

RURAL

A celebrated interior designer infuses his

SPLENDOR

Connecticut country house with elegant French flair.



INTERIOR DESIGN BY ROBERT COUTURIER PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAX KIM-BEE

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IT IS FROM A FAUTEUIL THAT INTERIOR DESIGNER ROBERT COUTURIER MOST ENJOYS THE FRENCH FORMAL GARDENS SURROUNDING HIS COUNTRY RETREAT, A STATELY NEOCLASSICAL CLAPBOARD HOUSE IN LITCHFIELD COUNTY,

Connecticut—and that is precisely how he likes it. In fact, Couturier designed every element of the 16-acre property to express his own ideas of living well, a philosophy that holds pleasing the eye as important as satisfying creature comforts. “Not many people would choose to live this formally, but for me, this is the way I’ve always lived,” Couturier explains.

The Paris-born, New York-based designer is from the old school of connoisseurship, where the goal isn’t to create an instant room but to take great pleasure in discerningly selecting each and every object, whether it be an Old Master portrait or a pair of 1940s sculptures by Serge Roche that once belonged to cosmetics empress Elizabeth Arden. Surrounding himself with fine things, however, does not mean perpetually tiptoeing around the china. These rooms are designed to be lived in, which includes giving his



The kitchen's sitting room walls are painted with a tree of life design that unites the disparate fabrics. Jansen sofa in Brunswick & Fils fabric. English 1670s cupboard. Art, Nicolaes Eliasz Pickenoy. Flowers, Kamilla's Floral Boutique. OPENING PAGES: The gardens in winter.



The eclectic arrangement of furniture in the salon is designed for convivial gatherings. Louis XVI side chairs in Prelle silk. 1940s sofas in Brunswick & Fils fabric and coffee table, Jean-Michel Frank. Louis XV daybed and curtains in Scalmandré silk.

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Hand-embroidered curtains add a whimsical touch to the formal dining room. Italian 17th-century chairs in Scalamandré velvet. German 17th-century chandelier. Italian Baroque mirror. Curtains, Lesage embroidery.

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Reclaimed chestnut floorboards add rustic warmth to the master bedroom. French 18th-century bed with canopy in Chelsea Textiles fabric. Settee in Edelman leather. Stool, Hervé Van der Straeten. Curtains and walls in C&C Milano linen-cotton.

four Shih Tzus full run of the house. “There is nothing here I can’t live without,” he says.

Couturier and his husband, architectural historian Jeffrey Morgan, entertain their friends and neighbors often and planned the house befittingly. The main reception rooms are on the second floor, complete with elevated ceilings and impressive scale. Curvaceous Louis XV furniture populates the salon, including a gilt-wood daybed where the designer often sits after dinner, surrounded by his dogs. The arrangement of fine antiques is loosened up with a pair of minimalist Jean-Michel Frank shagreen low tables and flame-stitch-covered Jansen sofas.

“You carry the memory of rooms around with you, and unconsciously they come out in your design,” reflects Couturier, whose dining room has affinities with the one at Charles de Beistegui’s Château de Groussay, which he used to visit often as a guest. Creamy white-paneled walls and curtains of gauzy, hand-embroidered Lesage fabric play down the formality of crimson velvet-upholstered chairs and the geometric slate-and-limestone-inlaid floor.

While those simple curtains suit the country setting, Couturier as a rule doesn’t believe in elaborate window treatments. “I see fancy curtains and think, What a waste of money,” the designer says with a laugh. “For me, they are a *cache-misère*, a kind of camouflage, taking away light, air, and room.”

The home is furnished elegantly but cozily, many rooms featuring a mix of provincial 17th-century antiques and eclectic pieces. The rich tones of old oak are enlivened by an array of patterned textiles in vibrant greens, reds, and golds. In the master bedroom, everything is intimately scaled, including the 18th-century French canopy bed by Georges Jacob. “People can’t believe I sleep in a queen-size bed!” Couturier shares with amusement. The room is catapulted into the here and now by a sleek goatskin-covered bronze stool by Paris-based designer Hervé Van der Straeten—a classic Couturier touch.

“This house in a way is an old part of myself, but you have to be careful not to go too far with it,” he says. With his penchant for the bold, contemporary stroke, the designer assuredly keeps one foot planted firmly in tomorrow. □

Floor-to-ceiling columns bring grandeur to the library. Sofa in Prelle silk velvet with pillow in Holland & Sherry fabric. Armchairs and curtain in Le Manach fabric.

