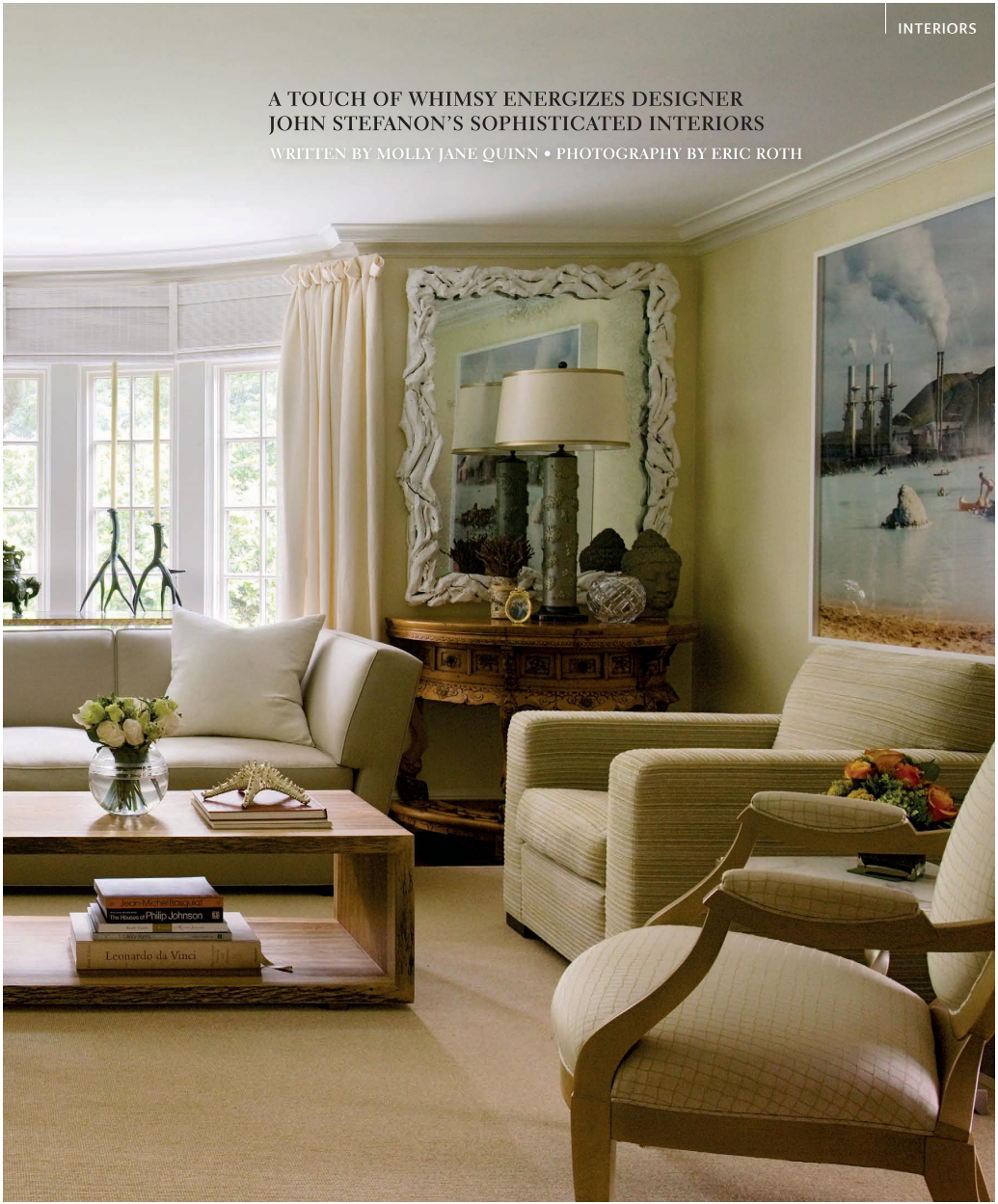


comfort & style

A TOUCH OF WHIMSY ENERGIZES DESIGNER JOHN STEFANON'S SOPHISTICATED INTERIORS

WRITTEN BY MOLLY JANE QUINN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC ROTH

THE LIVING ROOM derives its grace from symmetry and a neutral palette. John Stefanon's playful design aesthetic is apparent in the juxtaposition of the painted twig mirrors and the antique sycamore console tables. The large framed photograph on the right wall is "Procession" by Robert and Shana ParkeHarrison.



IN THE ALCOVE connecting living and dining rooms, built-in bookcases display antiques and paintings by Stefanon's mother. Antique Chinese plaques on the dining room walls (FACING PAGE, TOP) counter the contemporary furnishings. Stefanon and Jerry (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM), a rescued West Highland terrier mix, relax in the master suite.



