

Connecticut Cottages and Gardens



Refresh *and* Renew!

LARGER THAN LIFE

A DOZEN SMALL-SPACE VIGNETTES DELIVERED DESIGN INSPIRATION AT ROOMS WITH A VIEW
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAN BARRY

The Rooms With A View design showcase (roomswithaview.org) marked its thirtieth year at the historic Congregational Church in Southport last November. Held in the church great hall and library, the event—presented by media sponsor CTC&G—focused on a “Design for the Greater Good” theme. Every year, the multiday event—founded by late designer Albert Hadley, who had a home in Southport—revolves around a dozen small spaces created by a team of invited design professionals. This year, in addition to the vignettes, a café and bar called The Hadley Library & Café—inspired by the famous library room designed by Hadley for Brooke Astor—was created and served coffee, light bites and cocktails during the showcase. Additionally, an art show was curated by Swoon Gallery. Platinum and corporate sponsors of the event included Diane James Home, Drummonds, Elcish Van Breems, Phillip Jeffries, Little Greene Paint & Paper, On the Harbor Real Estate, Ring’s End, Russell Agency, Vaughan Designs and Waterworks, plus design sponsors Accurate Lock and Hardware, Arte, California Closets, Corston, DS Rugs, Fromental, Jennifer Manners, Marc Phillips Decorative Rugs, Motoplex, Torrico Design Center and Zimmer+Rohde. Read on for the inspiration behind the designs.—*Catriona Branca*



MAHJONG ANTECHAMBER

“I envisioned a room within the renowned San Francisco townhome of art collector Ann Getty (1941–2020) and reimagined Mrs. Getty’s adoration for 18th-century furnishings. A hand-painted chinoiserie wallpaper by Fromental in the Paradiso pattern serves as the foundation of the room; turmeric-colored birds, flowers and trees sway languidly on a vibrant, teal silk ground. Surrounded by this jewel box, Mrs. Getty pauses for a quiet moment before joining her ladies in a Mahjong game room.”—*Blake Funston, Blake Funston Interiors, blakefunston.com*



GARDEN ROOM

“We really thought about what the ‘view’ from our room was, and what better view than a garden? We chose Little Greene Paint & Paper’s wallpaper, Capricorn Boringdon, as the base of this garden view and then created an old-fashioned greenhouse or orangerie around it. We are both new Connecticut residents, so we were very inspired by the nature we are surrounded by here and the gardens at our own homes. We made sure that everything in our vignette was for sale to help the ‘greater good’ of the amazing organizations RWAV supports. We collected pieces from local vendors as well as donated pieces from our own homes to create our dream garden room.”—*Bennett Leifer, Bennett Leifer Interiors, bennettleifer.com and Victoria Tomlinson Cole, Victoria Tomlinson Cole Interior Design, victoriatomlinsoncole.com*

WELL-CRAFTED LOUNGE

“My vignette celebrated artisans and highlights the value of craftsmanship through a richly layered interior. I wanted to create an intimate lounge with a warm, enveloping setting for hand-finished furnishings, sculptural lighting and curated artwork. The custom wood chairs with woven leather strapping and brass accents were central to the concept, emphasizing the beauty of handwork and construction. Within the theme ‘For the Greater Good,’ the space reflects the importance of supporting artisan communities and preserving craft traditions through intentional design.”
—*Swagatika Rath, Interior Design MFA Student, NYSID Class of 2026, Instagram: @swagr.designstudio*



TIMELESS STYLE

“My design was inspired by a desire to revive a sense of timeless, classic style in tribute to Albert Hadley’s extraordinary taste and his founding of RWAV. The concept for my vignette was to create an entryway setting inside an apartment on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. I wanted it to feel glamorous yet subtle and calming all at the same time. I included a pair of doors that lead into the apartment made out of solid fluted plaster inset into wooden frames with sleek polished chrome octagonal door hardware. Mimicking the fluted doors, I had very simple curtain panels made that fall out of a very clean upholstered valance to keep it modern. The puddling of the curtains also mimics the table skirt, which was inspired by a table skirt that Jackie Kennedy had in her White House. The minty color was inspired by Prada. The wall color plays off of the minty table skirt but also includes a hand-strié finish that gives the space more depth and texture. I had an original 18th-century French mirror that I took to a plaster yard and had them mold it to make the pair and had antique mirror panels set inside of them. As a layering effect, I suspended the plastered mirrors by chain so that they floated in front of the curtain panels. I found the hanging lantern above the center table at a junk store in Queens, spray-painted it white and twisted silk fabric over the chain to add a richness detail. Lastly, to add a pop of strong color, I added a bunch of pomegranates on a tray for the center table.”—*Garrett Carter, Garrett Carter Designs, garrettcarterdesigns.com*



THE HADLEY LIBRARY & CAFE

"For this year's café space and for the thirtieth anniversary of Rooms With a View, we paid tribute to Albert Hadley by converting the chapel of the church into an updated version of the iconic library he designed for Brooke Astor's Park Avenue apartment. It was a large undertaking that was made possible through the incredible generosity of our trade partners: Brunschwig & Fils, Quadrille, Holly Hunt, Spoonflower, Vaughan Designs and Chesney's."—*Sydney Frazier, Sydney Frazier Interior Design, sydneyfrazierid.com; Amy Raiter Magnolia; and Victoria Vought, Victoria Vought Designs*



