

THE MAGAZINE *of* SPLENDID HOMES *and* GARDENS • MARCH/APRIL 2014

DESIGN

NEW ENGLAND



LOCATION, LOCATION



Graphic Reinvention

Vintage images take on a new life on the pillows, notecards, and sweet sachets created by Leslie Evans Designs

WRITTEN BY REGINA COLE • PHOTOGRAPHED BY TRENT BELL

Leslie Evans has a short commute to work — approximately 100 feet. She crosses a bridge that leads from her gray, shingled Cape-style house in Cape Elizabeth, Maine, to a 1,600-square-foot two-story barn that houses Leslie Evans Designs. There she walks past bins of pillows, sachets, table runners, notecards, and paper place mats ready for shipping, all printed and pro-



duced with her distinctive nature-inspired graphics.

“We have four sewing machines,” Evans says, pointing to tables scattered around the spacious and light-filled second-story workshop. “One is a new machine that’s almost never used; our favorite is my mother’s old Singer Featherweight.”

LESLIE EVANS STANDS in front of an antique rack filled with her tabletop linens and sachets, all embellished with vintage images. Her company logo (**LEFT**) identifies her signature striped cotton ticking backing.

Distinct Sound. Timeless Design. Exquisite Taste.

A Steinway is an instrument designed to fill your life with wonderful music. A Steinway is also a work of art that stands alone as the centerpiece of a room, with a distinct, timeless design that can never be duplicated.

Hand crafted, over a year in the making, each Steinway is an individual masterpiece, with a sound that is unmatched in resonance and tone, and a look that bespeaks classic elegance.

M. Steinert & Sons is the exclusive representative of Steinway in the greater Boston area. We invite you to visit our showroom in Boston or the Natick Mall to explore our wide array of world-class instruments from Steinway, Boston, Essex, and Roland.



M. Steinert & Sons
Steinway & other pianos of distinction

The Finest Pianos in New England for Over 150 Years
Boston | Natick Mall
855-233-8218 • www.msteinert.com

ARTISAN



There is plenty of nostalgia to go around at Leslie Evans Designs, where this graphic artist has transformed a lifelong love of textiles and pattern into a creative business that turns out fabric and paper products she describes as “vintage-inspired with a contemporary twist.”

Her runners, pillows, and sachets all have her signature colorful striped cotton ticking on the back and her trademark flowers, whales, ferns, or archival images on the front. Old postcards, photographs, and illustrations as well as pieces of vin-

A BRIDGE CONNECTS Evans’s house to the barn (ABOVE, LEFT), where the studio for Leslie Evans Designs is located on the light-filled second floor. The 1,600-square-foot structure, designed to reflect the simplicity of New England farm buildings, has a distant view of the ocean and Crescent Beach, which borders the property. An antique farm table (ABOVE, RIGHT) works for conferences and lunch breaks.



