

# Creating Ambiance with Color

BY CORINA A. LOPES | PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN AMBROSE

As homeowners throughout the Greater Hartford region can attest, Connecticut is home to a multitude of talented and experienced interior designers. In projects large and small, these designers guide clients through the sometimes laborious and confusing process of decorating a home, whether it's a remodel or new construction.

This abundance of talent was part of the motivation behind staging a recent event that showcased 13 designers from across the state, allowing local residents to view some of their most creative room and garden designs in a single location.

The first-ever "Design Spaces and Market Places" fundraiser, held in the former Hartford Rubber Works Plant on Park Street, benefited Rebuilding Together Hartford and the Hartford Preservation Alliance. "The reason we did this, along with helping a good cause, is to showcase that Hartford does

have a present and thriving design community," said Richard Ott, HPA board president and owner of Richard Ott Interior Spaces.

HPA board member and designer Marianne Donahue said those taking part in the event illustrated the importance of one of design's key factors: color. Good design must pay attention to the architecture of a home, she noted, "and the colors that are incorporated help solidify that."

In fact, an entire section of psychology focuses on the emotional effects of color. Blues and lavenders have been found

to promote peace and tranquility. Red, on the other hand, has been shown to stimulate blood flow, thereby increasing energy and excitement. Is it any wonder, then, that the best interior designers focus on color as much as the lines and contours of a space?

The precise use of color, as interior designers Nan Wheeler, Sharon McCormick, Cynthia Hernandez, Keatha McCue and Cynthia Kranz well know, is key to creating the right ambiance in any home interior. Read on to see how these five area designers used that knowledge to create their own show-stopping design spaces for this successful event.

## NAN WHEELER

Nan Wheeler Interiors  
37 Fulton Place, West Hartford  
(860) 231-8116  
nanwheelerinteriors.com

"Show Your True Colors" was the title of the room display created by Nan Wheeler, of Nan Wheeler



*Left:* A black-and-white dining room by Cynthia Mason Interiors focuses on the interplay of communication.

*Above:* Richard Ott Interiors couples clean lines and bold, solid colors to marry industrial with inviting.

*Right:* Summer romance continually blooms in this living room by Barbara Chester Designs.

*Far right:* Nan Wheeler's vibrant colors add a splash of warmth to a cozy sitting room.

Interiors in West Hartford. Not just a title, it is also a motto Wheeler lives by. "Classic and vibrant can coexist. People shouldn't be afraid of color. You should have fun in a space, and color is one way of providing beauty as well as energy," she says.

An example of incorporating high energy into an otherwise more classic and formal space would be an accent wall, such as the one found in her show space. Two of the three walls are a placating neutral, and a sofa is also in a neutral shade of the cream family. A soft, original pastel by Wolf Kahn lends a peaceful note to the room. A vintage-mirrored sideboard bureau helps finish off the simple, traditional furnishings.

The main focal point, contrasting all other décor, is a French wallpaper in a vibrant hue of rich magenta pink, with an energetic floral pattern. "This look may be too bold for some," admits Wheeler, "but I used it to show that you can mix things

up. Design a space around a focal point that reflects you and you'll always smile."

#### SHARON McCORMICK

Sharon McCormick Design, LLC  
40 Main Street, Durham  
(860) 349-1349  
sharonmccormickdesign.com

Whereas color in a space can make a person feel joyful, it can also be the tool in creating a sense of luxury. Through her use of a silver, gold, champagne, and pearl color palette, Sharon McCormick, of Sharon McCormick Design, LLC in Durham, elevates a living room to a lofty, yet attainable and comfortable, status.

Starting with the rich, hand-printed wallpaper in champagne, dotted with pearls, and following to the draperies with silver metallic thread sewn in, there is a high-society presence to the room. However, the placement and use of these colors are what make the room inviting.