ROOMS WITH A VIEW

SERENE STUDY

"Our theme, 'Women of Palm Beach,' reflects the very essence of our firm and the women who shape it. We are a Florida-based boutique studio that thrives on a collaborative approach to design. Vivi DeVries partnered with me in bringing our vision to life. Together, we set out to create a study in solace—a space that offers a moment to exhale, unwind and find respite from the pace of a hectic day."—*Helen Bergin, Helen Bergin Interiors, helenberginteriors.com*



COASTAL CONNECTION

"My room was inspired by the seaport and the unique landscape of New England where the lands meets the sea. Southport exists due to its harbor and proximity to major ports such as New York City and the railroads. The room began with the wallpaper from Gracie. I loved the sepia tones and blue sky. I decided to keep it simple, peaceful and quiet. The bold stripe on the chairs felt right!"—*Matthew Kowles, Matthew Kowles, matthewkowles.com*



GAMERS GROTTO

"I designed a library/game room around a vintage game table that I had recently acquired—it was center stage, with its foldaway design and leather books. The inspiration for my vignette stemmed from the design ethos: Cluttercore/Intentional Clutter. I designed a personal shadowbox of curated collections, collectively displaying meaningful and sentimental items to showcase personal expression and individuality. A nod to one's own life journey, requiring a sharp eye and keen design! The Indienne Jacobean floral by Thibaut on the ceiling was the ultimate umbrella mimicking the feeling of being in a treehouse. A true sanctuary for a reader or game enthusiast. The gorgeous carpet by Jennifer Manners and the beautiful landscape mural panels on the linen Arte wallpaper, anchored bookcases filled with artfully arranged treasures—a richly textured visual feast!"—*Jared Clark, The Clark, Instagram: @curatedbytheclark*

ARTFUL ARRANGEMENT

"The inspiration for the vignette was to create a physical representation and modern version of the Edouard Manet painting *The Portrait of Emile Zola*. The rich color and introduction of Japonisme motifs are a direct reference to what was depicted in the work and what was a popular aesthetic trope at the tail end of the 19th century. The walls were a hand-drawn mural designed to evoke sitting in a marsh landscape taking inspiration and motifs from 19th-century Edo period screens and rendering them in a very flat contemporary way only using outline. The vignette supports the idea of 'For the Greater Good' by supporting and promoting the craft and the artisans present in our industry that make great contemporary design work possible. The chaise and coffee table were two such objects that owe their creation to fantastic woodworkers, upholsterers and finishers. All of these unmentioned people are the true vehicles that allow the work to occur, and without their expertise, good and functional design of any style wouldn't be possible."—Terrence Charles, David Kleinberg Design Associates, dkda.com



PANTRY PERFECTION

"The space was inspired by my lifelong love of dishes and ceramics. In honor of the thirtieth anniversary of Rooms With A View, I sought to create something that had not been done before: a dish pantry. The cabinetry was custom made for the vignette and modeled after a 19th-century mahogany example that hangs over the bar in our home in Watch Hill, Rhode Island. In the spirit of 'For the Greater Good,' the space celebrated the beauty of everyday objects and the quiet rituals of gathering, generosity and shared meals."—Max Sinsteden, Max Sinsteden, 212-352-1917

HONORING THE PAST

"I grew up in Darien, but I have lived in Charleston, SC, for more than 13 years, and I wanted to pay homage to my Connecticut roots with my vignette theme. So, I designed a visual representation of the nostalgic and sentimental feelings I have about Connecticut; in essence, 'what Connecticut means to me.' The space had to feel just as cozy in the winter with a fire going, as in the summer with the window open and a breeze coming off the Sound. To me that meant beams, some wicker, classic and cool fabrics from Lisa Fine Textiles, an 18th-century antique, and of course a window with a quintessentially Connecticut view."—Olivia T. Mitchell, Torrance Mitchell Designs, torrancemitchell.com



IKAHNĒTASS

"Gilded 14th-century Italian religious art is the springboard for this vignette. Inspired by the work of painters like Duccio di Buoninsegna and Giovanni Cimabue, it provides a floating framework for the Paulette Tavormina's powerful photographs. Her images—rooted in Dutch, Spanish and Italian Old Masters paintings—add layers of history to this assemblage. Suspended in vermillion, Ikahnētass is anchored by black horizontal and vertical bands that move toward the viewer, terminating in pixelated flowers drawn from Tavormina's compositions."—Thomas A. Kligerman, Kligerman Architecture & Design, kligermanad.com



MARIE'S RETREAT

"Marie's Retreat was inspired by my late grandmother and her ritual of getting dressed as an act of self-respect and grace. The space is wrapped in soothing lavender tones and layered with soft neutrals. The botanical bamboo wallcovering was chosen intentionally, as bamboo symbolizes strength and resilience, which very much reminds me of my grandmother. The space serves as a reminder to slow down, take pride in simple daily rituals, and make time to pour into yourself before pouring into others."—Naika André, NJA Interiors, njainteriors.com