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# DESIGN

new england

## GARDEN ENVY

Bunny Williams and  
her Connecticut oasis





# FAVORITE THINGS





Delighting the senses with art, color, and texture is the heart and soul of designer Jill Litner Kaplan's home decor

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VIBRANT PINK, ANIMAL prints, and antique fabrics make for a lighthearted living room where a vintage Italian rope chair and antique French bergères are side by side with a classic Jonathan Adler sofa.



ART ENRICHES EVERY ROOM, starting with a Miro lithograph above the front stair landing. In the family room (FACING PAGE), a 1958 hand-colored Picasso lithograph is centered above the mantel. Jill Litner Kaplan (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM) in her third-floor home office.





## “EVERY CHILD NEEDS A CHAGALL,”

Jill Lätner Kaplan says with a laugh, noting that her 11-year-old son has a painting by the Russian artist hanging in his bedroom. The interior designer, known for her colorful rooms, penchant for bold fabrics, and exuberant use of artwork and objets d'arts, is not preaching child rearing or design technique — just what's important to her. “Art, collectibles, favorite objects are,” she says, “what make a home personal. The mix makes it dynamic!”

She demonstrates her belief in the power of art, artisanship, and nature at its artistic best in the brick and shacco English Tudor-style house she shares with her husband, Benjamin Kaplan, an attorney at a Waltham software company, and their two sons, Graham and Ian. Built in 1927, the house is part of the West Newton Hill Historic District of Newton, Massachusetts, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

At home, Kaplan puts her favorite things where she

can appreciate them — in bedrooms, hallways, dining, and family rooms. “I want to see things that I love and that delight the senses,” she says. Tall, curly twigs rise out of simple vases, a seated Buddha wears a pretty turquoise necklace, and a pair of cowhide shades tops a traditional gilt table lamp in the living room.

“Edward Gorey did the illustrations for all of Ben’s grandmother’s poetry books,” she says, noting the front hall’s three framed original prints that were part of the collaboration between the famed illustrator and Felicia Lamport Kaplan, a nationally known political satirist and poet.

In the living room, a large painting hangs between two tall, gridded-steel windows. The merry pink concoction by New York artist Doug Group holds an interesting conversation with the upholstery of a long Jonathan Adler sofa. The artist could have collaborated with the weaver of the sofa fabric. Deeply tufted for comfy seating, its white and neutral sunburst stripes alternate with a shade







of pink as hot as the painting's rising spheres.

The streamlined sofa faces a pair of bergères whose graceful, generous curves could only originate at the French source. Loosely patterned pink and cream ikat upholstery fabric jazzes up their traditionalism. The chairs anchor the living room seating arrangement and bring a note of feminine propriety into a room filled with plants, flowers, reeds, geological specimens, color, and art.

Though Kaplan loves beads, shells, coral, all antique fabrics (suzanis, in particular), and bright pinks and purples in upholstery and pillows in her living space, her work space is cleanly Spartan. She and her assistant, Ali Brown, run Jill Litner Kaplan Interiors

out of the converted attic of the Kaplan home. A model of sky-lit white efficiency, with copious storage built into the deep eaves, it is as practical and organized as the two downstairs floors are happily colorful.

The long, peaked office reveals something of Kaplan's efficient businesswoman side. With a Harvard master of business administration degree under her belt, she prides herself on running a tight ship and says she never forgets the ongoing challenge and competition involved in maintaining a successful enterprise. "People want beauty, function, creativity," she says, "but they need the reassurance of businesslike practices and to see exactly where their money goes."

Happily, her colorful, creative work lasts long after the bills have been paid and filed. ■

KAPLAN DESIGNED THE faux-shagreen dining table (FACING PAGE) and paired it with vintage Chinese-style armchairs and Art Deco side chairs. The carpet reminds her of suzanis such as the beloved vintage textile she uses on her bed (BELOW).



#### DESIGN DECISION

#### Stitches in Time

Jill Litner Kaplan loves and collects suzanis, a type of decorative embroidered tribal textile made in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and other Central Asian countries. The name is derived from the Persian word for needle, and suzanis are made using chain, satin, and buttonhole stitches augmented with couching, a method of laying a decorative thread on fabric as a raised line, which is then stitched in place with a second thread.

With time, all textiles deteriorate, but Kaplan finds that can add to their appeal. A slightly frayed coverlet, circa 1900, brightens the bed in the master bedroom (ABOVE). "Originally, it was probably a Turkish wedding bedspread. I love the bright colors and bold pattern. It's just right for the room," says Kaplan, who finds textiles an endless source of inspiration. "There is never a shortage of wonderful fabrics," she says, nor, as her work attests, of creative ways to use them.