butterfly fabric used for the headboard, footboard and pillow sham have soft glittery accents, to delight any age. The bedspread is a soft and practical white Matelassé. To cushion small feet, the custom octagonal-shaped rug arranges colors from the scheme in a geometric pattern trimmed in blue. Accessories like butterfly lampshades and the large butterfly mobile complete the childscape.

The master bedroom suite presented a different design challenge. Wanting to depart from other artwork, the client requested décor that could incorporate a traditional antique tapestry. Knowing that the piece would be central to the elements of her design, Suzanne asked the couple to find their tapestry before she began to design the room. They searched, but found nothing that satis-

ABOVE & RIGHT In the master bath, simple silver trumpet vases frame distant views. Master bedroom sitting area reverse-facing fainting couches provide a relaxing change from public spaces.

fied their vision. Exercising her talent, Suzanne then found just the right piece: a circa 1780 French tapestry which became the inspiration for the room.

Consistent with the room-to-room flow of blue, Suzanne selected a shade of teal from the tapestry. Soothing shades of olive and brown completed the European, sanctuary-like feeling. A backdrop for the furnishings was created by covering walls in a Zoffany, silver-washed teal damask wallpaper, and adding a rug with fine lines of teal and dark olive and finally, window treatments in silk taffeta. Teal velvet covers the headboard of the four-poster, canopy-like Niermann Weeks bed. Venetian silver leafed nightstands, also Niermann Weeks, are inset with panels of antique mirror. Topping the stands are Jay Strongwater picture frames and antique lamps in Verdé marble and gold ormolu.

Under the window near the bed, a revolving bookcase keeps choice volumes close at hand. Flanking the bookcase are Suzanne's





OPPOSITE Tree branches in a monochromatic palette give the guest room an organic feel. Chair and nightstand are fashioned from branches.

LEFT Octagonal girl's room is done in a butterfly motif, set beneath a hand-painted fabric canopy.

most exciting finds for the room: "I found these antique chairs in Stamford's Harborview Antiques Center. They are upholstered with pieces of antique tapestry that I knew would be perfect for the room." A set of French doors separates the adjoining sitting room. Reverse-facing fainting couches covered in teal mohair offer an opportunity for enjoying a cozy fire or watching the television, which is hidden behind cabinet doors. Above the fireplace is another piece from the couple's art collection. To the right of the fireplace a hallway leads to the dressing area and master bath. A niche along the way is re-purposed, becoming the perfect seating for slipping on shoes and a last minute reflection.

In the master bath, the centerpiece tub is set against windows with distant views. Suzanne chose softly colored glazed walls, artfully playing down the interior colors in order to draw the eye outdoors. Flowers in silver trumpet vases mimic the stand of trees just past the pointillette flowered window treatment.

Perhaps the room that is most reflective of the homeowners is the library. Separated from the media room by French doors, the library's heavy natural paneling and coffered ceiling convey serenity. A circular patterned custom rug coordinates with the rug in the media room, and anchors the four upholstered wingback chairs that ring the leather ottoman. Of course, there are shelves and shelves of books here. Likely one of them holds this quote from Henry Ward Beecher: "Books are not made for furniture, but there is nothing else that so beautifully furnishes a house." ■

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