



Old-World Inspiration

An eye for beauty coupled with fine craftsmanship brings designer Laura Barletta's vision to life in her French-inspired home.

By Janice Randall Rohlf // Photography by Michael J. Lee



Brass pendants over the island have a patina that enhances the kitchen's old-world appeal.

When a couple living in the suburbs west of Boston decided to build a house on Cape Cod, the wife expressed a wish that might have taken some people aback: “I want something that is not Cape Cod,” says homeowner Laura Barletta. “I either want to go crazy-modern, like Malibu, or I want to do old-world.” One look at the three-story stone house’s ivy-covered facade, sprinkled with wrought iron Juliet balconies, and it’s easy to see that European won out over California coastal.

“I’ve always loved French architecture,” says Barletta, also the designer, whose keen eye for style developed without a formal education in the field. “Buy what you like and it will all work, my mother-in-law once told me,” she says, and the advice has proved propitious many times over. She hunts for heirlooms and other treasures at places as varied as Boston Consignment in Beverly, New York City’s Mecox Gardens and the vast Scott Antique Markets in Atlanta. From Europe come two vintage fireplace surrounds that you might find in a baronial hunting lodge, among myriad other eclectic finds. She confesses to having a fondness for anything with carved cherubs.

“Every step of the way, Laura knew the aesthetic she wanted and how to achieve it,” says Lineal Design + Build architect Ben LaMora, who had worked with the homeowner before. “My job was to do the nuts and bolts and to collaborate with the craftsmen, all of whom had very rare skill sets. Every inch of the house, inside and out, is a significant architectural space.”

Take the kitchen. “I was picturing a winter scene when I designed [this room],” says Barletta. “I wanted

From top: The brick flooring in the four-season room exudes a rustic vibe; an antique sofa in the guest suite lounge is upholstered in bold pink Scalamandre fabric. Opposite page: The gilded chandelier is by Australian lighting designer Christopher Boots.



to be here watching a football game on TV, with a fire going, during a snowstorm—eating pasta at the bar with my husband. Just the two of us.” To achieve the cozy, old-world look the designer sought for the walls, Clayton Austin of Boston Ornament applied *tadelakt*, a traditional Moroccan wall-surfacing technique used in hammams. Composed of lime plaster and olive oil, it’s not only beautiful but also waterproof. The oak cabinetry received a grain-enhancing cerused finish from Wayne Towle of Needham, whose extraordinary finishes also appear in other parts of the house, including a French polished handrail on the stairs that practically glows.

While a smoky Belgian bluestone floor and reclaimed-chestnut ceiling beams further enhance the kitchen’s snug factor, they don’t eclipse the importance of light, very important to Barletta, here, where there’s a partial glass roof bringing in sunlight, and throughout the house. Barletta was constantly thinking about how to best illuminate spaces, whether naturally or from a thoughtful selection of fixtures, both vintage from places like Boston’s Appleton Antique Lighting and modern.

A counterpoint to the warm, earth-toned kitchen, the four-season room has more of a conservatory feeling, with salvaged brick floors, tall windows and potted plants. Particularly striking is the ceiling, diagonally coffered with cross-patterned shiplap inlay. “There was so much interest in the room already, between the stone fireplace and metal-frame windows purposely unadorned with millwork, that it felt like the ceiling needed something [to distinguish it],” notes Glenn Meader of Good Life New England, who played a significant role in design considerations, including this ceiling.

Thirteen years ago, on their eighth wedding anniversary, Barletta and her husband bought three pieces of art on a whim. The first, displayed in a New York City gallery’s vitrine, is by Michael Klein, one of a group of American contemporary realist artists who are leading the revival of representational painting that harks back to the Renaissance and French Academic traditions. The purchase proved to be pivotal, as it led the couple to collect many more pieces of art in this genre and in fact convinced them to open a museum





The master bedroom's decorative painting was done by Wayne Towle. Opposite page: The marble-topped washstand and ornate mirror give the bathroom a regal vibe.





devoted to contemporary realism: The New Salem (MA) Museum and Academy of Fine Art, run by Michael Klein and his wife, Nelida, will open next year. "I think these paintings are so exquisite that they need to be seen," says Barletta.

For now, the art collection serves as a through line in the home, where no two floor surfaces are alike and details down to the drawer pulls were worried over. In some cases, the art accents the other furnishings, and in others, it plays a more dominant role. In some areas, Barletta has gathered so many delights together that it's impossible to say which is the most arresting. In the guest suite lounge, for example, a massive neoclassical-style painting by an

unknown artist could easily dwarf the Edwardian sofa below it, except that the sofa is upholstered in hot pink zebra fabric. The back story is equally charming: The sofa is a repurposed family antique and the painting was found in an attic at St. Regis College. "I like mixing things up," says Barletta. "A little bit of new, a little bit of old."

Whatever her formula, or lack of one, Barletta has it. Years ago, she recalls, when she was debating whether or not to follow her passion, Key West interior designer Michael Pelkey said to her, "Honey, they don't teach you taste in design school; just trust your gut." She did and has the house to prove it. ■

DESIGN DETAILS

TYPE

Single-family residence

LOCATION

Cape Cod

INTERIOR DESIGN

Laura Barletta
beautifulinteriors.com

RESOURCES

APPLETON ANTIQUE LIGHTING

Living room chandelier
appletonlighting.com

BAKER

Living room swivel lounge chairs
bakerfurniture.com

FERRELL MITTMAN

Master bedroom nightstands
ferrellmittman.com

MECOX GARDENS

Kitchen table (antique)
mecox.com

NEIRMANN WEEKS

Four-season room lanterns and coffee table
niermannweeks.com

STARK

Guest lounge carpet
starkcarpet.com

URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Master bathroom fixtures
urbanarchaeology.com

