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10
*Years
of
Design*

On the Couch

DECORATOR VERSUS SHRINK (WHAT DO YOU THINK?) | BY SUSAN BEDNAR LONG AND LAUREN GOLDSTEIN, LCSW

Do you think the objects and furnishings in a room reveal much about the homeowner(s)? Interior designers and psychologists have demonstrated in past "On the Couch" columns that they can identify characteristics of unidentified homeowners with amazing accuracy. This issue, we've invited Susan Bednar Long (S.B. Long Interiors Inc, Connecticut- and Dallas-based design firm) and Lauren Goldstein, LCSW (Peace of Mind Counseling, LLC, Monroe), to weigh in on this photograph. Who came closer to the truth? Turn to page 146 to find out.



THE DESIGNER SAYS SUSAN BEDNAR LONG

I want to go to a dinner party in this room and mingle with their novelists and marine biologist friends! This earthy, self-assured couple lives in New England in the summer by the sea, maybe Nantucket, and beats to their own drum. The décor has been influenced by their attitude and a well-traveled life. One of them most likely is an architectural historian or educator. They are confident and casual, and they designed this lofty space as a personal retreat and versatile seasonal entertaining room off of their historic, low-ceiling seaside cottage.

Clearly they love symmetry, as evident in pairs of most items seen in this room. Maybe they fell in love with the orderly balance of Palladio's villas on one of their Butterfield & Robinson biking tours through Italy. They wear crisp Italian linen and Keen sandals most of the summer months and are not interested in the typical decorating styles and clichés of seaside decor. They designed this space to have lots of informal dinner parties and also as an inspiring place to perhaps write their next dissertation. As a bold move

and a nod to their personal interests in preserving the natural oceans, they have used the fluid whalebone sculpture above the table instead of a traditional chandelier. The effect is a great mix of modern and rustic sensibilities. The couple's interest in the essence of things and artifacts inspired them to uncover the old cottage siding and use the exposed wood wall structure as the backdrop to the new addition. The textures of the natural furnishings create the pattern in the room. A collection of handmade items—Turkish clay pots and Balinese carved wood chairs—mix effortlessly with a surprising pop of a canary yellow on the chair below unadorned window frames. Each object is unique with a travel story that makes for lively dinner conversation. Even the choice of the table's centerpiece is simple and unpretentious—maybe it's a grass from the plains of Africa?!

THE SHRINK SAYS LAUREN GOLDSTEIN, LCSW

Let me begin my analysis of this beautifully presented dining room by stating that the individual(s) who share this space are not spineless! In the therapy room, we talk about a "pink elephant in the room" as being a "factitious object of denial." No such case here. The enormity of this accent piece reflects the balance of a strong stable force that exists in this room.

I observe a lot of couplings: two chairs at the head of the table as well as two different style chairs divided by the rustic dining room table. Along with those couplings are the equal and same accent pieces evidenced by the plants, lamps and mirrors. I suspect that this space belongs to a mature well-established couple. A very noticeable theme to this room is that it appears very equitable and fair. Justice and equality are important. Togetherness in sharing is held in high value. The level of sophistication in this room conveys much beyond anyone in their youth or as a novice. The deliberately placed accent pieces convey balance, simplicity (bare-bones) and minimal upkeep. The simple plants, rustic wood and lack of clutter contribute to this observation. This room belongs to people who value their time, like to relax and/or entertain and are prepared for such at any time.

The mirrors, windows and optimal light (as evidenced by no window treatments) convey to me warmth, confidence (again evidenced by full-on exposure) and a combined flow of blending inside to out or outside to in. Mirrors force us to see ourselves be reflective and be willing to introspect. Either way, the conviction of people who know who they are and are decisive and deliberate with what they want. The natural earth tones, the bare-bones centerpiece, the gender-neutral décor represent a lean, not restrictive, comfortable but somewhat risky and edgy personality style. The design of this room has an ambiguous sex appeal, which lends itself as "inviting to all." Independence, space, uniformity, equilibrium and stability are important to these occupants. The fruit on the table and the healthy green plant reflect life and healthiness as a philosophy to this room. Time is used wisely. No bones about it, this is a well-designed room with the theme of balance, space and equality. Kudos to the well-adjusted persons who occupy this setting.

10 Years of Design

Design Directory

OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS, hundreds of breathtaking spaces by the area's top designers have graced the pages of CTC&G. It's the work of these innovative professionals that creates the style of Connecticut. In turn, these architects, kitchen and bath, landscape and interior designers have helped mold the style of CTC&G. Looking back on the decade, we scoured our archives for the professionals we worked with the most and asked them to describe their design philosophies.

—Elizabeth Huebsch

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