

# BETTER TOGETHER

Designer and client share a **SINGULAR VISION** for a new build and **PROVE THE POWER OF COLLABORATION**

INTERVIEW WITH KELLY MITTLEMAN, KELLY + CO DESIGN // PHOTOGRAPHER TIM LENZ



**above:** The layout of the backyard has a courtyard feel, with a lawn at the back of the pool available for yard games and extra entertainment. Outdoor furnishings by Design Within Reach provide multiple seating and lounging options. **opposite page:** The symmetry of the three buildings makes for houses within houses. All are aligned with connected hallways brimming with light and windows.

## How did you come to be involved with this project?

The wife had seen my website, and we'd run into each other six to eight months prior, and she mentioned that they were building this house. When she brought me in to help, I would say she was probably about 40% in her decision making. I was like, "Yeah, I love this." She has great taste, but when you're under the gun and have a lot of decisions to make, it's nice to have someone with similar tastes and values say, "I got you. Let's go." Once I was on the project, we just developed this kinship and saw things through the same lens. And I love that. It became a really cool collaboration.

## What was the biggest challenge?

I would say timeline, absolutely. Everyone was working to get this done very quickly, but to the standard that you can't shortchange any of the craftsmanship.

## There are so many large windows and great natural light that bring the outdoors in. How did that affect the design choices that you were making?

The beautiful thing about this house is that everything has automatic shades tucked into the valances. You don't see them at all, but then you can change the whole dynamic of the house, depending on the light. I'm a big fan of as little window shades as possible, especially if you're not facing the neighbors, because the beautiful space should be enjoyed as much as possible. There were multiple layers that went into the shades, with solar shades and blackout shades. It's a real special feature.

## Tell us about that kitchen and living room space.

They have a big family with seven kids, and combining spaces was important for them. Everybody can gather and hang out and have some space to move. The cabinetry was always going to be this oak, but we



**this photo:** The mudroom, with reclaimed brick floors in a white wash finish, is set up to stay nice and clean. Everything can be tucked away in built-in cabinetry. The bench seat is covered in ZAK + FOX fabric. **opposite page:** Since there is no formal dining room in the house, the RH table sits front and center. Pendants from Bungalow in Westport hang over the Taj Mahal marble-wrapped island. The steel hood surround defines the cooking area and adds a touch of texture and contrast against the natural oak cabinetry.





**above:** Sixpenny sofas and chairs are topped with Pottery Barn pillows and offer comfortable seating in the living room. Glass doors allow for natural light and provide views into the backyard and pool. An RH chandelier lights from above. **below:** The open kitchen and living room spaces allow for easy entertaining. Rustic reclaimed beams give the space a sense of timelessness.



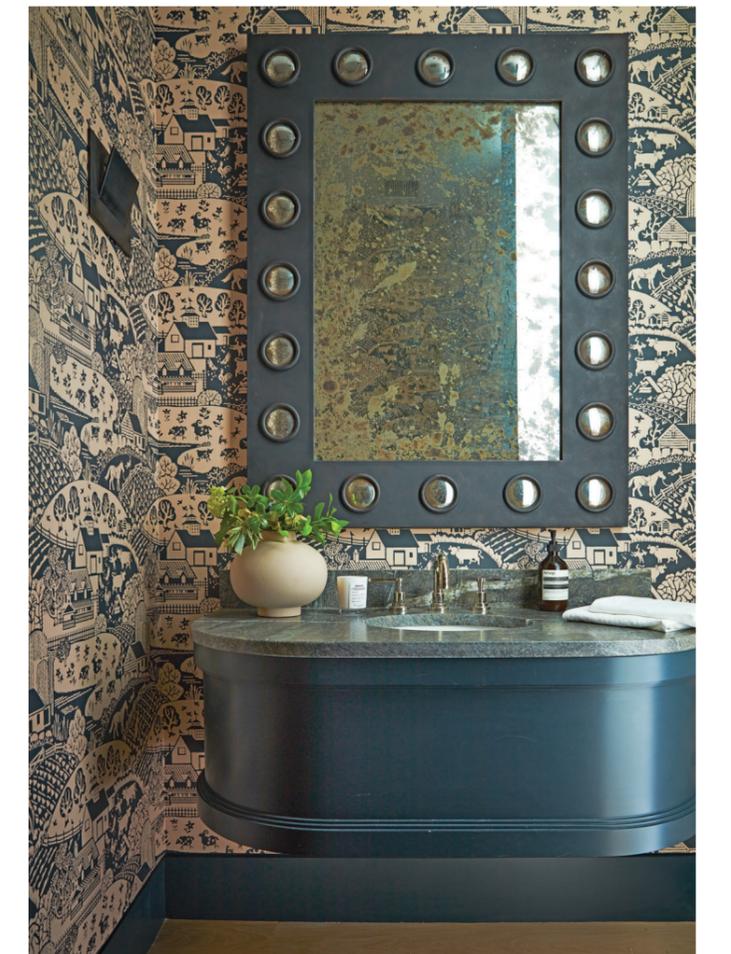
standalone on the first floor, it makes it much more special than if it were left white like the rest of the house because it's like you're entering into this darkness. That's why she chose it.

