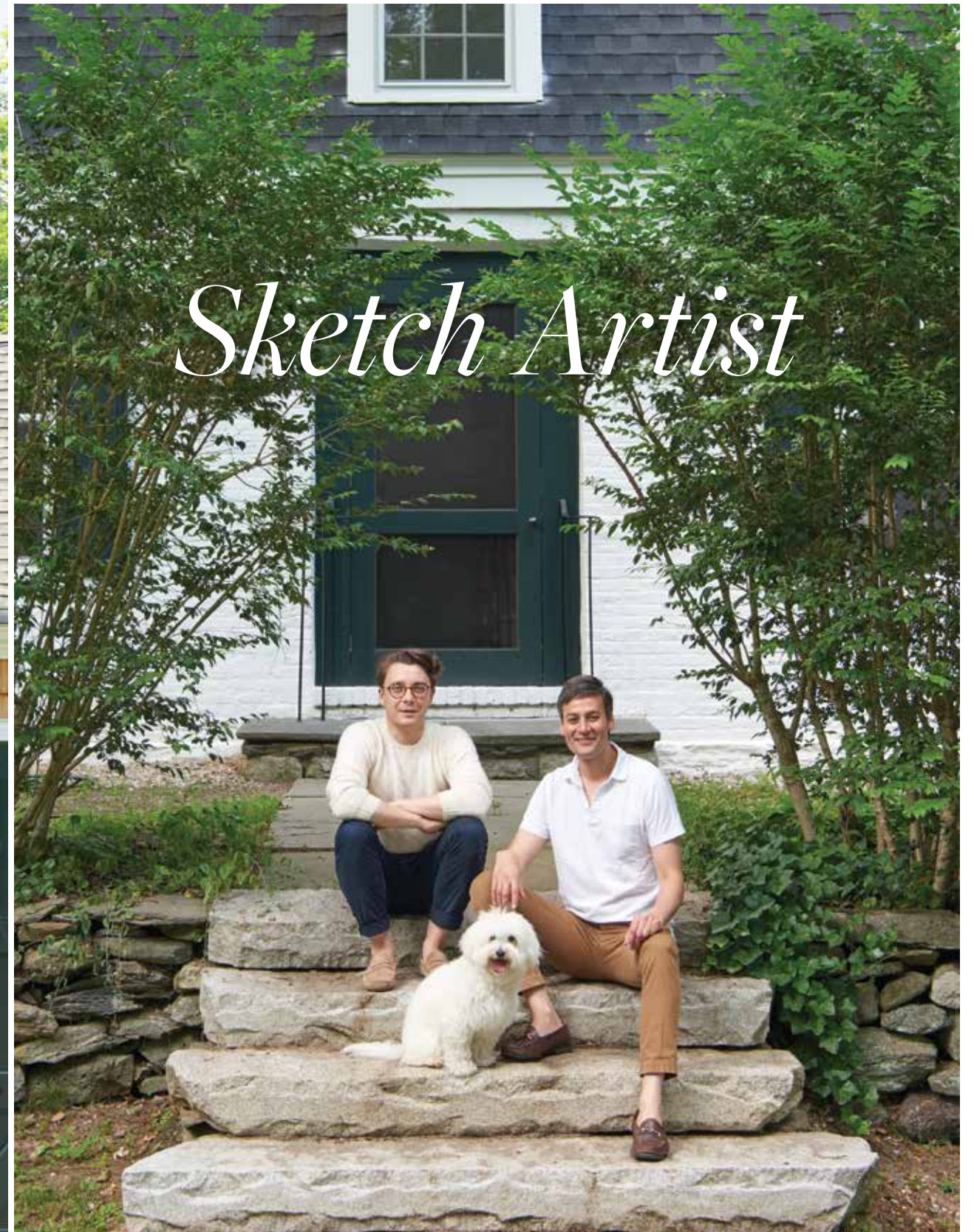


New England HOME CT

Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

Calm & Collected

Designer Jason Puiia reimagined the 1970s three-car-garage addition to better suit the eighteenth-century residence, trading in vinyl siding for cedar shingles and adding a porte cochere, carriage doors, gables, and a cupola. **RIGHT:** Puiia, left, with his partner, Keith Venkiteswaran, and their Coton de Tulear, Ziggy.



Sketch Artist

For his own retreat in Litchfield County, designer Jason Puiia leads a sensitive renovation that honors the home's storied history.