Advanced Communication Technologies

Hingham N. Falmouth
781.741.5959 508.563.2626
www.actces.com



control systems

home theater

multi-room audio

lighting control

surveillance systems

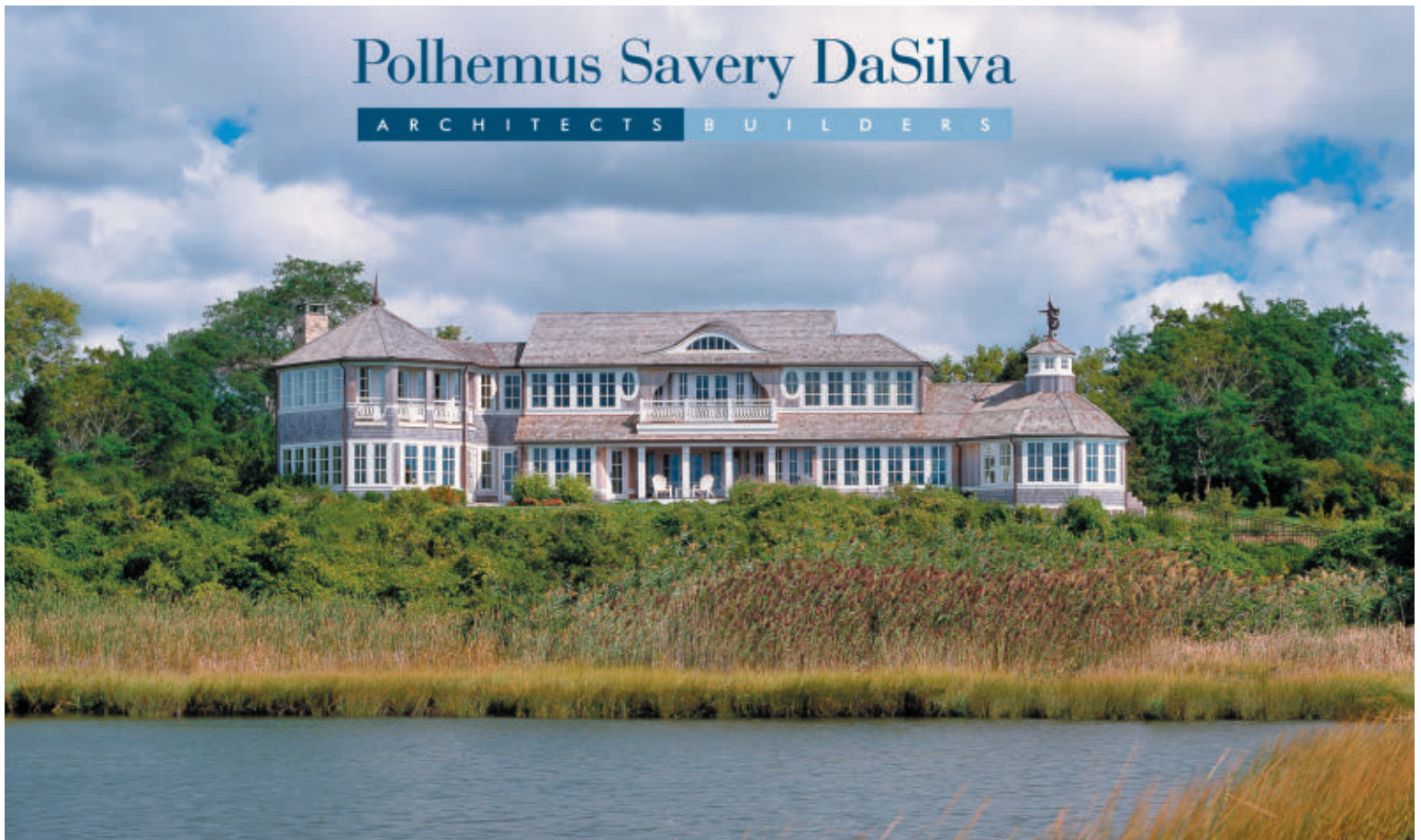


VINTAGE IMAGES USED in Evans's textile designs are pinned on a corkboard and a dress form in her barn studio (ABOVE, LEFT), which is finished with knotty pine. The designer's New England roots influence her illustration choices, as demonstrated in prints of whales and lobsters on her table linens (ABOVE, RIGHT). Evans is looking to expand her line to include tea towels, trays, soaps, and candles.

tage fabric form the backbone of her design library. "My skill as a designer is as an editor: I know where to crop, how to arrange pictures," she says. "I do the designs on my computer, upload them to a company in North Carolina, and they ship the printed fabric to my door. Copyrights are not an issue because I only use pictures that are in the public domain." To find her designs, she says, "I buy old encyclopedias, handkerchiefs, and postcards published before 1925." One of her go-to design sources is the seminal reference work *The Grammar of Ornament*, published

Polhemus Savery DaSilva

ARCHITECTS BUILDERS





ARTISAN



A MAP OF Vinalhaven, an island off the Maine coast, graces a large throw pillow (ABOVE). A nautical chart of Nantucket is superimposed with a striped bass image on another island-centric pillow cover (FACING PAGE, TOP). A wire basket (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM) is filled with ticking, cut and ready to be sewed to the back of Evans's pillows and sachets.

in 1856 by influential British architect and designer Owen Jones.