**The pantry is similarly dark.**

She asked me about the pantry because we had all that oak and I thought it should've been darker. It makes it like a little jewel box, and I think that this paint in there is cool. You get to see it because of the steel doors, but it doesn't jump out at you. It recedes.

**What are you most proud of with this project?**

I love seeing the integration of space when everything just feels like it's got its place and you don't feel like you have to subtract. When you hit that perfect balance, it's just enough.



**above:** In this bathroom, high ceilings give the small space a sense of grandeur while the Farrow & Ball wallpaper gives it just the right touch of whimsy. **above, left:** A custom steel door opens to the pantry. When it's closed and the light turns on, it gives the impression of a jewel box. **below, left:** Walls, drawers, and shelves were given a coat of Benjamin Moore's Midnight.



didn't know if it would get painted. We decided to leave it, because it gave the place some warmth and character. Everything is integrated. Once we decided on the countertops, everything felt really natural and organic.

**How has your own style evolved since you started?**

I'm constantly evolving. We see imagery, inspiration everywhere. Where I'm coming from now in design is that we see repeat images all the time, and your eyes get tired. Especially with Pinterest and Instagram, it starts to feel like we are homogenizing everything. When you get the opportunity to do things outside of that and create with people who are fearless—like these clients are—it makes it so much more gratifying. Everybody gets to expand. And it's so good as a result. That's what it feels like taking the risk. You get to open the door and say, "I'm so glad we did this."

**We love this darker den. Talk about your plan for this space.**

She chose the color for the moody den, and she wanted it to be dark in there, in contrast to the rest of the house. I think she was really influenced by Axel Vervoordt and Hugh Newell Jacobsen, who loves symmetrical rooflines and having little houses contained within houses. Each little section is a section unto itself. If you can create that den that would be



above: This moody den has all the right hues and rich textures with its CB2 sofa and vintage leather chairs. opposite page: The dark walls serve as a counterpoint to the rest of the home's brighter living spaces and create a backdrop for a Gray Malin print to pop.

“My design style is relaxed and approachable with moments of impact through art or antique/vintage finds, which help ground the space.  
**NOTHING IS TOO PRECIOUS, NOT EVEN THE ANTIQUES.**  
 Form definitely needs to follow function.”

— FRANCESCA WARREN, HOMEOWNER





**left:** The clients awoken to this gorgeous morning view. **below right:** The primary bath provides a sanctuary from the rest of the house. **opposite:** A Noguchi pendant makes a sculptural statement in the primary bedroom.





**above:** Visual Comfort sconces hang on the plaster walls in the home's entry, where a Nordic Knots rug is soft underfoot. **opposite page:** The staircase was designed to be an artful structure. A hand-rubbed patina gives it a time-worn appearance, and the angles allow for light to stream through. An Eternity Modern sectional marries comfort and style.



**The lower level is gorgeous. What was the goal there?**

They had been deliberating about what they wanted to do with the stairwell. It was a big bone of contention, because no one could make a decision, and when I came in, I suggested opening it up and doing something in steel. They loved the idea. So, you've got this artful, really cool thing, and I think it was more effective than putting up glass rails.

On the lower level, she was so receptive to the idea of doing this pattern on the walls. We were working with a Dutch company that makes murals to scale, and so we had to send them all the drawings of the space. The scariest part was pulling the trigger, because you're doing everything a million miles away, hoping that it's not lost in translation. They send you a sample at scale, then they show you the render around the space, and she said, "I'm in. I love it. That's so fun." So, you come down the steel staircase and then have the swirls all over the place, but it doesn't give you vertigo. This space could've been basic, but now it's such fun. It's minimal but it's maximal.

**Resources:**

Interior Design: KELLY + CO DESIGN, Norwalk, 203-247-3951; kellyandcodesign.com

Builder: SBP Homes, Stamford, 203-323-2200; sbphomes.com

Architect: Tanner White Architects, Westport, 203-283-4749;

tannerwhitearchitects.com