"The black velvet settee has been modernized with the use

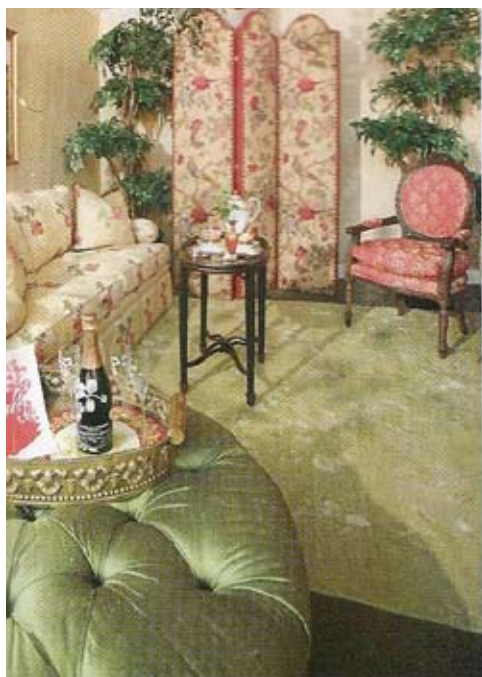
of pewter nail heads, rather than the traditional brass," she says. "Things like the pewter nail heads, or the three-dimensional wallpaper, or the gold wash on the silver mirrors make this transitional instead of traditional."

"The key," she says, "is to break the rules. Who says silver and gold can't work together? It's all about introducing the right accessories." Metallic pomegranates charmingly rest on a side table. Upon closer inspection, it's discovered they are salt and pepper shakers from Lux Bond & Green. "I chose them because they would work with my color theme. Being creative is what gives character to a room."

#### CYNTHIA HERNANDEZ

Cynthia Mason Interiors  
45 Mountain Road, Farmington  
(860) 838-1919  
cynthiamasoninteriors.com

Transition and movement are captured in the dining room space designed by Cynthia Hernandez of Cynthia Mason Interiors in



Farmington. To elicit a sense of movement encircling a sturdy structure – the dining table – Hernandez opted for a black and white color scheme, with green as an accent color. “I want this space to represent the interconnectedness of our lives. With social networking sites and wireless technology, we are constantly interacting with others. But it’s when we actually sit down to talk and eat with our friends and family that connection happens. This space is highlighting these two aspects.”

Not typical of her usual styling, this very modern room design features curved green panton chairs dating to the 1950s, seated around a dark table. The table itself utilizes place settings and a centerpiece in black, brown and white, with green artichokes acting as the earthy, floral element – a symbolic connection to nature, and not our wired society. The



walls are painted in non-uniform, horizontal black and white stripes, with the white space intended for literal writing on the wall. “It’s a playful idea,” said Hernandez. “On Facebook, we have wall posts where we leave notes for our friends. Why not actually have a friend write a permanent note on your real wall?”

**KEATHA McCUE and CYNTHIA KRANZ**

Galway Stallard  
20 West Main Street, Avon  
(860) 678-7180  
galwaystallard@msn.com

The starkest of all colors – white – can create a sense of ease and tranquility in an airy conservatory. Mother-daughter team Keatha McCue and Cynthia Kranz of

**Considering a pool?**

**Now is the time!**  
1-800-722-2782



SINCE 1970

[www.aquapool.com](http://www.aquapool.com)



CT RE

- Interior Painting
- Exterior Painting
- Power Washing
- Plaster & Drywall Repair
- Minor Carpentry
- Wallpaper Removal & Installation
- Textured Ceilings Applied & Removed

Certified Lead Safe

BBB A+1 Rating Dependable

Ask Us About Our Green Environment

**LANGAN PAINT & DECORATING**

Serving Greater Hartford Area • Ro  
FREE Estimates • Insured • CT

STEVE LANGAN • [srlangan@](mailto:srlangan@)

(860) 521-1203 • Call: (860)



Galway Stallard in Avon strove to create a balanced, calm design space that offers a respite from our demanding world. "We like things to be simple

and classic," says Kranz. "Monochromatic works so long as you finish it. Layer it up with nice décor or beautiful things, and it becomes a very entertaining

Rich jewel tones and textures artfully display the comforts of modernity with the luxurious details of antiquity, by Marianne Donahue of J Namnoun Oriental Rug Gallery.

space." The mirrored and limed-oak breakfront is as practical as it is beautiful, since it can be broken down into three pieces of furniture. Sunbrella-upholstered white linen settees and a painted carved table accessorized with mercury glass immerse the viewer in shades of cream and white, producing a feeling of calm, with a subtle yet energetic undercurrent.

"Texture," she explains, "is what draws a person into a neutral room." Here, texture plays in every detail of the space. By dressing the floor up with white pebble tiles instead of a flat white surface, the possibility of monochrome slipping into boring is immediately broken. "Always refer to your floor as the fifth wall," suggests Kranz. "Floors play a huge factor in design. They, too, can act as a focal point." ■