

DECEMBER 2018

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into the woods

A forested parcel on the banks of Lake Champlain in Panton, Vermont, captivated a Texas couple, who hired Houston designer Cathy Chapman and Burlington, Vermont-based architecture firm TruexCullins to transform the original 1927 farmhouse on the site. **OPPOSITE:** In the dining room, a mural by local artist Kathy Mitchell commemorates the area's history. Cozy furnishings, such as a wing chair in a Pollack flannel, are understated so as not to compete with the views. Lamp, RH, Restoration Hardware.



ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN, A 1920s VERMONT FARMHOUSE IS UPDATED WITH LOCAL STONE AND A SOFT PALETTE, IN HARMONY WITH THE ETHEREAL VIEW OUTSIDE ITS WINDOWS.

Interior Design CATHY CHAPMAN **Architecture** TRUEXCULLINS **Interview** CELIA BARBOUR
Photography ANNIE SCHLECHTER **Producer** KARIN LIDBECK BRENT

The clients wanted to use local and reclaimed materials wherever possible, so the living room walls are clad in stone taken from the same nearby quarry that once supplied the original house. Furnishings were chosen "to keep that farmhouse feel," says Chapman, with a few modern pieces, such as the sling chair, to add freshness. Simple lines and hushed textiles maintain the emphasis on the house and its site; even the sparkle of the Christmas decorations is subdued. New steel casement windows shepherd light through the nearly two-foot-thick walls; a pair of facing circular mirrors and high-gloss ceilings help the light dance. The sofa and bench are covered in Mark Alexander fabrics. Stool, Joyce Horn Antiques.





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Snow-covered Vermont is a long way from balmy Houston, where you and the clients are based. How does a Texan get into a New England state of mind?

CATHY CHAPMAN: A lot of the design inspiration came from the landscape. The property—a 125-acre wooded peninsula jutting into Lake Champlain—really spoke to the clients. The wife fell in love with it while she was visiting her daughter at college in Vermont.

CELIA BARBOUR: Was the palette influenced by this northern landscape?

Yes! The interior colors came directly from what she saw out the windows—the soft, chalky blue-grays of the lake and the distant Adirondacks; the skies with those pinks, purples, and golds. She wanted the interior colors to harmonize with the view.

How about the materials? They, too, seem to bring the outdoors in.

They do. The house was pretty much taken down to the studs, and everything is local. For example, the stone used for the living room walls comes from a quarry a couple of miles away. Trees that had to be cleared on the property were milled and made into paneling for new walls. We also reused materials from the original house: old wooden floorboards became ceilings, and sinks and tubs were refurbished and given new life.

I'm guessing that the excellent craftsmanship was also sourced locally?

Absolutely. It mattered a lot to these clients to support local artists and artisans: The builder, the stone masons, and the woodworkers are all based nearby, and they were among the best I've ever worked with. Many of the furnishings, also, were custom made in Vermont.

ABOVE LEFT: A spiral staircase connects the master bedroom suite to the kitchen. The custom steel hood is by Birdseye. The checkered floor is in Champlain Black stone. **LEFT:** The mudroom features a refurbished vintage mop sink from the original house. Paint on cabinets, Sherwin-Williams Cyberspace. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** A mirrored glass sconce adds sparkle; the mural is by Kathy Mitchell. In the dining room, the table extends to an oval, filling the small space; the candle chandelier by Authentic Designs, one of two, slides on a rod to remain centered. The bar counter is clad in pewter and finished with brass rivets in an echo of the cool-warm interplay used throughout the house. The stately front door is painted in Benjamin Moore Safety Black, and Vermont evergreens fill the urns; sconces, Ann-Morris.



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When it came to furnishing the rooms, you eschewed the quilt-and-butter-churn aesthetic that can often prevail in this region.

The wife loves beautiful old things, and she did want a farmhouse feel. We went shopping together in antiques stores whenever we were in Vermont. But we also aimed for a mix—nothing too stagey or contrived. We looked for well-proportioned, sculptural pieces and introduced a few modern furnishings, such as the sling chair in the living room.

The rooms are snug but still feel open, in part because of your restraint.

Unlike a modern home with giant spaces, this house has a lot of cozy rooms, and I was mindful of that. For instance, the dining room is petite, so I sourced chairs that are small, yet sturdy and comfortable. The table was custom built. It's round but expands to an oval. The two chandeliers above it slide on a rod so they can stay centered when the table is opened up.

What are some other tricks for keeping “cozy” from feeling “confined”?

Throughout the house, we kept fabrics really clean and simple, so as not to compete with the rich textures of the building envelope—walls, floors, ceilings—or with the views. The curtains are all mounted above and outside the window openings to maximize openness and light. And window seats let you snuggle up close to the landscape. I also brought in a lot of shimmer—mirrors in nearly every room, and brass accents. And because the ceilings are low, we painted some of them in high gloss to encourage the play of light.

Speaking of light, old houses can be fairly dark. How did you go about illuminating these spaces?

There isn't a single recessed light in the entire house. It's all chandeliers, sconces, and lamps, a mixture of antique and new. We spent a lot of time selecting them, and then arranging them to provide just enough brightness. The result is that the light in the house is very pretty; there isn't a harsh glare anywhere.

This project took four years. You must have gotten to know Vermont well during that time.

Actually, no. I only went up there five or six times total. We did most of the planning here in Houston, choosing colors, cabinetry, and lighting during marathon design sessions. Then we shipped it all up on our moving trucks and did one huge installation.

So you are the one thing that wasn't sourced locally?

The client and I had worked together in the past, and we had so much fun. When you feel that sense of connection and trust, it can travel with you anywhere.

OPPOSITE: In the master bedroom, the custom blue-pigmented plaster walls and ceiling contrast with the Vermont stone. The bed quilt is by Avasa. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The custom-made bed is upholstered in a tufted velvet. A Simon Pearce glass pendant frees up space on the carved-wood bedside table. **RIGHT:** Soft, dusk-sky colors make for a dreamy guest bedroom. The bed is by Stephen Plaud; the curtains are of a Kravet linen. The shiplap ceiling is the same color as the walls—Benjamin Moore Silver Lake—but at half strength.





Lake Champlain and the Adirondacks beyond can be seen from nearly every room in the house.

OPPOSITE: The original claw-foot tub in the master bath, refurbished and painted in Sherwin-Williams Refuge, sits tucked into a windowed nook by a fireplace. The Champlain Black marble floors are radiant-heated. The curtains are of a Holland & Sherry wool. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES

