

INTERVIEW WITH MELISSA LINDSAY, PIMLICO INTERIORS & IAN HOBBS, HOBBS, INC. | PHOTOGRAPHER AMY VISCHIO

TAKING SHAPE

Embracing its unique layout, this renovated **HISTORIC HOME** makes room for plenty of **STYLE**





this spread: The home's V-shape footprint opens to the garden and entertaining areas in the rear of the property, which can be seen from the front door. Interior designer Melissa Lindsay of Pimlico Interiors designed a custom sofa for the home's original oval-shaped entry hall; the fabric is by Sandra Jordan.

This house has a very unusual shape. Is what we see now the original footprint?

Melissa Lindsay: Yes. The house was built in 1930 by the firm of Delano & Aldrich. They were known for their appreciation of symmetry, and this house has some striking original features. The entry is at the point where the two sides of its V shape meet. The front door opens to an oval foyer and a beautiful winding stairway. From this level or the upper landing, you can see to the rear of the property, or access the hall that runs from the entry point to each of the two wings.

Ian Hobbs: It's not a common design, but it's actually very well suited to its location. Although the lot is only about a half acre, the V shape opens to the private, rear elevation of the property, which provides the clients with great views of the pool and gardens from nearly every room of the house. This layout gives them a sense of privacy and enclosure but also a connection to the outdoors. The rooms have beautiful natural light.





“The home has a beautiful
balance. The rooms feel
TIME-HONORED yet MODERN.”

—MELISSA LINDSAY

this page (clockwise from top left): A view toward the kitchen shows the dining room’s hand-painted de Gournay wallpaper; the butler’s pantry is richly equipped with custom cabinetry painted in Benjamin Moore’s River Rock, accented with walnut countertops and gleaming hardware; sparkling features, like the vintage mirror wall and crystal chandelier, add a layer of glamour to the dining room.
opposite page: In the kitchen, dark metal elements, like the chairs and custom shelf brackets, pay homage to the home’s original fabric.







Tell us about the clients. ML: This house was purchased as a family gathering place by a young man who splits his time between coasts. He wanted a home base for when he travels to New York as well as a country retreat for his mother and his younger brother's family, who live in New York. The mother and son fell in love with the house, but it needed some major improvements to renew the interiors and update its many aging elements. The first professional they brought in was Michael Baushke, a principal of Apparatus Architecture, who had been the architect for the son's West Coast home.

How did the clients find you and Ian? ML: The mother found me online, and we instantly clicked from the first time we spoke. I met the clients and the architect—on my birthday!—in March 2017. Once we saw the house together, I had a sense of the size of the project. It was going to be extensive and would require incredible attention to detail. I recommended Hobbs, Inc. as the general contractor because I was familiar with their work and their ability to handle large and complex renovations.





opposite page: The library, with shelves full of vintage leather volumes and small treasures, envelops its occupants in the warmth of deep green walls and a cheering hearth; the painting over the sofa is by Caio Fonseca. A lively Schumacher fabric covers the room's club chairs (top left). **this page:** A lighter-than-air living room scheme reflects the beautiful natural light pouring into the space and contrasts with the ebony of a grand piano and the caned chairs flanking the fireplace.





this page: The second-floor landing provides a dramatic pause at the top of the stairs, with an Edward Ferrell sofa in a Holland & Sherry fabric, backed by a modern and oversize print Phillip Jeffries floral paper. One can take in the view of the gardens through arched French doors, enhanced by a sculpture by Benedict Tatti. A small powder room (left) is packed with charm, a shimmering gilded mirror and paper by Schumacher.

opposite page: The glass-walled sunroom offers a wide-open vista of the property's beautiful trees and garden.



What was the scope of the project? IH: It's a unique and beautiful house, but it was ready for a facelift. After nearly a hundred years and several remodelings, the house had settled a bit and the floors were uneven, windows were out of plumb, and all of the systems were outdated. We had to take the interiors down to the studs and rebuild. The clients gave us great leeway to use the best materials to replicate the home's original fabric, including details like substantial hardware, complex millwork, and restoration glass for all of the windows. In improving the drainage for the structure and the property, we were also able to carve out and create livable space on the basement level. From start to finish for design work, and then constructing all of the interior and exterior details, the project took almost two years.

Did the mother or son incorporate any existing furnishings?

ML: We brought nothing from her past or her son's. We selected and brought in everything, down to the flatware from Bergdorf and the antique leather-bound books for the library. She was specific about the fine points: for example, all of the books should be in English, so she could read them. We were able to restore all seven of the home's fireplaces and locate sources to equip them with custom-made fire baskets. The original baskets were used

to burn coal, although all of the fireplaces are now gas-operated. Those details mattered, and they are part of what makes this home so special and unique. She even has a fireplace in her dressing room—how great is that?

How did the two generations impact the design? ML: This was the interesting part. While the mother was more of a traditionalist, her son had definite modernist leanings. She spends more time here than the other members of the family, and most of the public areas reflect her sensibilities. But it's a beautiful balance. The rooms feel time-honored yet modern. For example, in the library, a cozy and traditional design is enhanced by its contemporary elements—the art and textiles are very twenty-first century. You'll find this interplay throughout the house.

IH: One of the benefits of the V-shape layout on the second floor is the opportunity for the son and his mother to express their own styles at opposite ends of the house.

ML: The son's primary suite, with its black-and-white palette, and the geometric forms of the exterior metal window frames that enclose the bath and dressing area, are all his taste, and very contemporary and dramatic in feeling. At the same time, a few details in his bedroom—a three-legged





carved and gilded Louis XV demilune console and a companion chair—provide a couple of touches to remind you of the home's overall aesthetic. His mother's wing—complete with a fantastically detailed dressing room and an almost ethereal pastel palette—is all hers.

