

# Gathering Place

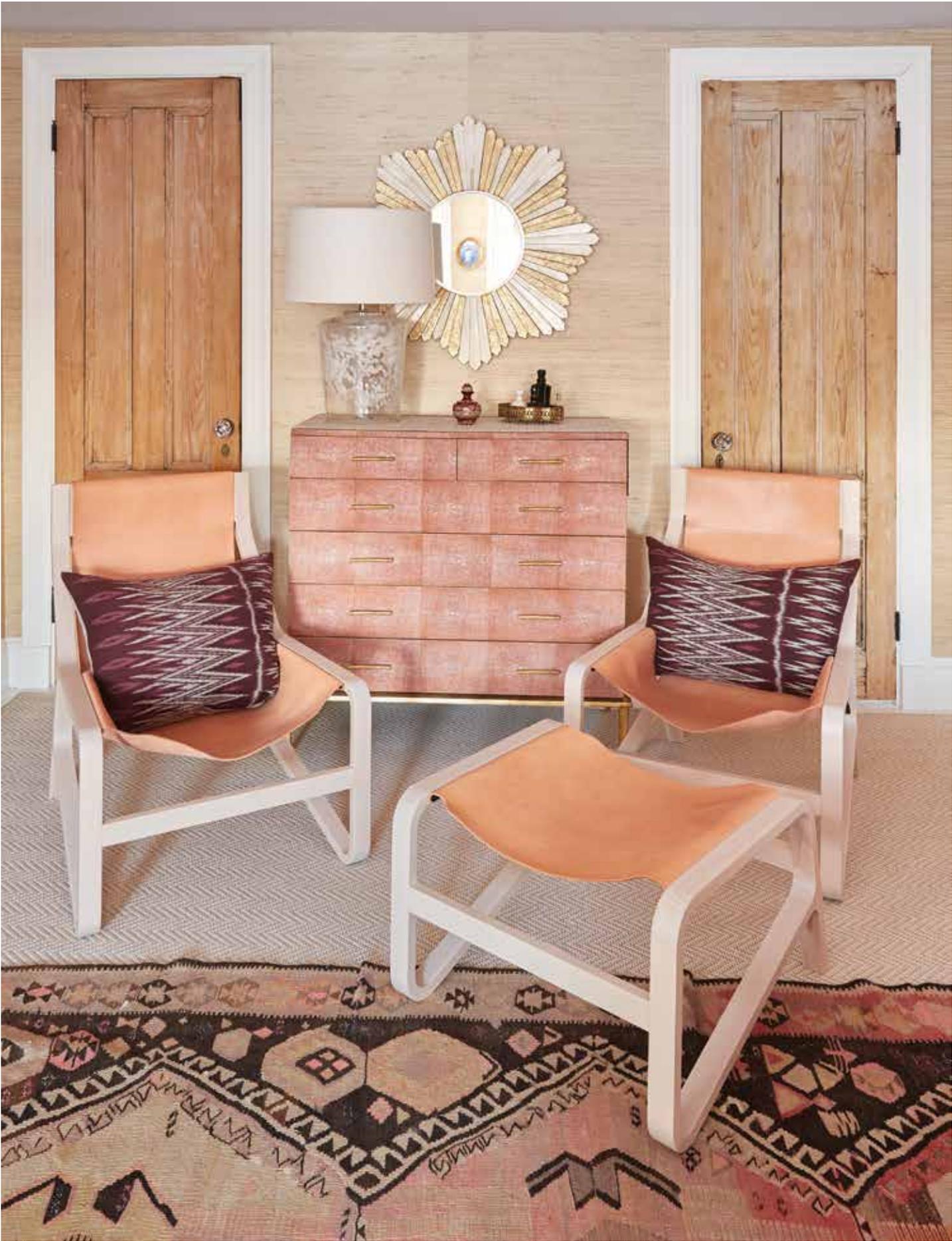
*An eighteenth-century farmhouse in Yarmouth gets a contemporary update from designer Nicola Manganello*

Sometimes, you just have to knock down a few walls. When Nicola Manganello bought her sprawling 1760s farmhouse in Yarmouth, she knew she would have to open it up a bit to create some extra space for her family and friends. It's a gorgeous, stately home, complete with oversize brick fireboxes designed by New England architect John Calvin Stevens. Some people might blanch at the idea of updating a house like this, but Manganello knows what she's doing. She's been in the interior design business for decades, and she's been a DIY enthusiast for even longer. She inherited this tendency from her father; from her mother, she learned the value of having a steadfast sense of taste, an adherence to elegance. Founder of Nicola's Home, a design-build firm located just steps away from her house on a shady road by the sea, Manganello has well-earned confidence. So the decision to disrupt the floor plan of the historic structure wasn't a difficult one. See, she needed a room that would fit her husband's beloved dining table.

