

New England HOME

Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

Savoring The Season

Breezy yet beautiful is the
secret for stylish summer
living across New England.



Let Me Be Perfectly Clear

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BY LOUIS POSTEL

Transparency, transparency, transparency: now, more than ever, we want to know what's going on. Not the *appearance* of what's going on, but what's really going on. Is that handsome, silver-haired politician merely the tool of lobbyists? Is that proud, global-thinking auto executive cheating at every opportunity? Transparency is craved, too, in the world of design. "Clients today are demanding a higher level of transparency when we specify and procure," says designer **Donna Elle** of Nantucket, Massachusetts. "This is a real change from just a few years ago. They value my time and



ELLE

are willing to pay for it on an hourly basis, while getting charged the designer's net prices. The cost-plus environment just seems to be working so much better. Especially now, when the Internet leaves so many clients confused, leading them into all kinds of errors regarding scale, quality, and color." Counter stools seem to trip up many clients these

days, including Elle's. Despite the fact that the stools will end up in a \$6 million home, Elle says her clients are often aghast at the prices from the Swaims, the Thibauts, and others at the

top of the line. One client found stools on Crate & Barrel's site for \$300 apiece, while the ones Elle spec'd cost four times as much. So the client went for the Crate & Barrel. They didn't last, and the client ended up getting rid of them and purchasing the ones Elle had suggested in the first place. "On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog," goes the famous *New Yorker* cartoon. No one knows—until they get it home.

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John Buster IS THE ENTREPRENEUR, DESIGNER, AND CHIEF BOTTLE washer behind Bedworks in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Back in the 1970s, Buster went to Washington, D.C., as a civil rights attorney, and then to the U.S. embassy in Buenos Aires. That's where he fell in love with the custom made—namely the Bolivian handicrafts he found in remote villages, and then sold on the beach in Rio. Settling ultimately in Cambridge,



Buster decided to make beds for what he saw as thoughtful Harvard/MIT types who would have the curiosity to appreciate what went into a quality piece. His firm joined a select group of small, high-quality man-

ufacturers: Thos. Moser and The Door Store are thankfully still with us, but Charles Webb, Schilling, and Eastern Butcher Block, among others, are gone. (One of Bedworks's specialties is repairing the webbing on Charles Webb's beautiful beds and sofas.) As Donna Elle decries the increasing number of out-of-scale furnishings coming off the Internet, Buster sees a plague of "no-fits" affecting the entire design world. The piece looks good, but when the delivery guys get to the landing, they stop. There's no way it will get up the stairs built by New England carpenters a century ago. "That's why everything we make we make modular, using the latest technology: flat-nosed bolts and hex keys so that owners' can easily disassemble their beds and move them," Buster says.

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DESIGNER Jennifer Bardsley OF HINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS, is also seeing clients who get lured into the "no-fit" jam. The thrill of hunting something down without a designer's help sours quickly. "One of my clients made a move to Marblehead from the Hingham Shipyard," said Bardsley. "She had



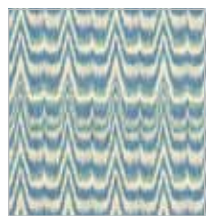
BARDSLEY

purchased on her own an open-stock chair, something that can be found almost anywhere. My role was to steer her gently away from doing this kind of e-commerce shopping. One of our most significant finds, as it turned out, was a beautiful, embroidered Kravet fabric called Quince, which I had made into sofa pillows. Although pricey, those pil-

lows tied the whole room together, a mix of teal, gold, browns, and rustic brick.”

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PARENTHETICALLY, TEAL MAY WELL BE RATED the color of the year, though we’re only



halfway through July. “It’s the hot color, says Toni Galeno of Ailanthus in the Boston Design Center. “Teal—in wide trims on sofas, ikat, paisley, and over-scaled flower patterns—that’s what we’re seeing.”

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TEAL OR TOMATO, FABRIC OR A BAR STOOL, a purchase by a single client homeowner making that choice on her own is certainly understandable. How could she not, with all the clickable consumer “options” coming her way? The appearance of transparency, the chimera of trust and quality works efficiently in marketing. And usually, the inevitable letdowns and no-fits can be fixed. In January, architect **Mark Connor**, whose office is in Massachusetts’s Lexington Center, happened to attend a presentation on an upcoming, \$8 million “Center-escape” plan that looked like an exercise in



MARK CONNOR



LEE CONNOR



SASAKI

transparency, but in his view and the view of his wife and partner, **Lee**, was just the opposite. “Town planners had somehow ignored, or were unaware of the fact that **Hideo Sasaki**, widely considered the preeminent landscape architect of midcentury America, had already designed it in the mid-1960s, and done so beautifully,” says Connor. “One thing that stood

out right away was the plan to replace the brick sidewalks with cement.” Connor points out in one of his many counter-presentations to the citizenry: “True, bricks that are fifty years old are difficult

for wheelchairs, as are cement slabs. But the new wire-cut, tightly packed bricks have been proven in a recent Veterans Administration–sponsored study to be as, or more, vibration-free and ADA-compliant as concrete.”

