



## 9 Genius Design Lessons From the Bernardsville Designer Show House

*House Beautiful* gets an exclusive tour.

BY [HADLEY KELLER](#) APR 14, 2020



LISA RUSSMAN

It's rare to get to see the work of celebrated designers in real life—which is why we love designer showhouses so much. They provide an opportunity for designers to show off their creative chops (often within *extremely* limited time frames) and for visitors to get up close and personal with interiors. This year, *Aspire Design and Home* was set to host the Bernardsville Designer Showhouse in New Jersey, to benefit the [Connie Dwyer Breast Cancer Foundation](#). The event's roster of designers had worked hard on transforming the Gothic-meets-Arts-and-Crafts-style parish house of St. Bernard's church, designed by architect Henry Janeway Hardenbergh (best known for New York's Plaza Hotel and iconic Dakota apartment building), when the coronavirus pandemic forced the showhouse to shutter its doors. Luckily for us, though, the designers are offering an exclusive tour to *House Beautiful*—and it's chock-full of great design ideas. Take notes—and, if you feel so inclined, consider a donation to the [Foundation](#), which will miss out on proceeds from the showhouse's ticket sales.

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# 1

## Go Bold in the Kitchen





LISA RUSSMAN

Yeah, yeah—we know everyone loves an all-white kitchen, but if this one by Anna Maria Mannarino in a rich blue doesn't have you considering going bolder, we don't know what will. "Embellished with gold accents [note the subtle backsplash], the collection of furniture and fixtures are meant to exude art, beauty and boldness," says the designer. Mission accomplished!

## 2

### **Make a Focal Point**



LISA RUSSMAN

Designers Courtney McLeod of Right Meets Left Interior Design, Jennifer Levy of Cav Design, and Samantha Gore of Samantha Gore Interiors + Design collaborated on a suite in the building, including this dining area. "The dining room is the first area that greets you upon entering Unit 202, and deserving of some drama," explains the trio. So they opted for a painterly wallpaper and furniture, lighting, and accessories with strong enough silhouettes to go with it.

### 3

#### Make Use of the Architecture



LISA RUSSMAN

The building's Gothic-style bones meant some dramatic window casings, which designer Sam Cardi of Samuel Robert Signature Spaces incorporated into this office design. Painting the walls a moody, earthy hue and keeping the window moldings white sets them off against the rest of the room. "It is with great respect for the uniqueness of the architecture that I was inspired to compose the space with a bold and fluid hand reminiscent of the mid-century masters," says the designer. "By making the structural details luxurious, yet understated, I was able to amplify the beauty of its original integrity."

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# 4

## Create Distinct Spaces



LISA RUSSMAN

Who says a bedroom is just for a bed? Make the space more functional by adding a table and chair to create a reading, writing, or drawing nook, like Kathryn Platt did here. "My inspiration is the bucolic scenes of New Jersey and equestrian ties as depicted in local imagery," she explains. "The bedroom is my interpretation of the serenity and tradition imbued by these views, in a contemporary way, using color, pattern, texture, and artwork."

## 5

### Treat Your Shelves as Art



LISA RUSSMAN

In her "Reader's Retreat," Tina Ramchandani incorporated lessons from architect Henry Janeway Hardenbergh in a modern way: "Hardenbergh produced work that is thoughtful, high-end, and exudes sophistication," she says. "I incorporated these characteristics into this Master Suite through my own lens. A full wall of shelves, incorporated into the upholstered walls, offers a space for displaying treasured collectibles, giving the room a layered, interesting feel."

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# 6

## Take Cues From Nature





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"Upon entering the master suite, one is immediately struck by the view of the original Saint Bernards edifice juxtaposed against the Somerset Hills of Bernardsville," says designer Nancy Mickulich of Oasis Home Designs. Michulich took cues from this view, incorporating references to natural elements like geodes and a subdued color palette in the bath.

## 7 Mix Old and New



LISA RUSSMAN

With the cane bed as a jumping-off point, Kelly Dunn of Fathom Design created a bedroom that mixes antique and modern. "This bedframe reminded us of a scene from a movie that took place in the 20s," she says. "From there we built out a design that hosts a character who genuinely respects replicas from the past while artistically embracing the age to come!"

## 8

### Create a Warm Retreat





LISA RUSSMAN

McLeod, Levy, and Gore used natural elements, soft textures, and warm colors to create a cocoon-like retreat in this guest bedroom. "The Guest Bedroom is a welcoming sanctuary for overnight guests," they explain.

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# 9

## Go Dark in a Small Space



LISA RUSSMAN

While it might seem counterintuitive, deep, dark, walls work best in small or confined spaces, creating a sense of richness and depth, like in McLeod, Gore, and Levy's den. "Perfect for quiet nights in, deep blue walls set off by a luscious coral ceiling color create a space that both embraces and nourishes," say the designers.

# 10

## Neutrals Don't Have to Be Boring



LISA RUSSMAN

Gail Davis created her living room as an homage to her mother, a breast cancer survivor. She used neutral colors to emit a soothing vibe, but plenty of texture (like on the rug and armchairs), unusual silhouettes (like the Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams Elroy chairs), and art make the space plenty interesting. Plus, a wood-paneled ceiling adds instant warmth. "I wanted it to be a place where one could come, relax and be around soothing colors and inspiring visuals," says the designer. "It was important for me to fill the space with things that my mother loves as well as pay homage to all survivors."

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**HADLEY KELLER** Senior Editor

Hadley Keller is a writer and editor based in New York, covering design, interiors, and culture.

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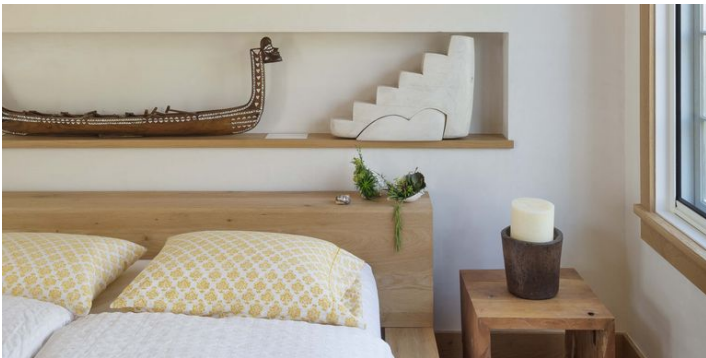
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