

CTC & G

Connecticut Cottages and Gardens

COTTAGESGARDENS.COM | APRIL 2023

Season of Change



MAKING PEACE

A designer and his husband refashioned a house to function as a sanctuary for themselves and their friends

BY DAVID MASELLO
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALLYSON LUBOW

AS SEEN IN
CTC&G
Connecticut Cottages and Gardens

Light & Bright

A neutral-hued sisal rug from Stark grounds the living room. Its furnishings include a 1960s brass coffee table through

1stDibs, an 1860s oversized Belgian mirror, and a sofa replete with custom throw pillows through Mark David Interiors. See Resources.





M

any of the first nights that Joshua Smith and his husband, David Gerbitz, spent in their Sharon house involved sleeping on a giant blow-up mattress on the basement floor, while making sure that their beloved white boxer, Crosby, was also settled in his pet bed. Sometimes, prior to retiring for the night, they would linger outdoors, warming themselves at a firepit. As work progressed on the upstairs floors of their house, Smith and Gerbitz continued to visit on weekends from their Manhattan apartment when the workmen were off duty.

"We were so determined to finish the house and be done with our basement camping that we managed

to furnish all the rooms and complete the new trims, woodworks and moldings within three-and-a-half months of buying," says Smith, a prolific interior designer with projects throughout the U.S.

For a man who is also a meditation teacher and life coach, Smith possesses special skills for designing spaces with a purpose and that foster a state of calm—in his own home, a meditation room in the former attic. "Spirituality has always been a big part of my life," Smith explains, "and I always think of the home—mine and those of my clients—as a sanctuary." While guests often gather in the downstairs rooms, it's not uncommon for Smith to invite them up to

his "sacred space" to meditate or assume yoga poses. "Every home should have a designated space where you go to unplug. I visit mine daily."

In keeping with his desire to foster a prevailing sense of domestic quiet and peace, Smith chose a palette of whites, grays and light blues. But his methodology is deceiving, for while any given room may seem monochromatic, there may often be as many as seven different shades of color. "I learned about color from the master of color, Steven Gambrel," says Smith, who once worked for the noted interior designer. "Learning to make the mullions one color, the window trim another, the ceiling, moldings,

Indoor-Outdoor Living

(CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE) When designer Joshua Smith (pictured) and his husband, David Gerbitz, added an all-seasons room, they used stones from their property for the fireplace; the rattan furniture is from RH. The house dates from 2010. Their dog, Crosby, curls up beside a Cisco chair in the living room. An 1880s French farm table from Galerie Half is set with 1950s dining chairs through Lucca Antiques. Williams Sonoma Home chaise lounges beckon by the pool. See Resources.

walls yet others makes for a real depth of complexity. Despite multiple hues, a room can feel especially harmonious and balanced.”

Smith admits that his husband has a “Zillow addiction,” referring to the real-estate website that lists available properties. The couple drove up to see one such “obsession” on a weekend, and upon coursing the dead-end road, then following a sinuous gravel driveway, they were smitten at first sight with the house. “When we pulled up and saw the meadow and stone walls, and the surrounding 10 acres of state-protected land, we melted.”

From the outside, the house presented itself as one of the area’s many classic all-white period Colonials,

but upon walking inside, its origins as a spec residence dating from 2010 were revealed by what Smith calls “lots of Sheetrock.” But as he adds, “We love old homes, and we were so in love with the location and the potential for the house that we settled on it quickly.”

In addition to designing distinctive tongue-and-groove ceilings, paneling and wainscoting throughout the house, Smith also drew up plans for a generously scaled screened outdoor room, a place so filled with seasonal breezes and Litchfield County views that he claims friends often refuse to leave when gathered there. “It’s a perfect place to hear the sounds of nature. And let’s just say, too, that Litchfield County is known to have a few bugs in the

summer, so the enclosure takes care of that.”

On many a weekend, he and Gerbitz roamed their land to find stones for the room’s fireplace. Although the actual construction was left to an expert mason, Smith laid out all the found multi-hued rocks and, as if assembling a giant jigsaw puzzle, made sure that the resulting fireplace and chimney assumed the right color distribution.

Smith and Gerbitz continue to feel a kind of reverie for the house. “I keep having what I call ‘Mary Oliver’ moments,” says Smith, referring to the late poet known for her sonorous descriptions of nature and its effects on us. “You feel something in these spaces and the land—an energy, a kind of magic.” ✨

Quiet Time

(THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT) The entry foyer is decorated with an antique convex mirror, an 1860s Belgian oval table, and a whimsical cube from ABC Home. The primary bathroom has a Kohler tub with a tub filler from Signature Hardware, alongside vintage finds, such as a ’70s woven footstool. A former attic space was converted into a meditation room. See [Resources](#).



Kitchen Duty

(THIS PHOTO) In the kitchen, soapstone countertops stand out against the white cabinetry. The homeowners’ collection of vintage ironstone, mortar and pestles, cutting blocks and transferware are displayed on shelves. See [Resources](#).



“
We managed to furnish all the rooms and
complete the new trims, woodworks and moldings
within three-and-a-half months
”

In The Abstract
The primary bedroom
is dominated by natural
light and a large abstract
canvas by Santa
Fe-based artist Cecil
Touchon. See *Resources*.