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ON THE OTHER HAND, MIDCENTURY MODERN has been getting a lot of respect from the clients of architect **Gary Wolf** of Boston. “While we can’t pretend that it’s still 1939—any more than we can pretend it’s 1775 when we’re updating a colonial house—we need to show great deference to the original design,” says Wolf, who was awarded coveted Fellowship status by the AIA. One textbook International-style house belonging to a Wolf client in Weston was, as is often the case with modern, too modest in size. No mud-room, no play/living room, no separate bedrooms for the kids, no upstairs



WOLF

laundry room. The house, originally designed by Edwin Goodell, a former president of the BAC, needed an addition. “The massing of the

house was a sort of wedding-cake style, with the ground floor closest to the road, then a step back to the second floor, and yet another step back for the third,” Wolf explains. “Windows came together at the corners, effectively dematerializing the rooms from the inside.” But to simply extend the original siding for the addition would be disrespectful of Goodell’s 1939 design. “I decided to match all three of the original rooflines as well as the fenestration for the addition,” continues Wolf, “but I used siding that was very different from the flush, horizontal siding of the original, which was wood—though wood so finely detailed it looked more like metal. In contrast, we clad the addition in a rough reclaimed lumber. The effect was to make the older part of the house look even crisper and more modern.”

And in the spirit of transparency, no one would be led to believe that the new footprint was anything but that—new. How such transparency, deference, and creativity will seep into the rest of society is anyone’s guess. •



KATHERINE FIELD'S BRIDGE HOUSE



CUNNINGHAM'S BEACON HILL GARDEN

► **THE ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL LANDSCAPE DESIGNERS** bestowed high honors on two New England landscape architects at its annual nationwide competition.

Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design, of Stoneham, Massachusetts, took home two Gold awards for a residential project in Cambridge and a small garden in Boston, while **Katherine Field and Associates**, of Newport, Rhode Island, won a Gold award for its work on a home in Jamestown, Rhode Island.



FLORA HOME

► **THE LIFESTYLE RETAILER Flora Home** IS celebrating its sixteenth year by opening a third shop. This newest addition to the Flora family—which includes Flora Style, a luxury women's apparel and personal accessories boutique, and the original Flora Home store—allows an expanded look at owner Anne Burke Sadow's artfully curated collections of home furnishings and decor, tabletop, home accessories, and other products for indoor and outdoor living. Interior designer Richard Sadow adds his talents to the mix with expanded design services available at the new location. All three Flora shops sit within walking distance of each other in the lovely coastal village of Padanaram, in Dartmouth, Massachusetts.

► **Tracker Home Decor**, A HOME FURNISHINGS store on Martha's Vineyard, has

opened a second island location, nicknamed The Villager for its spot on North Water Street in downtown Edgartown.



along with some smaller pieces of furniture. Lines represented include Peacock Alley, John Robshaw, Dransfield & Ross, and Visual Comfort, among others.

► **VALERIE WILLIAMS HAS A LONG-STANDING** love of design and an enduring ardor for the seaside village of Watch Hill, Rhode Island, where she spent childhood summers. She has combined those two passions in **Coastal 41°**, a chic new shop in downtown Watch Hill. The boutique



celebrates all things beachy, but in what Williams calls a "modern, coastal way," and offers accessories and furnishings from a wide variety of vendors, including Dunes and Duchess, Annie Selke and Pine Cone Hill, and Roost, along with pieces by New England coastal artists.

► **HAPPY TENTH ANNIVERSARY TO Lucia Lighting & Design.** Owner Lucy Dearborn studied English and business in college, but a job with a lighting store sparked a passion that led her to open

The new shop holds a trove of home accessories such as bed and bath linens, area rugs, lamps, candles, and tabletop,



DEARBORN

her Lynn, Massachusetts, lighting showroom. As a certified lighting specialist, Dearborn works with homeowners, architects, designers, and businesses to shed beautiful light on New England-area homes.

► **IT SEEMS THAT Lisa Pyden IS DOING** what she was always meant to do, after a decade or so detour into other areas. After an early career in interior design in California, Pyden became a mom, moved with her family to Martha's Vineyard,



and turned a photography hobby into a commercial photography career. Photographing vacation rental properties reminded her of her first love, and she recently opened her own interior design firm in Edgartown's historic John Coffin House. Pyden specializes in revamping homes and decorating boutique hotels.

► **AN IMAGINATIVE, SOPHISTICATED NURSERY** by **Blakely Interior Design** won the "Most Creative Design" award at the 2016 Rhode Island Home Show's Designer's Showcase competition. Designer Janelle



BLAKELY

Blakely Photopoulos named her nursery "Have Hope," playing on Rhode Island's state motto, "Hope." In keeping with the theme, she outfitted the space with a wallpaper called Wickford Willow, artist Deborah Sabo's interpretation of a classic toile pattern, with scenes of the historic Rhode Island fishing village. •

BY PAULA M. BODAH