"I mean, how many rooms do you really need?" she asks rhetorically as we look at the 14-foot cherry piece. "My husband bought this many, many years ago from Chilton. We call it 'The Gathering Table.' And that's what this house is: it's our gathering place."

by Katy Kelleher // Photography by Jonathan Reece

Inside Nicola Manganello's home in Yarmouth, the defining hue is a blushy pink. Manganello added grasscloth wallpaper throughout the house to give it a cohesive feel and to add texture to the rooms.





The stately fireplaces were designed by John Calvin Stevens and added to the 1760s farmhouse during an early-twentieth-century renovation.





Manganello and her husband, Jim, host Christmas and Thanksgiving for their extended family at this very dining table. In the weeks leading up to the holidays, Manganello spends hours dreaming up table settings, planning how she will layer table runners and mismatched china, how she'll incorporate her collection of vintage glassware into the tablescape, and how she'll top it all off with some lively greenery. "I don't believe in matching," she tells me, and it shows. Around us are patterns and prints, stripes and florals, and windowpane-printed fabric. She may not believe in matching, but she does believe in color harmony, playing with textures, and the natural beauty of plants. As a result, her home feels joyful and warm, eclectic yet cohesive. "I think there's such beauty in the found object," she adds. "I also get so much joy from flowers and arranging. In my second life, I'm going to open a wreath shop. I long to get back to working with my hands."

As her business has grown, Manganello has gone from constructing pieces herself to outsourcing that work to her team; it's a transition many small business owners have had to make. But she continues to indulge her crafty side inside the confines of her own home. The dining room features an arrangement of lush greenery that sits atop a crochet runner, and under the cherry table lays a long, colorful wool rug. "I bought two rugs from Anthropologie, cut off the borders, and seamed them together," she revealed. "I didn't want to spend thousands of dollars on a custom rug, and I needed a cool rug in here." Nearby sits a gift from her mother, a striped taupe sofa with a carved wood back, loaded with plump rosy pillows. "Every time she comes in, she says to me, 'That sofa looks so nice there,'" says Manganello with a laugh. "And 'Why didn't it look like that in my house?'"

Manganello designed her daughter's room (above) to feel both feminine and classic.

As an interior designer, Manganello has a lot of experience reupholstering furniture. Many of her pieces are vintage finds that have been covered with modern fabrics (opposite, top). She likes to shop the Brimfield Antique Show in Massachusetts, searching for unique pieces she can strip down and paint.

Through the sitting area, a glimpse of the dining table (opposite, bottom). The Chilton cherry table measures 14 feet long. Manganello uses it to host big holiday dinners for her extended family.





While her mother prefers tried-and-true New England designs—think toile prints and primary colors—Manganello is a bit more inspired by Scandinavian design, with its emphasis on texture and coziness and preference for simple, soft color palettes. Her house is filled with pastels: light pink and baby blue, soft yellows and creamy beige. “When we got the house, I painted all the floors a true white,” she says. She also painted the mouldings white as well as the woodwork. This helped unify the rooms, as did the addition of grasscloth wallpaper, in various shades of cream, beige, and gray. It was a tricky balancing act, she explains, between paring things down (removing the stippling on the ceiling and taking out walls) and building up texture. “I wanted everything white with natural doors,” she says. “That’s another bit of Scandinavian influence.” She took down the doors and sanded them, revealing the pine’s natural grain and flaxen tones. “I did that to make it feel consistent,” she says. “And I do love it. I love natural wood. It’s clean and uncluttered. The older I get, the more I want things uncluttered.”

Manganello is learning the pleasures of living with less although, as she notes, “it may not seem that way right now.” (Guests are coming soon, after all, which means a bit more decoration.) “In my old house, I was always trying to clean things up,” she says. “It started as a farmhouse, a country home. I love that, but lately I’m just loving less.” This has allowed her to reflect on the items she truly adores, the special pieces that will come with her from home to home, place to place. There are the woven reed McGuire chairs, which frame the fireplace in her sitting room. “They’re such beautiful mahogany,” she says. “It was a bit of an indulgence, but they have been around for a long time, and will be. They’re heirloom furniture, and I got them as a treat for myself.” Another prized piece is the chandelier that hangs above the Chilton dining table. Made from brushed brass and decorated with hollow glass birds (“You can throw those in the dishwasher, and it shines them right up,” Manganello notes), this piece has “sentimental value” for both Nicola and Jim. “I loved my old house—that’s where I married Jim,” she says. “We had a

The kitchen is the heart of the house (opposite). The big soapstone sink is a centerpiece to Manganello's workstation. A collection of vintage and new blue-and-white chinaware is displayed on the shelves. "I like to mix and match," she says.