Text by ALYSSA BIRD | *Photography by* JOHN GRUEN | *Produced by* KARIN LIDBECK BRENT



Finding “The One” can take time. Just ask Jason Puiia, a partner at the Manhattan-based interior design firm Rees Roberts + Partners, and Keith Venkiteswaran, a digital strategist, who looked for a weekend escape in both upstate

New York and the Hamptons before a property in Litchfield County finally won them over. “It was unlike anything else we had seen,” says Puiia of the eighteenth-century brick Colonial, one of sixteen recognized historic listings in the village. “I wanted the challenge of working with an older building, and this one had a sense of familiarity about it.”



CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: Puiia sets the table in the family room, which is used for informal entertaining. The living room’s original wood-burning fireplace from 1760 was preserved and repainted. In a corner of the living room, an antique secretary cabinet complements a fretwork chair found at an estate sale in Salisbury. **FACING PAGE:** Schumacher’s Pyne Hollyhock print—made popular by designer Albert Hadley—enlivens the living room. “This is a masculine way of doing chintz,” says Puiia.



But dated additions flanking the original 1760 residence were masking its potential, so while it may have been love at first sight for Puiia, Venkiteswaran needed some persuading. “I ended up convincing Keith with a napkin sketch,” recalls Puiia, who had scribbled a renovation plan for the 4,100-square-foot property during a post-showing lunch.

Venkiteswaran got to play client, with Puiia presenting him with sketches, Pinterest boards, and CAD drawings. “I’d spend weeks developing schemes, and then I’d run them by Keith,” says Puiia. His proposal involved gutting the additions—a 500-square-foot rec room that was once a screened-in porch, a former doctor’s office (the previous residents were both physicians), and a 1970s vinyl-clad garage—and better integrating them into the original structure, which the couple wanted to preserve as much as possible.

Opting to tackle the project without an architect, the interior designer consulted



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—DESIGNER AND HOMEOWNER JASON PUIIA

LEFT: A dated 500-square-foot addition became a light-filled family room with a television area, an informal dining area, and a workspace for Venkiteswaran.

RIGHT: Puiia’s plan included doubling the size of the kitchen, which he carefully crafted to avoid looking too new. **FACING PAGE:** In the family room’s dining area, a fixture from Shades of Light hangs above a West Elm table, Pottery Barn side chairs, and armchairs from Mainly Baskets Home; the artwork is by Mark Liebergall.

with contractors John Considine and Roger Hedman of Riga Construction along the way to ensure that his vision would be buildable and structurally sound. The doctor’s office is now a spacious main-bedroom wing, and the square rec room—with its low ceiling, peeling parquet floor, wood stove, and aluminum sliding doors—became a multipurpose family room complete with a vaulted ceiling, fireplace, workspace, informal dining area, and doors leading out to a new patio. “This is the room we use the most,” says Puiia. “It works just as well for a large group dinner as it does for two people watching a movie.”

The exterior’s most dramatic transformation is the garage, its middle bay replaced with a porte cochere. While one side of the structure still functions as a garage, the other houses storage space and a mud room that serves as a secondary entrance. “It feels



“We wanted a comfortable, collected, layered space that felt like it had evolved over time.” —JASON PUIIA



Another addition, which had served as a doctor's office, morphed into the main suite. The new bath features a Randolph Morris tub, Carrara marble flooring, and a Cheviot sink. **FAR RIGHT:** In the bedroom, vintage bedside tables flank a bed from Charles P. Rogers, while an Oushak-inspired rug ties everything together.

like an old carriage house that could have always been there,” says Puiia, noting the addition of cedar shingles, a cupola, gables, carriage doors, and Belgian block flooring. In fact, the couple’s goal for the entire home was that the renovation not look too new. To that end, Puiia injected architectural elements such as molding, trim, and bead-board that were in keeping with the space’s eighteenth-century origins.

With the shell complete, Puiia could finally get to what he does best. “We took our

time furnishing the house, looking for unique pieces at antiques shops and seeking out local artists,” says the designer. “We wanted a comfortable, collected, layered space that felt like it had evolved over time.” And Puiia’s favorite client couldn’t be happier with the result. “Ultimately, we ended up building exactly what Jason drew on that napkin that day,” says Venkiteswaran. “Jason’s superpower is knowing how people want to live.”

EDITOR'S NOTE: For details about this home, see *Resources*.

INTERIOR DESIGN: Jason Puiia
BUILDER: Roger Hedman, John Considine, Riga Construction

