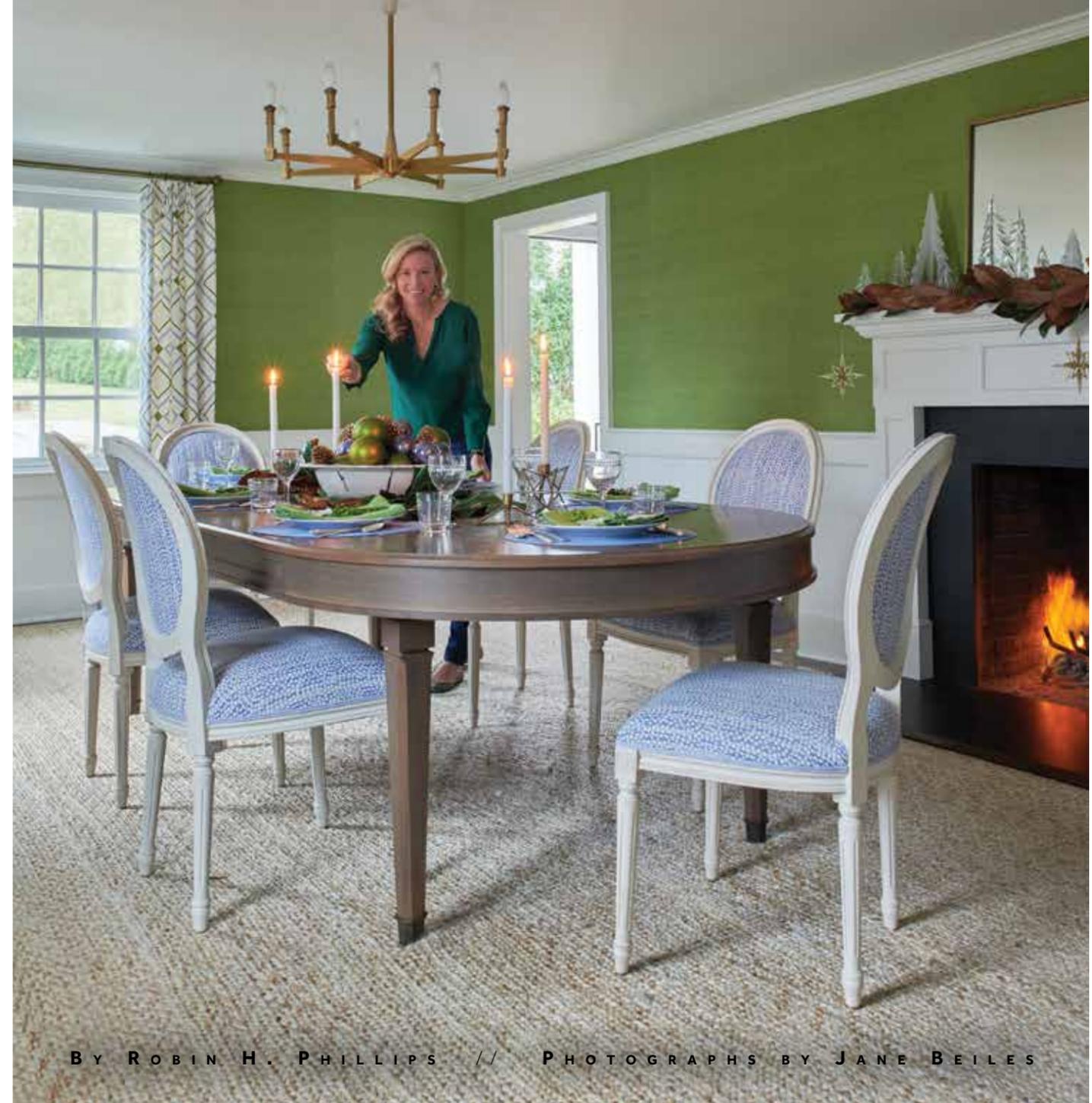




# Art & Soul

A ROWAYTON DESIGNER CREATES A FESTIVE STORY WITH LOCAL ART



BY ROBIN H. PHILLIPS // PHOTOGRAPHS BY JANE BEILES



**HOME BASE** Elena Phillips and Katie McCormick transformed a 1980s small and inefficient kitchen into a wide open space. McCormick's favorite color, blue, appears in the Serena & Lily turquoise Parisian bistro chairs. The butler's pantry is made festive with the addition of a Noble Fir garland intertwined with Magnolia leaves and feathers, along with a miniature Boxwood wreath in the window. Rowayton cookie maven Samira Schmitz's snowflake and Christmas tree cookies. Designer Elena Phillips and golden Maya. The powder blue lacquered bar area pops against the bright matte white.



**R**OWAYTON NATIVE ELENA PHILLIPS loves to help clients create homes that work for how they live, showcasing their favorite colors and textures, and making the space make sense as a whole. This is abundantly evident in the home of Katie McCormick, one of Phillips's devoted clients. "Elena helped me renovate and redesign our home in Watch Hill, and I knew when we purchased this house she could help me reimagine it." Phillips and McCormick worked together to completely renovate the home, making intelligent structural and architectural changes—like turning a living room into a cozy dining room with a fireplace, expanding the kitchen, removing a useless office, adding a custom butler's pantry, and a terrific mudroom with built-in dog crates, along with a whole lower level playroom for two active kids.

