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INTERVIEW WITH TINA ANASTASIA, MARK P. FINLAY INTERIORS;
RYAN FLETCHER, FLETCHER DEVELOPMENT LLC; & THE HOMEOWNERS | PHOTOGRAPHER JANE BEILES

open minded

A new in-town home filled with
ART, LIGHT AND OPEN SPACE checks all the boxes



above: Modern furnishings and a contemporary sculpture provide hints about the interiors within. Fletcher added the patio to the homeowners' specifications once the house was completed, installing a gas-powered firepit to create an instant outdoor gathering place.



above: The home's traditional Shingle-style profile has been given some distinction with its subtly curving dormers and a wide fascia beneath the first-floor roof. Carefully pruned and rounded evergreen borders provide a simple and elegant finish to the street-facing portion of the landscape.

This house has a traditional exterior profile but a very contemporary feel inside.

Tina Anastasia: The house is on a street close to downtown New Canaan. Its exterior blends with the traditional styling of its neighbors, and the interiors reflect the young and relaxed environment that the homeowners were looking for.

Ryan Fletcher: This is a style I personally feel most easy about. I believe many young buyers like to live a very clean and simple life, but most still like to come home to a time-tested exterior style that they know everyone will understand and appreciate. It allows for a bit more homeowners' peace of mind that they're not too outside of the box when thinking about a home's resale value.

Husband: We wanted an open interior plan and lots of light. The home's finishes were all Ryan—but also all ours. It was such a perfect fit; we asked him to execute his ideas and vision. If you asked me today if I could move into one of his houses, sight unseen, I would do it. My wife wanted a house that felt connected after being in a home with lots of rooms and walls. Literally, with the floating staircase, the entire home is connected. Our son can be on the third floor, my wife and I on the second, and our daughter in the basement, but we're together in the open spaces that are tied together by the staircases. Again, open was the key—the 1958 floor plan of our old house was a series of walls, unconnected rooms and floors. We tend to spend a lot of time at home since I'm a teacher. Our favorite time is being huddled up as a family.

“Many young buyers like to live a very **CLEAN AND SIMPLE** life, but most still like to come home to a **TIME-TESTED** exterior style that they know everyone will understand and appreciate.”

—RYAN FLETCHER



above left: The mudroom has a modern slant; artwork is from Appleton Art Design. **above right:** The stairwell's transparency is enhanced by large windows. **near left:** Another piece of art is reflected in the powder room mirror; artwork is from Appleton Art Design. **opposite:** The foyer opens to an expansive view made possible by the open floor plan. Without taking a step, the homeowners' love for art is apparent.

Design choices such as the simple horizontal line of the breakfast area pendant light and clear acrylic counter stools help to amplify the flowing quality of the space.





above: Ethereal ballet images by painter Ryn Del Mar complement the simple lines and soft gray fabrics used in the breakfast area. The same soft tones create a calming backdrop for a busy kitchen. **opposite:** Rug choices set the palette for the furnishings; a hair-on-hide area rug is the underpinning of the living room.



above left: The wall paneling—grooved horizontally to imitate shiplap—directs the eye from room to room. The transition space between the mudroom and kitchen is enhanced by the homeowners' favorite painting, "Reverent" by Ned Martin (larger canvas at left). **above right:** The small dimensions of the foyer powder room are enlarged by the clever use of a tall mirror. Artwork is from Appleton Art Design.

Is there anything here from your old place? Husband: We literally brought folding chairs and a folding table for dinner, a horrible Oriental carpet, the kids' bedroom furniture for familiarity for them, and four bean bags to watch TV. Nothing else came with us, and that was the idea and was necessary to do this home justice when we decorated.

When did Mark P. Finlay Interiors come on board? TA: Ryan referred the homeowners to our firm when the house was structurally complete, and they were looking for some help with furnishing.

How did you begin? TA: We usually start with rugs, and this house was no exception. We built the ideas for fabric from the area rugs, keeping some of the same tones. It was an evolutionary process, and it took a bit more than a year and a half to finish. What the homeowners needed first were pieces in the main rooms. We determined early on that they had a taste for modern furnishings.

Husband: We wanted to maintain the openness of the floor plan, clean lines and a bright, airy feel.

TA: When we do interiors, our main goal is getting the right fit, and we

below: The living room was designed to be well-used: a large sectional invites conversations and curling up. Acrylic legs on the ottoman lighten its appearance while providing a table surface or extra seating when needed.





above and opposite: The dining room is wrapped in a Kravet wallcovering to give the space some quiet intimacy. Two cartoon-style paintings by Cabell Molina (opposite) from Love Art hang in the space, along with another Ned Martin painting (above). The table is illuminated by a Moooi Heracleum fixture. **right:** Small-scale paintings adorn shelves in the butler's pantry.



consider form, function and scale. We allow for the pathways that need to be maintained within the space. Then we focus on the style and function of the furnishings that are ultimately chosen. In this case, we also helped with some of the final finishes: the wallcovering in the dining room and decorative lighting throughout.