The design uses many recurring elements: wallpapers that reflect nature, and in almost every room, some dark metal. What inspired this? ML: The use of bronze metal accents connects to the architectural integrity of the home—the repetitive bronze railings outside the French doors throughout—and not only does it connect the home to its history, but it gives a garden element to the interiors, which plays off of a lot of the fabrics, patterns and design elements used throughout. I love how the wallcoverings connect to the gardens outside while also offering a bit of whimsy to different spaces. They create a beautiful layer in the rooms with the artwork, furnishings and lighting. It was so important for me to create interior spaces that have layers and depth—this is often most achieved through the balance of juxtaposing different period pieces, patterns and art.

The glass-walled sunroom on the second floor at the back of the house is a stunning and modern feature. How did that idea evolve? IH: This room always had the role of a sunroom, but Michael saw the potential to make the outside wall entirely of glass. From there—and actually from the second-floor landing—you have an amazing view of the back of the property, with all of its greenery, the gardens and the pool. It was a great idea, and it was our challenge to make it happen.

Was it difficult curving that glass wall? IH: It was a tricky bit of geometry. The custom fabricated glass wall meets the brick exterior walls of the house on either side, so we had to make it weatherproof, and the fit needed to be perfect. The result was worth the effort. We're all proud of that detail.

How did you accomplish some of the additions to the old floor plan, since the home's footprint didn't expand? ML: Between Michael and Ian's team, all of the new spaces fit within the existing structure. This house was designed for the long term, so an elevator was added to the plan. The two powder

opposite page: The pastel preferences of the lady of the house, including the Oriental Bird paper by GP & J Baker that covers the walls of her bedroom, are punctuated by the occasional contemporary accent, such as an animal print upholstered chair. In her bath, tradition rules with refined and detailed built-in cabinetry and glowing accessories.

below: A wall of vintage framed art speaks to her love of time-honored objects.





this spread: Geometry in high-contrast black and white defines the son's domain, contrasted with an antique gilded console that connects this modern retreat to the home's more traditionally furnished spaces. Dark metal frames most often used for exterior openings outline the bath and dressing room in this dramatic primary bedroom.





this spread: Located in the son's wing on the second floor, a dark-light counterpoint creates an alluring design dynamic in the guest bedroom. The Schumacher paper, with butterflies and birds on a bright white field, contrasts with dark trim and furnishings, and the Pierre Frey headboard fabric brings a garden green to the palette. A vintage fireplace surround, lit from a custom reproduction of the home's original fire baskets, enhances this carefully composed and layered design.



“The clients gave us great leeway to use the **BEST MATERIALS**
to replicate the home’s **ORIGINAL** fabric.”

—IAN HOBBS





above: At the opening of the two sides of the V-shape house, landscape architect Renée Byers lengthened and enhanced the home's axis from the front door to the newly located pool in a simple and artful composition, framed by the backyard's ancient trees.

rooms—off the entry foyer and the upstairs landing—fulfill their functions in very small spaces. But like everything else we did, these additions were designed to feel like they've always been part of this house. And because of the remedial work at the basement level, we could actually add more new features. There is a home theater, a very special grandchildren's room, and a wine room on that lower level. To bring more natural light into these spaces, new window wells were constructed for larger openings to the outside.

How did you update the existing backyard? ML: The rear elevation of the house is framed by three beautiful and very old trees. Those were preserved, but the entire rear landscape was reworked. To create the beautiful axis that extends from the front entry to the rear of the property, the pool location was moved so it centers the outdoor view. It's flanked by the pool house on

one side and a lounging area on the other.

IH: The old plan had a porch with a single stair down; this hardscape was expanded to accommodate space for dining and relaxation, and all of the overgrown shrubbery that was planted up against the back of the house was removed. The new landscape has a symmetry that relates perfectly to the house.

Was the pool house an addition? IH: It was, and again you can see the counterpoint between classical form and modern features. You have a traditional, temple-like structure with very geometric and contemporary glass-and-metal openings.

The beautiful plantings are placed in a very elegant pattern. Who designed



above: With a classic temple shape and columns that relate its structure to the porch, the new pool house is a perfect fit for a landscape that honors the past and future of a historic home.

the landscape? ML: The landscape was designed by Renée Byers; she did great work that complements the home's exterior and interior features.

Now that the project is complete and the clients are happily using this home, what are your own feelings about it? IH: The project had so much detail, but there was great teamwork. Michael had a vision, and I had Dave Smart and Toni Sand from our firm as supervisor and project manager to work out every fine point. It was a plus to be involved from the beginning, when Melissa recommended us for the project. And the clients were amazing. They were willing to go the distance to get everything just right. ML: From my first conversations with the clients, this project had a wonderful energy. Everyone shared a vision, and I always felt I was working with a team of all-stars. The clients respected the idea of bringing in the

best professionals. They understood that it's a harder task to recreate a home and make it feel like it's always been there. Not all projects end this way, but it was honestly such an enjoyable experience that it was almost bittersweet when we were done. The clients allowed us to do our best work, and that's something we all appreciate. —INTERVIEW BY JUDY OSTROW

Resources:

Interior designer: Pimlico Interiors, Westport; 203-972-8166; pimlicointeriors.com

Builder: Hobbs, Inc., New Canaan; 203-966-0726; hobbsinc.com

Architect: Michael Baushke, Apparatus Architecture, San Francisco; 415-703-0904; apparatus.com

Landscape architect: Renée Byers Landscape Architect, Greenwich; 203-489-0800; reneebyers.com