



**Left** Colleen DeCourcy in her living room. **Below** In the main bedroom Quietly Violet paint by Benjamin Moore is the backdrop for ceramic flowers by the artist Bradley Sabin. **Bottom** The laundry and mudroom



# INTO THE WOODS

When Colleen DeCourcy, the former chief creative officer of Snapchat, left Manhattan for Long Island, she created the fairytale home of her dreams

Words **Phoebe McDowell** Photographs **Haris Kenjar**



**It was March 2020** and Covid was on the boil. For the New York-based advertising creative Colleen DeCourcy, staying in the SoHo apartment she shared with her daughter, who is now 31, didn't appeal. Tightening travel restrictions meant their place in Portland, Oregon, was out of bounds too, so they sought refuge on Long Island instead. "We drove around a lot — estate agents were leaving the houses unlocked," she says. "I just loved the location of this one on a big parcel of land, which is hard to find here." Here being the well-heeled corridor between the villages of Sag Harbor and East Hampton.

DeCourcy, 60, had lived in a 1960s farmhouse ("lovely, but very spare and modern") on Shelter Island on the northeastern tip of Long Island before Covid, so her love for the area runs deep. The former chief creative officer at Wieden+Kennedy — the advertising agency behind Nike's

Portrait: Ben Fink Shapiro



In the entrance hall the walls are painted in a calming pale blue, Borrowed Light by Farrow & Ball. The pendant light is from Jamb and the antique Axel Larson chairs are covered in fabric by Carolina Irving



“Just Do It” campaign back in 1987 — envisioned a more traditional look for this new house and decided that the designer Heidi Caillier was the woman for the job.

The pair met on the Expert, an online consultation platform that matches designers with clients. It began with an hour-long session to discuss the kitchen, but DeCourcy was soon prepping slides to pitch the project as a whole to Caillier. The brief? “A magic house in the woods that was quirky and eccentric and creative and colourful.”

It was a meeting of minds. One a designer known for her deft and devout maximalism; the other a professional storyteller raised on Hans Christian Andersen fairytales, who loved the fact that deer would wander freely in the woods surrounding the house while turtles meandered through the yard.

Researching topographical maps, DeCourcy was “heartbroken” to discover that in order for the house to be built, the top of a hill had been removed. “So we brought in 300 trees and wrapped them around the property, importing 30ft Lebanese cedar, Asian pine and ginkgo trees.”

Elsewhere rewilding was done by Charles Marder, a garden designer who made all that was green look as if it had been there for decades. “He’s a real craftsman — he works with the Spielbergs,” DeCourcy says. The flashy bright blue pool was remodelled into a natural pond and is now used “endlessly” by DeCourcy and her family.



**Below left** In the guest bathroom the tiles were custom-made by Tabarka Studio. The marble sink unit is from Drummonds. **Below right** The library is DeCourcy’s hideaway, where she likes to read and listen to jazz. The vintage light is by Ponce Berga and the armchair is from Jamb. **Bottom** The outside of the house, with landscaping by the local A-list gardener Charles Marder



**Top** DeCourcy fell in love with deVol kitchens when she lived in the UK. The Tiles are by BDDW. **Above** The armchair in the guest bedroom is by Rose Uniacke, covered in Dedar fabric, and the bed is a custom piece by Shoppe Amber Interiors

## The garden designer is ‘a real craftsman — he works with the Spielbergs’

Inside, the house — which measures an impressive 7,500 sq ft — was “well made but unimaginative and drab”. First on the agenda was colour, a chiaroscuro canvas “reminiscent of the Dutch masters”. Sumptuous shades of carmine, aubergine and olive have a velvety intensity, and are mixed with accents of ochre and blue. Mismatched chintz, check and patchwork fabrics somehow coalesce.

Much of DeCourcy’s time is spent relaxing in the library, where muddy brown shelves hold rows of books. It’s a space dedicated to simple pleasures such as listening to jazz and reading. Since departing her post as chief creative officer at Snapchat earlier this year she has whiled away hours in here. The room has a distinctly British feel, thanks to a sofa from Howe covered in blue and white floral fabric and two plaid armchairs from Jamb.

Although she believes that “when you hire a real creative person you need to give them full control — there’s magic to letting them be themselves”, she has had ample input. Her



SoHo apartment, crammed with French modern furniture, “everything from Jeanneret and Perriand to Yovanovitch”, is evidence enough of her design pedigree.

See too, her love of BDDW, a brand beloved by pop stars and presidents that sells handcrafted pieces designed by the multidisciplinary artist Tyler Hays that can cost upwards of six figures. It’s where a number of standout pieces — sofas, chairs, nightstands — came from, as well as the Delft-style tiles in the kitchen.

In a similarly mellow tone, the teal deVol kitchen has been on her wish list since she was introduced to the brand when she lived in the UK in the 1990s, splitting her time between London and the Cotswolds.

There’s no shortage of personality. “I like to tell a story with small items of ephemera that capture my imagination and are almost totems,” she explains. These include artworks “held together with bits of tape and glue”.

Art is not restricted to frames. In the dining room there is a mural of local fauna, while upstairs, in the moody master bedroom, is a half-botanical, half-fantastical ceramic installation by the artist Bradley Sabin.

The next phase of work will see the basement, complete with cinema room, bar, wine cellar, additional kitchen, bedroom and en suite, being refurbished. But DeCourcy is thrilled with — and inspired by — the house so far. “What I really wanted was a place for my imagination to run, somewhere that stimulated me visually.” ■