

home



Adding nature to the room brings in life and warmth.

LIGHTEN UP

LEIA T. WARD OF LTW DESIGN, BRINGS BALANCE, CALM AND LOTS OF NATURAL LIGHT TO A SOUTHPORT HOME MAKEOVER

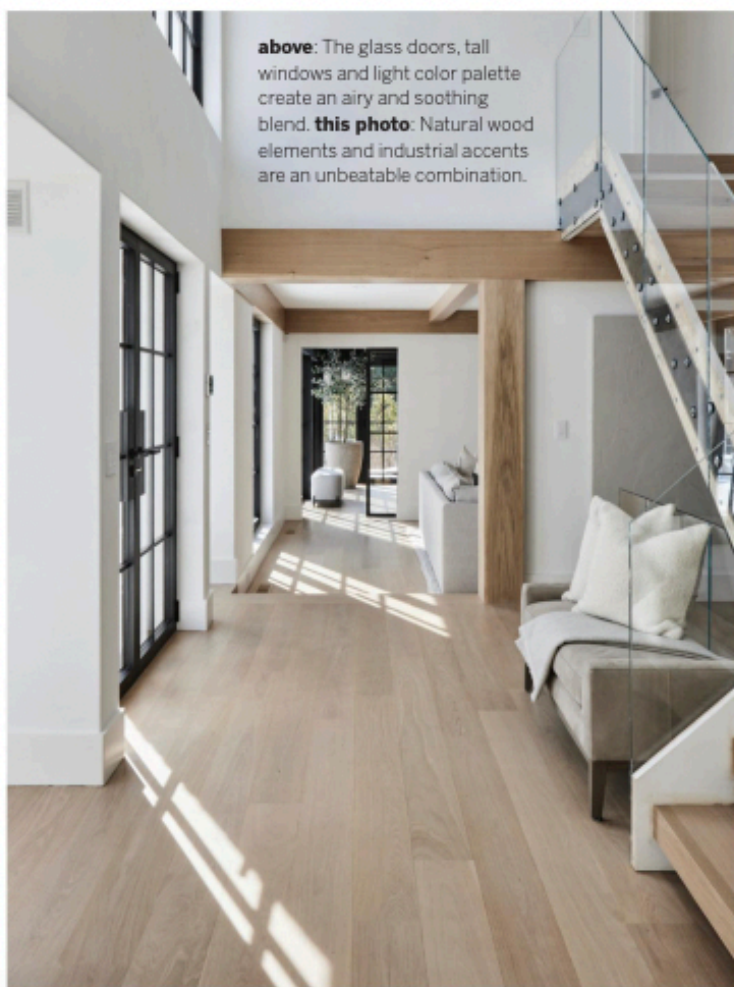
BY DIANE SEMBROT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREA CARSON

During the best of times, creating a soothing space at home is a perfectly brilliant idea. During chaotic times, nationally and globally, all the better to have a feathered nest that can serve as a retreat to find a safe moment of ease. Without such times and places to renew, we would have nothing to give back to the world.

That said, not all of us are gifted about creating the look. Sometimes it takes a professional's eye to design a room, or even a whole house, that brings a vague vision or even just a wispy sentiment to life. Open the door, then, to Leia T. Ward, founder and principal designer of LTW

Design, an award-winning staging design firm specializing in exclusive luxury properties. Named one of the top ten luxury stagers in the country, her firm's expertise provides her access to an expansive inventory of furniture, accessories and artwork. A leader in her field, Ward and her team have staged exclusive homes ranging up to \$20 million, including the residence of Bruce Willis and Emma Hemming.

With influences from her extensive travel, her design signature is an elevated blend of textures, capturing natural light and emphasizing clean lines in her projects. The LTW brand has a signature style of



above: The glass doors, tall windows and light color palette create an airy and soothing blend. **this photo:** Natural wood elements and industrial accents are an unbeatable combination.



above: A bright gold faucet becomes the focal point of a flawlessly minimal design in the kitchen.

casual sophistication, creating calm and beautifully balanced spaces. In other words, less is more—and what goes in works with everything else. She calls on her decade-long experience in the television and magazine industries in New York City. LTW Design projects have been featured in national magazines, including *House Beautiful* and *Town & Country*.