There is a lot of transparency that seems to be reflected in the choice of furnishings: an acrylic console at the entry, transparent legs on furniture and see-through counter seating in the kitchen. They maintain the sense of open space. TA: We wanted this throughout the interiors, to retain its more modern feel, so we tried to keep the pieces we chose both neutral and light in scale. This made for a serene backdrop for the homeowners' art collection, which is colorful and unique.

The artwork is such an important ingredient in these interiors. What was the process for developing the collection? TA: We made referrals to several local galleries for the art. Sorelle Gallery in New Canaan was a major source for the paintings and sculpture.

Husband: This is very important for us; we had never once considered artwork seriously. However, the home Ryan built, the furniture that Finlay found for us and just the open spaces and windows and light deserved nothing less than incredible art. We first looked at a piece of art by Ned Martin; that started it. We planned on buying his piece, maybe one or two more, but the home brought everything to life. After having Ned's work hung, it started a landslide. Sorelle would come and go, leave pieces, work with us and the artists, and were incredible facilitators in our venture into this realm of buying art. Totally new, but not daunting, thanks to them.



this spread:
An exquisitely cozy reading room is the wife's favorite space. Shelves for books and objects, a warm fireplace and seating with silver metallic footstools are both glamorous and comforting.



this spread: A neutral palette runs through the entire house, including the master suite, where bright accents provide some spice in the tranquil space. Elegant features include an expansive window seat and tray ceiling. **opposite:** Fletcher's team created all of the home's cabinetry with contemporary, clean lines. The artwork near the window seat is from Southport Galleries.

this page: The master bath window overlooks a beautiful tree perfectly centered in the view.
opposite: In the master sitting room, shimmering touches such as the silvery pouf and pendant fixture provide an elegant place to unwind. The blue artwork is from Love Art.



“We wanted to retain a more **MODERN** feel throughout the interiors, so we tried to keep the pieces we chose both **NEUTRAL AND LIGHT** in scale.”

—TINA ANASTASIA



“We wanted to maintain the **OPENNESS** of the floor plan, clean lines and a **BRIGHT, AIRY FEEL.**”

—HOMEOWNER

What are your favorite rooms in the house?

Wife: I love the reading room. It's where my daughter and I spend time reading together by the fire. Also, it has one of my favorite pieces of mirror art by Alina B. The metallic foot cubes are so different from anything we had before, and I love them as a reminder of how our tastes have evolved. The bookcases in here are the most personal part of the home, with family pictures and books I've read. Finally, Tina did an amazing job incorporating my love of safaris and elephants by hanging a great photo over the center of the bookcase; it breaks up all the little squares nicely. I also love the window treatment in this room—it's light and geometric. I think that space is playful and glam, as Tina would say!

Husband: My favorite spaces are the third floor and the patio out back. I think the third floor, with its unique ceiling and windows at the far end, is just a metaphor of what the home is: bright and unexpected. The back patio with the firepit is an extension of the home. It functions as another room that we use from April to November or whenever. I love opening the patio doors and tying everything together for the family. It's great to be connected regardless of whether we're inside or out.

In addition to the color that the art collection brings to the interiors, the color red pops up in accessories throughout the house and outside on the patio. Husband: That patio sculpture is called “Red Autumn” and was made by Rob Lorenson. We do happen to love red, in general, and I'm a ridiculous Manchester United Football Club fan. They're known as the Red Devils, and I would be lying if the red doesn't remind me of them. And my wife says the red is a reminder of my red beard! *[laughs]*

Resources:

Interior designer: Tina Anastasia, Partner and Director of Interior Design, Mark P. Finlay Interiors, Southport; 203-254-2388; markfinlayinteriors.com
 Builder: Ryan Fletcher, Principal, Fletcher Development LLC, Norwalk; 203-286-6166; fletcherdevelopmentllc.com
 Architect: Mose Associates Architects, Ridgefield; 203-438-5355; moseassociates.com
 Artwork: Sorelle Gallery, New Canaan; 203-920-1900; sorellegallery.com
 Landscape designer: Artemis Landscape Architects, Bridgeport; 203-683-1808; artemisla.com

this spread: A triad of paintings by Kiyoshi Otsuka lines the stairway to the third floor, where a sitting room has been furnished as a retreat for the family to relax with a peaceful view of the outdoors.