Manganello's farmhouse is located just a short distance from her office.







When Manganello and her husband, Jim, moved into this house, they brought their brass chandelier (far left), which features hollow glass birds that can be removed and cleaned in the dishwasher. The table runner is from Anthropologie.

Shortly after purchasing the house, Manganello removed the cabinet doors and stripped them down to the pine (middle). She likes the Scandinavian modern look of bare blonde wood.

The owner's suite bathroom features a glimmering crystal chandelier by Visual Comfort and ice-blue paint on the ceiling. The rug is a Brimfield find.



huge dinner after, and the birds were there. I felt like it needed to come here with us.”

She’s similarly attached to her collection of artwork, which the couple built slowly, adding a piece here, another there. There’s a painting by Connecticut artist Alison Meyer hanging in her sleek kitchen. It shows a vivid green bottle of gin set against a slate blue background. (“I bought that as a gift for my husband, since he loves Tanqueray,” she explains.) In her sitting room, there’s an oil painting of women in green and red dresses, sitting on a lawn, laughing and drinking. “That’s me and my two dear friends, Melanie and Tara,” Manganello says. “My friend Tessa O’Brien painted it. I had a garden party one night, and we were sitting out in the yard at a tea table, but we weren’t drinking tea.” She smiles at the memory.

But, while some of her paintings and prints come from friends, others are of unknown provenance, purchased at flea markets and antique sales. “Some of it goes all the way back to my years at Maine

College of Art,” she tells me as we walk upstairs, our footsteps quiet on the carpet. “My friends would be throwing their pieces away at the end of the semester. In the back room, there’s a painting like that, a little house in a field.” On the other side of the canvas, there’s another piece, hidden from view. “In school, you always use both sides of the canvas,” she adds.

This seems to be true of Manganello, too. She finds a use for every scrap of fabric, and brings new life to faded rugs and unloved furniture. “Things don’t have to be precious,” she says. She finds equally beautiful pieces at the Brimfield Antiques Fair, Anthropologie, and Williams Sonoma. The important thing, she says, is not where she finds the item but how it fits into her overall vision. She wants her life to be filled with good food (she likes to serve her family big vats of Italian red sauce, with beef and veal meatballs), lingering conversations, and plush pillows you can sink into. “I’m passionate about both food and atmosphere,” she explains. “And those things go hand in hand.” **MH+D**

Manganello’s upholstered bed is by Hickory Chair. Grass cloth covers the walls and adds texture.

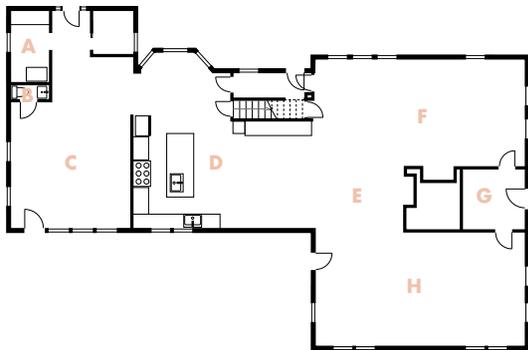
In the front living room, a sitting chair (opposite, top) is placed next to a rattan side table, accompanied with a lamp by Arteriors.

A little vignette of items in the upstairs hallway (opposite, bottom).

ARCHITECT: JOHN CALVIN STEVENS  
LOCATION: YARMOUTH

- |                       |                           |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>A</b> Pantry       | <b>G</b> Foyer            |
| <b>B</b> Bathrooms    | <b>H</b> Living Room      |
| <b>C</b> Den          | <b>I</b> Bedrooms         |
| <b>D</b> Kitchen      | <b>J</b> Family Room      |
| <b>E</b> Sitting Area | <b>K</b> Owners' Bathroom |
| <b>F</b> Dining Room  | <b>L</b> Owners' Bedroom  |

#### FIRST FLOOR



#### SECOND FLOOR

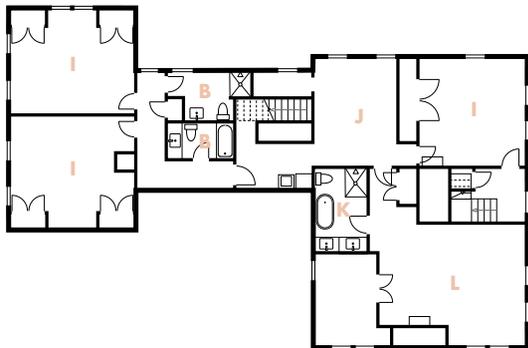


ILLUSTRATION: Tim Lohnes