Leslie Evans Designs was born in 2009 in the wake of economic turmoil. Evans had had a long career in graphic design starting in the 1980s, when she founded a firm in New York that included Timberland, Reebok, and Esprit among its clients. Then, in 1991, when her children were young, the Boston native moved to Maine and launched a company that serviced clients such as G.H. Bass and Stonewall Kitchen. But after the attacks on New York's World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, business came to a screeching halt.

"I felt the earth slip away from under

Renjeau Galleries
79 Worcester St
Route 9
Natick, MA 01760
508-655-5121

Sonora- 36x60 - oil on canvas

www.renjeau.com

FINE ART • FRAMING • RESTORATION

Renjeau

Galleries



my feet,” she says. But, still determined, “I started over.” She launched a smaller graphic design firm, and in 2002 she and her life partner, Ronnie Sellers, designed the barn as a creative space for Evans’s business and his publishing company, which produces calendars, greeting cards, and books and sells them globally. But when the recession hit in the late 2000s, Evans saw her work drying up again. “I wondered, ‘How many times is this going to happen to me?’ ” she says.

It was time to turn the page. “I had always thought that it would be nice to have my own brand,” she says. She delved into her own collection of fabrics and stitched

EUROPEAN COUNTRY

ANTIQUE · RECLAIMED · CUSTOM



Ecountryantiques.com

617.876.7485 146 Huron Avenue · Cambridge MA · 02138 Tue -Sun 11-6

802-253-2169

**CUSHMAN
DESIGN GROUP**

Full Service Architectural Design

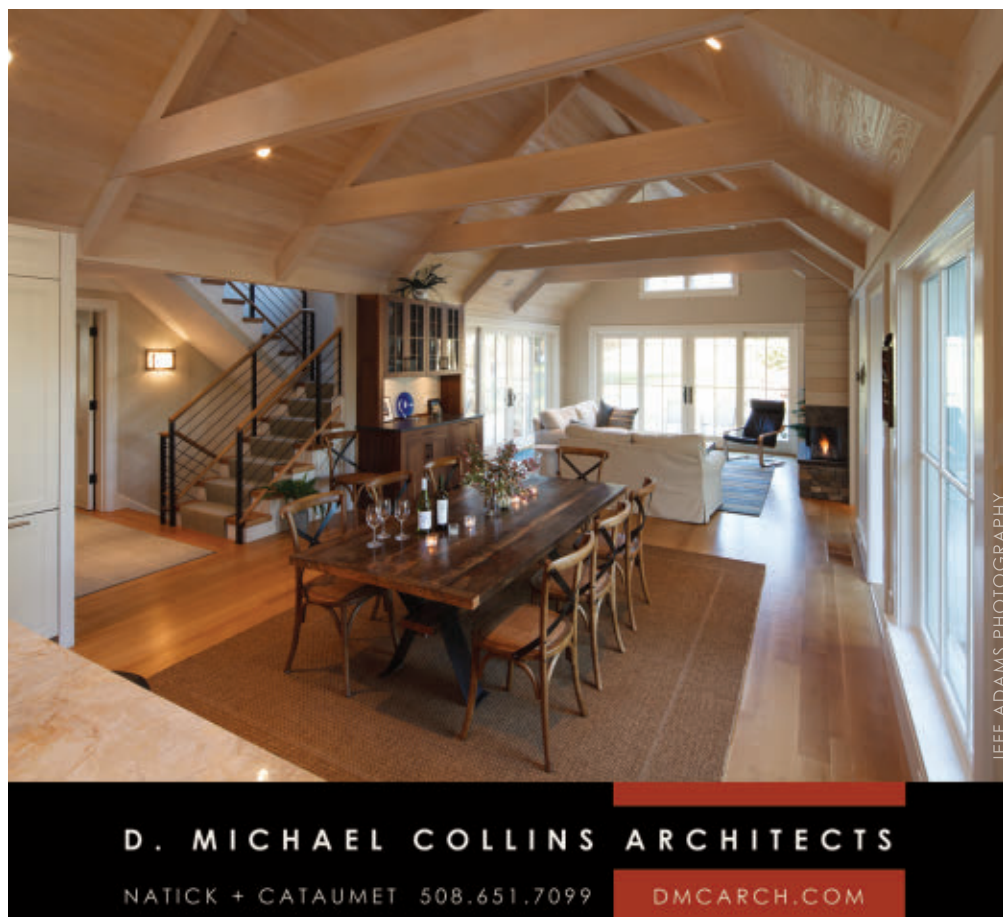
Creative · Intuitive · Functional · Efficient