Let her enter your home like a fairy godmother to bring you the gift of serenity—uplifting colors, sane storage, harmonious patterns, balanced sheens, luxe layers, smart furniture layouts, and more. She handles the complex decisions to nurture the beauty of ease for the owners.

We recently sat down with her to learn about her sack of skills and used a local project as an example. This was a design project in Southport. The waterfront brick Colonial home has a gallery hallway that connects the entire space, filled with the pitter-patter of the owners' young children.

There's plenty to learn here and apply to your own home project.



above: The restrictions of the design allow one to appreciate the way the elements—shine, color, shape, material—support one another and create a cohesive look. **below:** A modern take on a kitchen bar



Tell me how this project came about?

This project came about because our clients saw our work from our Cove Project, and it spoke to them and the aesthetic they were envisioning for their own home. It was an old brick home that my clients—a fun, young couple—bought me in and said, "We want a modern home." The challenge was making this older Colonial home with a lot of small closed-off rooms into an open, sunny modern home. It was a complete overhaul. A year and a half later, the dream became a reality.

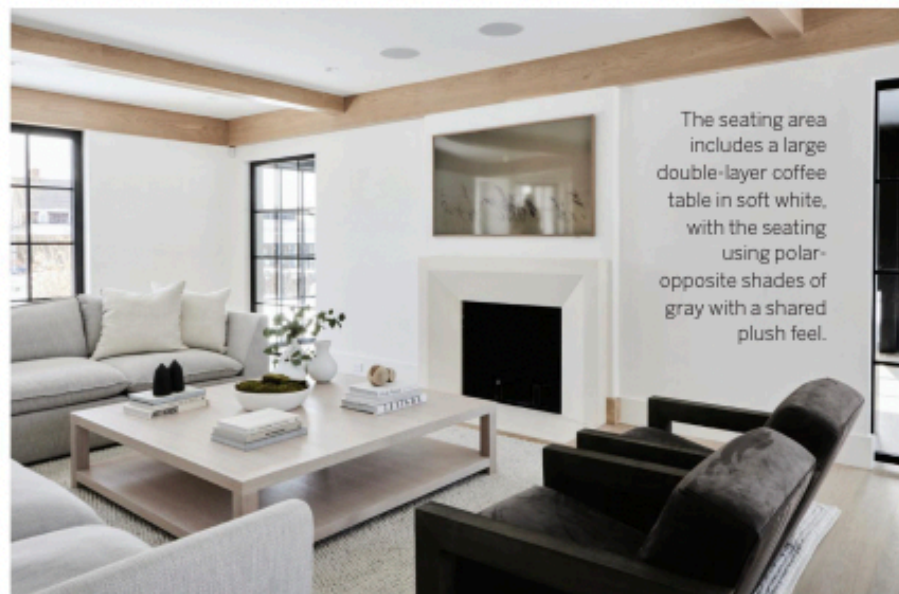
What did you first think when you saw the house?

When I first saw their home, I saw all the endless possibilities. It was a dark, older, traditional home with many small rooms and low ceilings, but all I saw was the finished product—a space that was open, airy and flooded with light.

What are your first steps when taking on a big project?

When taking on a project, the first step is having a concept meeting to ensure that the client's vision and our vision are in sync. Once that is determined, our team then works backward. What I mean here is that instead of starting with the foundation of a space and building upon it until it is what was envisioned, I immediately see the finished space and work with my team from the end point. We sketch out what we want it to be and then source and layer in the details with our incredible vendors.

below: The fireplace serves as a cozy gathering space on cool evenings. **right:** Natural light floods into this room, anchored by a large sofa and black side table.