RATHER THAN “SINCERELY” OR “YOURS TRULY,” BOSTON INTERIOR DESIGNER JOHN STEFANON USES THE WORD “HAPPINESS” TO CLOSE HIS E-MAILS.



His design ethos carries the same graceful levity, relying on a mix of classic and comfortable furnishings and just a bit of whimsy.

In his own home in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, Stefanon has created a haven of warmth and simplicity for his family, which includes spouse Michael Cackstetter and their two sons, 10-year-old Nate and 5-year-old Tyler. The journey to their domestic bliss started six years ago, when Stefanon and Cackstetter were living in a house in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston.

“We were very happy in our home in J.P.,” says Stefanon. Then one night, a few friends came over for dinner and one of the guests fell in love with the house. “She was very funny and took out her checkbook and asked, ‘How much?’ But she was really serious, so Michael said maybe we should consider.”

After selling her their home, Stefanon and Cackstetter stumbled upon a 1935 Dutch Colonial-style house with Tudor embellishments. Though it was outdated, “the charm of it” appealed to them, says Stefanon. “The scale feels like a unique home without being over the top, and there is ample space for us. You could tell that someone built this house with a lot of thought.”

That was in 2004, before they adopted their sons, and their main concern was to find a property with a generous yard and room for long stays by extended family.

Stefanon took a measured approach to his interior design. The large living



room, for example, needed to be comfortable enough for everyday lounging but formal enough for cocktail parties. And the furniture and color scheme in the adjacent sunroom needed to be different enough to be clearly defined as a separate space, but similar enough so as not to be jarring.

"I stayed with neutrals," says Stefanon. "It's a nice way to have a lasting effect and to bring in color with smaller accessories. I love aqua and gold; I love mixing silver and gold. When things are lit by that blue-gold-white light of a sunset, that to me is very peaceful."

His predilection for natural hues is derived from his childhood in Brazil. His father's family is from Italy and his mother's from Greece and France. After World War I, both sides immigrated to Brazil. Stefanon's parents lived in Rio de

Janeiro, but he spent much of his time at his grandparents' farm in the countryside, where he made his own kites and ran barefoot through fields. "We were brought up in very simple, very humble homes," says Stefanon. He and his family later moved with his banker father to California, where they lived for 15 years.

For their Chestnut Hill house, Stefanon chose a mix of antiques, select pieces from the couple's Jamaica Plain home, and accessories and fine art that imbue each room with a casual glamour. In the dining room, a table from Adesso, a Boston store specializing in contemporary furniture, is flanked by antique carved wood plaques, salvaged from a temple in China, that Stefanon reworked as wall hangings.

The only room that was fully updated was the kitchen. Though cramped and outdated, it had a farmhouse charm, with drawers for potatoes and bread and cupboards with rickety latches. Stefanon wanted to integrate modern amenities yet still retain the room's unique aesthetic. He accomplished that with hickory plank flooring and Thomasville Cabinetry in buttery yellow. An antique Dutch table and chairs seem a

A TWIG CHANDELIER in the breakfast nook references the woody setting outside the French doors. The chairs and table are from Italian furniture maker Kartell. A coral throw pillow adds color to the master bedroom (ABOVE), where Stefanon pairs a contemporary chair with an antique Dutch writing desk. The photograph is by Finnish artist Arno Rafael Minkinen.



relic salvaged from the original home. Stefanon opted for marble countertops and backsplash simply for the gorgeous contrast when baking flour is scattered across the stone. "In France," he says, "kitchens always have marble counters." But the room gains the most warmth from the teak sink that Stefanon imported from England. It was made using boat-building techniques and then soaked in polymer, so it's nearly impervious to water and requires just a rubdown with teak oil now and then.

After living in the house for four years, the couple began the process of adopting a child. Little did they know that they would become parents to two rambunctious boys nearly overnight. Immediately, friends questioned how their stylish and predominately white home would be affected. Surprisingly, Stefanon says that little has changed.

"It's really just showing them to have respect for your own space," says Stefanon. "We sit down to have dinner together every night in the dining room."

And, yes, Nate wrote on one of the white chairs that first week. But for Stefanon, it's all part of the joy of truly living in a home. "They are so much like us, it was like it was always meant to be. We couldn't have dreamt up better kids."

And surely the boys couldn't have dreamt up a more loving, livable, and yes, happy home. ■

AN ANTIQUE TABLE and chairs lend authenticity to the renovated farm-style kitchen (FACING PAGE). The teak sink is by British furniture designer William Garvey. The sitting room (ABOVE) is a playful nook for reading. Leather armchairs from Oly Studio flank a daybed upholstered in burlap. In the front hall (LEFT), a staircase niche holds a humorous self-portrait by Boston artist Michael Costello.