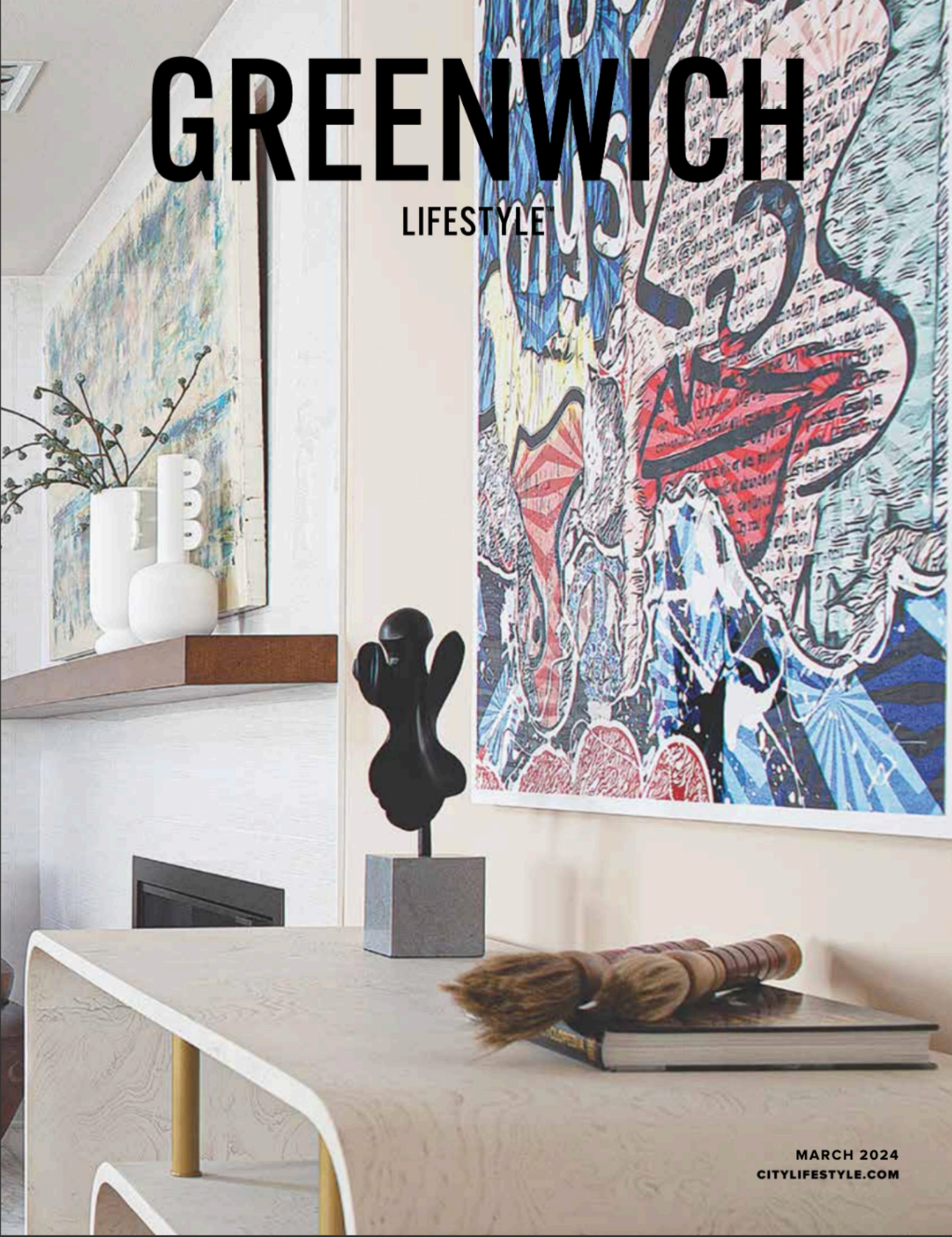


# GREENWICH

LIFESTYLE



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# Your Dream Home Awaits

WHEN IT COMES TO DESIGN, LARA MICHELLE KNOWS GOOD TASTE

ARTICLE BY ASHLEY ALT

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF LARA MICHELLE



Family Room, designed by Lara Michelle



Lara Michelle Beautiful Interiors Inc. is founded by award-winning designer Lara Michelle, an expert in her field known for her impeccable taste. Lara lives in Rye Brook, New York with her husband and two children. Her client base spans from Darien to New Canaan to Greenwich to in and around the lower Fairfield County. For clients dreaming of that picturesque, luxurious and elegant home, Lara is the person who can turn that dream into a reality.

Lara attended Cornell Fine Arts School, which had “a very small but a very great fine arts program.” Taking general courses like drawing, painting, sculpture, photography and art history, Lara realized she didn’t want to be a fine artist, as being stuck in a studio by herself didn’t thrill her.

“I am a highly creative person that wanted to do something creative,” Lara says. She ended up at the New York School of Design (one of the best interior design programs in the country), obtaining an internship with Victoria Hagan, a well-known designer in the art world. With Victoria, Lara loved how interactive her Take Victoria’s work was with people, not to mention the creative process, when she fell in love with the idea of running her own business.

After her time with Victoria, which Lara describes as “amazing and incredible,” she went on to work for several other well-known designers in the city. When she became a designer for an architectural firm, people started asking her to style their apartments. “And then it grew from there,” Lara says.

She started her business, officially, in 1995 on the side until she gained enough clients to go full-time.

