



*"Signature Home" in Mystic  
As featured in The Day, October 21, 1994*

*When you walk into Mary Staggs' three-story, self-designed contemporary home in Mystic, expect to be greeted by the unexpected.*

*The first focal point will be perched at the top of the third floor- a near life-size, colorful wooden tiger—one of Mary's flea market purchases. "Tiger" invites you into the nucleus of Mary's home, located on the third floor- a floor usually not considered for the kitchen, dining and living area. But for Mary, who designed the home herself after choosing the site, the third floor makes perfect sense.*

*The 3,400-square-foot home, constructed atop a hill, takes advantage of the picturesque town of Mystic and its river, which it overlooks. And although the master bedroom on the second floor as well as one other bedroom have views, the third floor, with its 14-foot ceilings, has the most spectacular vistas. So for Mary, who likes to entertain and sit outside to eat, the third floor was the ideal spot for her living area.*

*And by designing herself, Mary was able to tailor a home to her lifestyle. She advises others to do the same.*

*"Take a look at your lifestyle," she says. "If you enjoy entertaining then make your home conducive to that. If you enjoy privacy then you can structure your rooms in a way that there's plenty of separate space for family members... I think that function plays a big role in how you decide you're going to design your house."*

*But if you're going to build yourself, watch out for cost overruns. Mary's experience taught her to leave plenty of money in the budget for the unexpected.*

*"Building materials, from the time I initially designed the house to when we actually started constructing it, skyrocketed because of hurricanes in Florida and preserving owls in trees in the North Country, so wood all of a sudden became like gold," she says.*

*Mary had a big part in the financial aspect of the project- and by doing all the buying herself; she was able to save substantially by pricing out items. Contractors who allow homeowners to have a more active role in the building process are out there more and more, she says.*

*The rewards of homeowner involvement from designing to collaborating with her contractor, John DeCiantis, of Stonington, are visible throughout Mary's home- a "signature home" which caters to her needs and tastes.*

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*Her third floor great room is not only breathtaking, it is functional. Her kitchen is not blocked off from the rest of the rooms, and with its multitude of white cabinets, a double oven and gas stove, it is truly a place to cook. Separating the kitchen from the dining area is a counter with stools. The separation is subtle, and does not interfere with the open feel, something Mary had wished to keep.*

#### *Open Kitchen*

*"I like to cook, I like to entertain," she says. "So I wanted a kitchen that was open... but at the same time separate enough so that you could be sitting in the living room and not be looking at a kitchen."*

*The great room encompasses four distinct areas in one open space, and an unusual eclectic tone weaves the four together. The contemporary design, with its light oak wood and white walls, are warmed by the lushness of the Victorian furnishings and Persian carpets.*

*Adjacent to the kitchen is the dining area, and a stately antique table-picked up at a second-hand store and stripped of its paint and restored by Mary-occupies the best spot in the great room. It is here that one can dine and gaze out toward the river and walk out of the French door and relax on the deck.*

*Vistas are still easily accessible from the den at the top of the stairs, but the cozy alcove with its scattering of chairs, small couch, TV and of course, Tiger, is more of a place to watch a show or curl up with a book, or, for Mary, sit at a desk and paint a watercolor.*

*The only enclosed room upstairs is a tiny, oblong bathroom next to the kitchen. A stained glass window, in shades of rose, teal and blue, allows the light to stream in but also guarantees privacy. The window is antique, and is another find of Mary's-this time plucked from an old building in Springfield, Mass.*

*The living room has a Tabriz Turkish carpet in rust and blue tones similar to colors in the adjoining dining room, easing the eye from one space to the next. The room has an unusual Victorian piece- a comfortable couch still stuffed with its original down feathers. In neutral white stripes, the couch is complemented by a rust colored armchair. Both pieces, placed by a Spanish marble fireplace, make a lovely spot for after-dinner entertaining and relaxing.*

#### *Sleeping Quarters*

*The second floor functions as sleeping quarters for Mary and her two young sons, and includes a playroom for the kids. Mary's master bedroom, done in rose and blue hues picked up on the walls and Persian carpet, is adjacent to the master bath, with a French door opening to the second-floor deck giving the room the feeling of a separate suite.*

*One of the most important lifestyle accommodations considered when Mary designed her home was the need for office space. Mary is a certified rolfer, practicing a technique called rolfing which corrects body alignment by asserting pressure on the muscles' connective*

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*tissue. By locating her office on the third floor, Mary provided her clients with a private, accessible entrance.*

*With the exception of a library/guest room, the lower level is designed for her business. The waiting area mixed two contrasting colors, peach and black, creating a vibrant room. The walls and ceiling are peach colored, the continuity of color giving the illusion of more space according to Mary, as well as being less jarring to the eye.*

#### *Striking Effect*

*African prints, framed in black, and a black African mask, boldly exist within the peach backdrop, making for a striking effect.*

*A section of the room is left for Mary's unique desk-a slab of uncut pine atop filing cabinets-an earthy touch heightening the room's exotic air.*

*The rolfing room itself, also peach, is soothing, and American Indian prints in gentle shades compliment the walls. A mirror occupies one corner so clients can learn to correct their body posture.*

*Mary's new home on Bruggeman Court, which she has occupied for nearly four months now, ignores conventional configurations and focuses on individual needs and tastes, resulting in a creative design that combines living space and work space for a signature home-a home that makes its mark on her business as well.*

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