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# Cool, Calm, & Collected

Interior designer Jill Litner Kaplan transforms a Victorian-era estate in West Newton Hill into a sophisticated retreat for a high-flying, fun-loving couple and their three children.

BY JASON OLIVER NIXON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TIEULI



An oversize amilitarylike light fixture from Plush Home in Los Angeles welcomes guests into the front hallway. *right*: Separated by half-height columns, the double living room mixes numerous seating groups unified by a consistent color palette.





ABOVE: A breakfast nook with a custom banquette hugs a column in the kitchen. BELOW: A Chinese stone urn from the Boston Design Center. OPPOSITE PAGE: The dining room features a graceful table from Dessin Fournit, chairs and a console from Michael Berman, candelabras from the Boston Design Center, and a vintage chandelier.



"I'm not formulaic. I love being a mix master and combining high and low, from inexpensive pieces to custom creations."

—JILL LITNER KAPLAN

When interior designer Jill Litner Kaplan first saw her clients' turn-of-the-century, tarred and gabled home in West Newton Hill with its wraparound porch and expansive carriage house, the estate was in the middle of a soup-to-nuts renovation. The circa-1895 home had been stripped down to its studs, and troops of workmen were busy returning the faded grande dame to her former glory.

"It looked like a bomb had gone off—the home was totally gutted," laughs Kaplan, taking in the completed interiors with their gracious layout, soothing color palette, and sleek furnishings. "I certainly had my work cut out for me."

The challenge for Kaplan was twofold: first, to create a transitional space that would carry the young family from a city-slicker existence to a new life in a verdant bedroom community, and second, to get them into their new home as soon as possible.

"The couple was moving from downtown Boston and sought urban sophistication that was cozy, yet never precious," says Kaplan. "[They] had two children—they now have three—and wanted a place where the kids would feel at home as much as the adults."

The working relationship, Kaplan says, was wonderful. "It was a collaborative effort: The wife was the primary decision maker, and we made decisions at lightning speed. The couple moved in a year and a half after I began work on the project." The wife (who declined to be named to preserve her family's privacy) concurs: "Jill is fantastic. I love her ideas, and she expanded my sensibility to some things that I might not have chosen otherwise. I am certainly now much more open to texture and pattern—she really opened up my taste."

Though the home has a remarkable sense of relaxed chic, it is anything but a shrinking violet. An abundance of foreign-inspired patterns and exotic sensibilities—reflecting a truly global viewpoint—are visible throughout the home's three floors and adjacent carriage house. The result is a harmony that is seemingly effortless.

Take the double living room, for instance. Its robin's-egg blue walls are offset by a pair of Donghia wing chairs covered in a bold ikat fabric. Two Egyptian Agra rugs from Steven King Inc. at the Boston Design Center grace the floor, and richly textured shagreen-covered nesting tables from R&Y Augusti add a splash of color. Further revving up the mix are a pair of petite leopard-print chairs that are also from Donghia, a curved sofa from A. Rudin, and kicky Moroccan-style occasional tables in a rich chocolate-brown finish with midnight-blue lacquer insets that offer further visual punch. As Kaplan explains, "It's a double living room separated by half columns, but the fabrics are all compatible with one another—as are the





top row: A chair and ottoman from Lee Industries, upholstered in a floral pattern from British textile designer Cath Kidston, anchors one daughter's bedroom; another daughter's room features jaunty green walls. bottom row: In the estate's spacious carriage house, "The objective was to create a separate hotel-like suite for friends and family," notes Kaplan.



A king-size bed and side tables from Push Home—along with custom items for the bed from Leonine Linens—set a high-style scene in the master bedroom below. Custom tile from Waterworks adds a chic splash of elegance to the master bathroom.

rugs and the patterns. The two rooms really work together as one."

The expansive living room opens onto a jewel box-like annex with a cozy fireplace and furnishings that have been scaled down to accommodate the space's miniature footprint.

"The room had no purpose," says Kaplan. "So instead of making it into a third living room, I painted the walls dark brown and installed built-ins to showcase books and objects and help create the feeling of a stylish sanctuary. I chose small furnishings and interesting fabrics so that there is texture upon texture to really make the room feel warm and inviting."

Nearby, the large kitchen spills into a family room-cum-breakfast nook that also mixes patterns and pops of color, albeit with furnishings of a larger proportion to highlight the room's expansiveness. "This is the soul of the house, where the family spends most of their time," says Kaplan, as she settles into an overstuffed sectional custom-made by Montauk Sofa. "It's the perfect spot for entertaining, too." Thanks to the myriad seating options—from the custom banquette to a pair of window seats covered in a lemony Donghia print and some red leather dining chairs from Oly—there is plenty of space in which to curl up and watch TV or sip cocktails with friends.

Upstairs, the private rooms are luxe and soothing—including the color-rich bedrooms for the couple's three children. "I create rooms that children can grow

into gracefully," says Kaplan. "These are rooms that are not age-specific; they do not have a short shelf life."

One daughter's room, for instance, boasts fabrics from Osborne & Little, contemporary side tables from Bangalow 5, and a plush Flokati rug. Another daughter's room houses a chic chair and ottoman upholstered in fabric from British designer Cath Kidston, Moroccan poufs done up in red leather, and glass-beaded light fixtures from Canopy Designs. "The little girl could really live in this space until she is 18," Kaplan notes.

The master suite is also an oasis of luxury and calm, thanks to a dramatic bed from Push Home in Los Angeles that anchors the space, heavy silk taffeta window treatments from Jim Thompson, and a custom-made chandelier from Zia-Priven Design. Scones from Williams-Sonoma Home offset the master bathroom's bespoke bounty, which also includes custom tiles from Waterworks and a glamorous dressing-room chair covered in fabrics from Paris-based Lelievre.

"I'm not formulaic," Kaplan says. "I love being a mix master and combining high and low, from inexpensive pieces to custom creations. That's the magic." Adds the beaming wife, "I am so happy with the way the home turned out. Jill made our transition from the city to the suburbs so easy." Then she smiles slyly: "But as soon as our youngest child is off to college, we are heading back to an apartment in the city—with Jill in tow." ♦