The pretty colonial tucked on one of Rowayton's many charming streets was built in 1910. "Elena was instrumental in helping us find solutions to the house's problems," says McCormick. Once that was complete, Phillips set out to create a design palate and find furniture for every room—one that pleased and functioned for the whole family, including Claire and Sean, the McCormicks' children, and two golden retrievers Maya and Elsa.

"Katie loves blue, and everything would be blue if I didn't suggest we blend in some other colors," says Phillips. McCormick agrees with a laugh, and says she now adores the pops of pink and green that complement all the different kinds of blue hues that Phillips blended into the overall color scheme. "The powder room is a little jewel box with its dramatic cerulean blue lacquered paint," says Phillips. Then as the rooms get bigger, the blues soften and mossy and lime greens are added, with pops of turquoise in the kitchen chairs and fabrics. The addition of a nicely-sized family



**COLOR CONNECTION** The lovely blues and greens connect from room to room but appear in different forms and tones. Mud room features built-in dog crates and Belgian slate from D and D Homes in Darien, and shiplapped walls to differentiate the space from the connecting rooms. Andrea Carson's *Popsicle* photograph hangs there. The *Butterflies* artwork by Charles Patrick greets from the far kitchen wall and also picks up the colors of the connecting rooms. Phillips added a new gas fireplace and built-in book cases to the family room.

room off the kitchen, with comfortable upholstered furniture, continues the blue and green palette but reverses it—where the dining room has mossy green grass-cloth walls, the family room has sky-blue matte painted walls. “The rooms are of course different and serve difference purposes,” says Phillips, “but they obviously connect and clearly belong to the same home.”

Growing up in Watch Hill, and now living in Rowayton, the McCormicks are definitely fans of ocean and nature, and the home possesses a beachy vibe. You might think that transforming this type of home for the holidays wouldn't be easy, after all how can you make such a summer place feel wintry?

“Christmas doesn't have to mean dark greens and reds,” says Phillips. She cleverly brought in hues of purple, gold, and even brown on the magnolia leaves to create a festive holiday tablescape, and dress up the mantel, the butler's pantry, and the bar. “I added miniature boxwood wreaths tied with ribbon, spray painted pinecones with gold leaf paint, and found wonderful purplish ornamental balls that I added in with green ones for a centerpiece,” says Phillips. The place settings have boughs of boxwood tied with grosgrain ribbon. The china and glasses are all inherited. A faux Noble Fir garland from Terrain is easy to add into the butler pantry backdrop, and gold painted pinecones and some feathers add a little drama and texture. “Simon Pearce crystal clear and frosted Christmas trees work with any décor, work nicely for the mantel, and reflect light in the mirror.” Combining this traditional holiday greenery in such a modern and summery color scheme makes for a refreshing take on holiday decorating. “I love how Elena's holiday additions don't shock the eye, but seem like they were meant to be here,” says McCormick.

One special element of the McCormick home is found on the walls in almost every room—local art. Many of the artworks were



#### FABRICS GALORE

Designer Phillips loves to add luxurious fabrics like the Schumacher on vintage finds like the desk chair and pink arm chairs in McCormick's office. She added the Murano glass and brass lamps from Stamford's Antiques and Artisan center. Betty Ball's seascape painting hangs on the far wall. Daughter Claire's room has a custom China Seas fabric headboard mixed in with Pottery Barn. Sean's nautical-inspired room has grey grasscloth walls and Katie Ridder for the Euro shams.

created by Rowayton artists. "I love to go to local art shows and home tours, and I often find art I want to own," says McCormick. "My neighbor Betty Ball is one of them, and I had to have one of her pieces which now hangs in my office," says McCormick. Ball is a RISD grad and a printmaker whose work has been shown at Norwalk's Center for Contemporary Printmaking. Another local photographer that both love is Andrea Carson. "She has done portraits of our families," says McCormick. The two women saw her colorful photograph of a popsicle during a Rowayton house tour, and McCormick sought it out to purchase for the mudroom, adding a whimsical image and pop of color. "Artwork adds so much personality to a home, and it doesn't have to break the bank," says Phillips.

A dramatic piece of art that's always a conversation piece hangs in the kitchen, artist Charles Patrick's *Butterflies*, which Elena found on an art shopping mission in Greenwich. He is best known for intricately cut paper butterflies, suspended by little pins and clustered together to form shapes and icons, on white canvases. "I love how delicate it is," says McCormick, "and how it looks different from afar and up close." The dining room features a painting by Rowayton artist Danielle Holmes. "Katie saw her piece at a show at Brendan's 101 and showed me and I agreed it was perfect for the space," says Phillips. Holmes also exhibits her work at the local Community Cooperative Nursery School art show. "I love to go to the CCNS art show and look for pieces for my clients there all the time," says Phillips. The house and their collaboration are shining examples of something both women say: "We love our community and neighborhood." ■