The seating area includes a large double-layer coffee table in soft white, with the seating using polar-opposite shades of gray with a shared plush feel.

above: Curved deep-seated chairs arranged around a round table is shape playing at its best. The black ceiling turns the expected on its head for a gorgeous touch of drama. **below:** The glass railing opens the space, and the metal accent adds an edgy urban element.



It takes a real team effort to make it happen!

Pick a favorite room and tell me why it works.

It's so hard to pick a favorite room on this project because we love them all! To see each one transform was the best part. I love that we added a gallery hall to create the

feeling of an open-floor plan, raised the ceiling height and flooded the first floor with the natural light it was missing. My goal was to make this older home feel open and light, so we bumped out the entire back wall of the first floor and created a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows.

What are a few of your favorite moments of the finished project?

My absolute favorite part of any project is the final reveal. Nothing beats the moment our clients walk into their finished home for the very first time. After much work, collaboration and effort by so many, nothing feels better

than seeing the looks on our clients' faces and how happy they are when they see in real life what we had imagined for so long. We love hearing, "Do I really get to live here?" And the tears—there have definitely been tears. It feels so rewarding to see our clients loving where they live.

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What can others learn from the design decisions you made?

Less is more. Always. Period.

Where did you source a few of your favorite finds?

We love supporting local vendors and artisans in America when we can. Many of our other vendors are overseas, and we have the opportunity to connect with them twice a year at market to see all the new items.

Any design pet peeves?

If I never see a fireplace on an angled wall again, I'd be a happy camper! Actually, all angled walls for that matter.

Anything else to add?

Working on this project was a labor of love with incredible clients who were

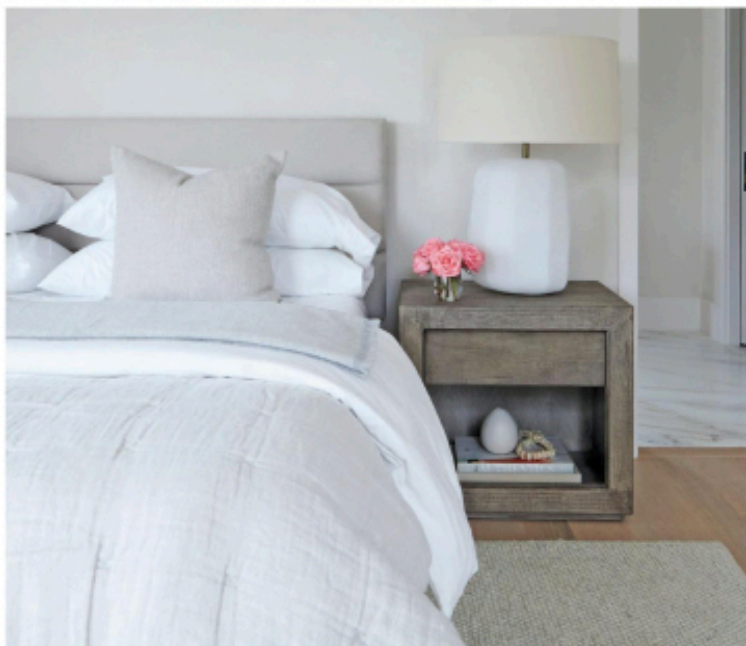
very involved and passionate about the design process. After a year and a half, we are beyond thrilled that they can now enjoy their family in their new home. We are grateful to have been a part of the process.



above: The dark gray walls paired with the dark gray sofa provide a cooling effect to rest and recharge.



left: The main bedroom has a cohesive mix of soft white furnishings that confidently intermix textures.



above: The main bedroom has a soft gray padded headboard with beach-washed gray side table with minimal embellishment.



left: The main bath has a deep rounded tub, full glass shower and gold accents as well as a romantic chandelier, though the windows provide ample natural light. **above:** Bold restraint with frameless mirrors, unpaneled windows and touchless faucets.

