

# at home

IN FAIRFIELD COUNTY



# decorate!

HIGH STYLE IN  
STAMFORD + DARIEN

GLAM UP YOUR  
DINING ROOM

CHIC IDEAS FROM  
CELERIE KEMBLE



\$4.95  
WINTER 2010  
ATHOMEFC.COM







by JUDY OSTROW photographs STACY BASS styled by RONNY CARROLL

# crown JEWEL

Designed by Interieurs Dovecote, this Stamford "castle" blends soft, modern furnishings with sleek fixtures and plenty of shimmer and shine



As the saying goes, "A man's home is his castle." But for a Woodbridge couple who were in the market for a house that would shorten the husband's commute and bring them closer to their children and grandchildren, the old adage has a clever twist. One man's castle became their home.

"It was in a gated condominium community, close to the parkway in Stamford, and built on the grounds of a beautiful old estate," recalls the homeowner. "The property had been owned by a very successful man who, as a young boy before he emigrated from Italy, saw a magnificent castle on the Po River. He had decided, right there, that if he ever became rich, he'd build an equally impressive home for himself."

In the foyer, designer Brooke Crew has created a serene still life with vintage and modern finds from Dovecote. **opposite:** The mahogany front door of the white brick home hints at something special beyond.



The first-floor powder room is a treat for the eye and a pleasure for guests; the Exeter sink with Julia faucet and monogrammed towels are from Waterworks; wallpaper is from Schumacher. *opposite:* Set in the turret on the main floor, the dining room is the stunning centerpiece of the public spaces, and its furnishings accentuate the room's shape. Chairs and a curved bench, upholstered in brown velvet, surround the textured bronze, glass-topped table from Thomas Pheasant.



And he did. Although the property had been sold long ago and the “castle on a hill” served for years as a nursery school, it was a beloved landmark for Stamford residents. When the condo developers put their project before the city zoning board, one of the requirements for approval was that the castle had to be part of the plan.

So it was this white brick structure, complete with turrets, that the couple visited while searching for a home in the area. The wife, walking through the completely renewed and exquisitely proportioned space, was speechless.

“She was so quiet,” says her husband, “that I thought she hated it.”

In fact, she was stunned by the resemblance of the castle to a lovely old white house that she had always coveted in Woodbridge.

“That place had been my dream; for years I would drive by slowly, looking at it through the trees, and wonder if it would ever come on the market. Now

here I was, in a beautiful house that had everything on my wish list, in the perfect location.” Her visceral response was an instant “yes,” and her husband agreed. Two weeks later, they owned the place.

Having already decided to start fresh with new furnishings, the wife remembered the name of a designer that a friend had recommended.

“My friend had opened a shoe store and had a Westport design shop decorate the interior. I loved what they did, and so once the castle was ours, I knew who could help us. The house had the most beautiful bones, but when we moved in, there were still lightbulbs in the ceilings and many empty rooms.”

She and her husband paid a visit to Dovecote—the name she’d kept for just this moment—and met the woman who became their designer, Brooke Crew. Brooke partners with Sarah Kaplan, owner of the store, in Interieurs Dovecote, the design practice located upstairs from the retail space.

It was a fortuitous match; couple and designer







Serenity rules, even in the hardworking kitchen designed by Christopher Peacock. The tranquil palette extends to the breakfast room, with signature pieces in soft whites from DWR. opposite: Crystal containers and lamp bases are a Dovecote trademark; here a bowl is filled with a Ronny Carroll arrangement.



clicked instantly and proceeded to create an interior to complement the space that had bedazzled its owners.

Brooke, who started her career working at Neiman Marcus, where she and Sarah met and where both were buyers, had determined early on not to trail her mother in the decorating business.

"I grew up with flea markets and swatches," recalls Brooke, "so of course, as a bratty young adult, I vowed I would never follow her career path." But as is the case with many other designers, genetics proved to be destiny, and she opened a Dallas home furnishings store, where customers kept asking her to decorate their homes. When Sarah called to invite her in on the new design extension of Dovecote's business, the lease on her Texas shop was up, and she jumped.