Starting with an initial consultation, Lara meets the client at their home to get ideas and see what they would like to do with their space. “We walk through the house room by room and discuss their

dream for the entire house,” Lara says. “I give them suggestions, a timeline and as much information upfront as possible.”

Communication is the top priority in making her clients’ dream homes come true. Whether it’s redoing a bathroom, “making a fantastic man cave” or remodeling the kitchen, Lara explains her team can do anything when it comes to interior work in the home.

“My carpenter can basically build anything I can draw or dream up,” Lara remarks of her contractor. “Even furniture like dining tables, book shelves or bars.” Also a part of her team includes a plumber, an electrician, a painter and a “wallpaper guy who is fabulous.” “We’ve been working together so long we can really get into any client’s home and make it spectacular,” she says.

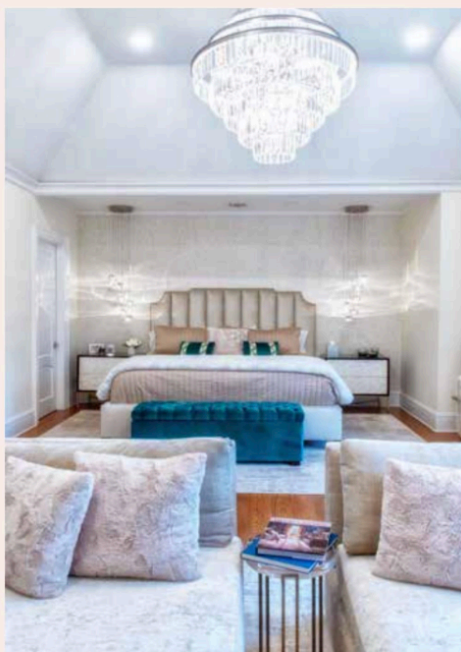
In addition to her design work and the construction of the homes, Lara also purchases the items the clients need for their homes including fabrics, trims and wallpaper. This involves the designer going to various showroom locations, including the New York Design building, “which has really great lighting showrooms,” to find the perfect fit for her clients’ homes. “The trade pricing used to be very secretive,” she states of the furniture wholesale model. “So I’ve devised a different way to work—I send the invoice that comes directly from the manufacturer so the client can see exactly what they are being charged and what I am being charged—I find that people really appreciate that [transparency].”

Depending on the client’s budget, Lara also works to produce custom designs and furniture. To bring these exact specifications to life, it’s a “big combination” of heading to markets and showrooms as well as taking advantage of online shopping.

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“If a client is doing an amazing kitchen, living room and powder room, maybe we can cut back a little bit on a few bedrooms that are upstairs that aren’t seen that much,” she says of custom requests.

Her upholstery workroom can make these custom designs “work nicely,” from fitting sofas and upholstery items that is the exact configuration the client wants, to getting the precise fabric that the client wants.

“We are super customer-service oriented,” Lara says. “We ensure the client has the least stress possible.”

In the photos you see across these pages, Lara explains her design process, detailing the functionality of each household room.

**Family Room:** Lara designed this beautiful yet functional family room for a young, active Greenwich family. Her custom upholstery sofa and chairs have high performance fabrics and the custom rug, although ultra plush, is made with extra strong, stain resistant fibers. The fireplace is wrapped in statement-making zebra marble slabs spanning from the floor to the top of the 13-foot high ceilings.

**Playroom:** The playroom in this Greenwich home is outfitted with Lara’s custom designed built-ins which houses toys, games and art supplies. The TV and coffee table were intentionally omitted to allow for more play space and kids imaginations to run free—what a radical concept! To lighten and brighten the space, the wood paneled walls were whitewashed and hardwood floors were stained in a light finish.

**#3 Master Bedroom:** Luxurious textures abound in the serene master bedroom designed by Lara. The custom upholstery is adorned with sublime designer velvets and chenilles while a textured golden wallpaper behind the bed adds a subtle glow. The crystal hanging pendant lights and grand chandelier create a glamorous effect.

As if her photos don’t do her work enough justice, her clients can attest to the brilliant work of Lara:

“Lara worked with us as we gutted our entire house. She project-managed on a weekly basis because we lived in the city and I was pregnant with our second [child]. We were very dependent on her being onsite, handling every detail and making real-time decisions. She did an exceptional job understanding our style, family needs and thinking out-of-the-box when we had to find solutions/workarounds. Our home has since been featured in magazines, home catalogs, websites, etc. all thanks to Lara’s brilliant design skills.” -Meredith and Nick G.

“We have recently completed a large renovation which included our kitchen, foyer with new stairs, three bathrooms, laundry room, mudroom and our master suite under the watchful eye of Lara Michelle, and we are thrilled with the professional and efficient way that every detail was handled. We were abroad for much of the project and any issues were very quickly resolved, with the whole process running smoothly and on time. Lara has excellent relationships with her contractors and suppliers and holds them to extremely high standards. We would not hesitate to recommend Lara Michelle for any renovation or design project.” -Martin and Laura F.

“I interviewed several designers and decided on Lara. Lara’s expertise encompassed everything I was looking for in an interior designer. She was professional from our first meeting throughout the process, staying on task and sticking to a timeline. Her talents in every area of design made the process exciting and fun! She remained calm, reassuring and solution-oriented throughout, especially when we experienced unexpected hiccups along the way. Lara is extremely talented, dependable, confident, respectful and listens to her clients. I highly recommend her!” -Katie A.



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