Design Solutions.

Throughout New England and Across the Country
To see more images of our diverse portfolio,
please visit our website.

cushmandesign.com

Photos: Susan Teare



ARTISAN



A CUPOLA PROVIDES plenty of natural light for a sewer working at the hand-me-down machine that belonged to Evans's mother. Knotty pine on the floor and cathedral ceiling give the post-and-beam structure a warm ambience.




TREFLER'S
 — EST. 1921 —

up some table runners and sachets and brought them to a Portland, Maine, church fair. "I made \$200; I was bummed," she says. "But I realized that I love natural history and pattern. I stuck with it."

Now her whimsical yet practical cotton-linen-blend textiles and paper products are sold in specialty shops and online at *etsy.com*. Still, Evans is keeping her operation small. She employs just one in-house worker, while pillows and runners are stitched by piecework sewers in their homes. "They are mostly older ladies, all local," she says.

A Maine Staple Goes Chic

The balsam sachet has long been a favorite memento for visitors to the Pine Tree State because of its fresh scent. The homely forest-green-and-beige burlap sack that held the aromatics probably didn't do much to advance sales, however. Most people were just going to stuff them in a drawer or toss them in a suitcase.

Not so with the sachets Leslie Evans designs. In her hands, balsam has become chic. She offers a wide selection of fragrant pillows, stuffed with scented balsam, lavender, and orange and clove fillings, that look as good as they smell.

The sachets, which come in several sizes, are covered with a linen-cotton blend depicting whales, hydrangeas, birds' nests, flowers, birds, maps, old postcard pictures, or graphic and arresting images of conifers, and the backs are finished with Evans's signature cotton ticking. A summer favorite features signal flags that spell out the names of popular tourist destinations such as Cape Cod or Boothbay Harbor. We are partial to *La Pêche* and *La Poire*, her vintage-style fruit prints, pictured below.



As she looks to the future, Evans has a list of products — tea towels, trays, soaps, and candles — she would like to create.

“Once people love your stuff, you can put your designs on anything,” she says with a smile. ■

❶ **Leslie Evans Designs**, leslieevansdesigns.com, sells products online at etsy.com, and at New England specialty shops, including The Lion's Paw, Nantucket, MA; MacKimmie Company, Marblehead, MA; Tale of the Cod, Chatham, MA; and the gift shop at the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens, Boothbay, ME.



CYNTHIA KNAUF
LANDSCAPE DESIGN INC



Susan Teare Photography

BEAUTY

FUNCTION

SUSTAINABILITY

COLLABORATION

cynthiaknauf.com



Now Visit our
New Gallery in

Chatham

Contemporary, *Traditional* or TRANSITIONAL
in two great locations!

J.TODD GALLERIES
www.jtodd.com

572 Washington Street
Wellesley, MA
781-237-3434

492 Main Street
Chatham, MA
508-945-0888