The team—couple and designer—took an unconventional approach to the castle project.













Beautiful and traditional millwork creates a counterpoint to the simpler, more contemporary shapes of the furnishings, which include a pair of Thomas Pheasant's Moderne Wing Chairs. Patterned pillows are by Madeline Weinrib; the coffee table is vintage Dovecote. opposite: In the foyer, the focal point is an untitled Gouache and ink on paper by Alexander Calder.

"I know the design rule is to start with rugs," says Brooke, "but my clients didn't even want rugs at first. So we began with paint colors."

The wife, who admits to being detail-oriented, wanted the perfect tints. So, to everyone's amazement, she bought paints and primer for the proposed palette, hauled in large squares of drywall and painted the samples herself, testing them in the rooms where they might eventually be used.

The resulting soft palette, with white trim that highlights the beautiful millwork used throughout the house, is a subtle backdrop for jewellike lighting fixtures and furnishings that are perfectly scaled for the airy, high-ceilinged surroundings.

Says Brooke, "For me, the element that makes the home special is its turret. When I began to put together the plan, I started with the dining room downstairs

and the sitting room upstairs."

The designer captured the magical appeal of this most castle-like of all the home's spaces. In the dining area, an oversized pendant—the scalloped Tatiana fixture from Baker—is perfect punctuation for the round, sunlit room.

Upstairs, the second story of the turret is the wife's private retreat, a cozy and luxurious annex to the master suite. The circular room's focal point is a plush chaise, accessorized with velvet and pearl-trimmed cushions, fit for any castle's queen.

While Brooke added shine and polish in every room—shimmering curtains, crystalline accessories, sparkling fixtures—the home's aura is welcoming and comfortable. Castles of old may have been imposing and austere, but this one invites family and friends to curl up and enjoy their surroundings. Even the master bath has a cozy,







"We mixed a little bit of everything in this house.  
The furnishings are **SOFT AND TACTILE** but **FUNCTIONAL** too.  
We actually use every room."

—THE HOMEOWNER



Intimately proportioned and furnished for maximum comfort, the den is a perfect relaxation space. From the plush, overstuffed Lillian August sofa, to the velvety Antelope patterned carpet from Stark underfoot, the room is designed to soothe.



"I know the design rule is to **START WITH RUGS**,  
but my clients didn't even want rugs at first.  
So we began with **PAINT COLORS**."

—DESIGNER, BROOKE CREW







Soft textures and a serene palette provide the appropriate dreamy quality in the master suite, with lots of places to sit and admire the surroundings. Brooke took a cue from the Farrow & Ball wall color Skylight, using furnishings in the palest hues. The turret retreat, above, is the wife's favorite room.







The couple's grandchildren have their own special room in the castle with many child-sized furnishings, including a wee reading corner, from Giggle in Greenwich. The orange "Monkey" as he is called, is one of the homeowner's finds from Takashimaya.





button-tufted slipper chair, perfect for lounging after a manicure, or while waiting for the tub to fill.

Two of the biggest boosters of the home's accoutrements are the couple's grandchildren; one of the bedrooms was decorated just for them. The space is completely child-friendly and beautifully modern, with a citrus orange, pale green and white palette, and child-sized accessories that include a tiny upholstered club chair and bouncy poufs. The boys, ages two-and-a-half and "five and three quarters," as the older one says, think that their grandparents' house is the best possible sleepover destination. His grandmother tells of the five year-old's determination to live full-time in the castle—when he grows up.

The couple had originally planned to complete the

interior over a three-year period, but they were so excited with the results, as Brooke progressed with the design, that they finished in just a year.

"Brooke understood our taste," says the wife. "Our old house in Woodbridge was a contemporary, but we mixed a little of everything in this house. The furnishings are soft and tactile but functional too. We actually use every room."

She adds, "It's been a wonderful experience working with Brooke. We look forward to many years of adding new treasures from Dovecote to our home."

#### RESOURCES:

*Interieurs Dovecote: 203-341-0888*

*Artistic Upholstery: 203-849-8907; drapes and upholstery*

