



**GREAT ROOM** Full-height metal-framed doors open onto the wildflower meadow that links the new barn with the farmhouse. **EXTERIOR** Designed by Halper Architects, the contemporary building has a standing-seam Galvalume steel roof and is clad in stained western red cedar, which helps it to blend in with its leafy setting

# THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR

It was a case of right place, right time for Mike and Becky Goss when the barn next to their 19th-century Connecticut farmhouse came up for sale. This plot offered an opportunity to commission a newbuild, providing the extra space that they needed and allowing them to embrace a more modern aesthetic

TEXT AND PRODUCTION **ANNE HARDY** | PHOTOGRAPHS **DEAN HEARNE**







GREAT ROOM Shearling-covered mid-century Otto Schulz sofas, sourced from Lawton Mull, flank a vintage Roger Capron **coffee table** from Avery & Dash. A Carl Auböck **magazine holder** and vintage Arne Jacobsen **lamp**, both from Becky's shop The Flat, stand on a **rug** from Nasiri, which picks up on the soapstone-brick fireplace dividing this area from the dining room and bar. Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo's **painting** *The Bird Charmer* and the Zak+Fox **cushions** enliven the pale scheme



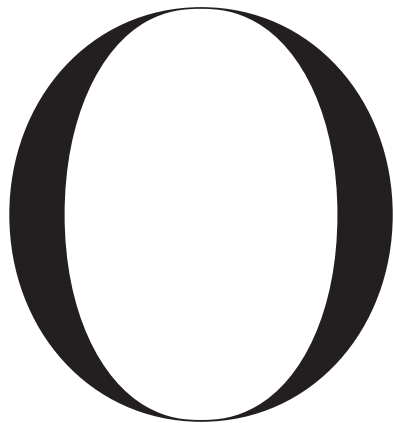


**GREAT ROOM** Pots of geraniums on a **tablecloth** in Robert Kime's 'Lilac Lamp' on bastian linen brighten this area. **DINING ROOM** Deborah Thomas's 'Broken Ice' **chandelier** hangs above a Frances Palmer terracotta pedestal **bowl** on an old French farmhouse table teamed with antique European painted **chairs** from The Flat. A vintage rug echoes the tones of the 19th-century Italian **oil painting** from Robert Kime. **KITCHEN** Off the dining room, a planked white-oak door slides open to reveal cabinets in the same pale wood with Carrara marble worktops, contrasting with handmade black tiles. Robert Kime's 'Gothic Helmet' **lamps** in antique silver illuminate shelves displaying vintage serveware



**GREAT ROOM** At the opposite end to the fireplace, a mid-century **sofa**, reupholstered in Robert Kime's 'Hishi' cotton/linen in blue, and a vintage rattan and leather **armchair** from Lawton Mull are arranged round an antique Northern Italian painted **cabinet** from Robert Kime, which conceals a TV





On a hot summer's day in 1999, when Mike and Becky Goss moved into their farmhouse in Connecticut, it was still possible to catch the smell of onion grass on the wind. Though it was over 100 years since their new home had been an onion farm, the soil ran deep with allium seeds denoting the property's former use. In the early 20th century, when the farm was split up, agricultural land gave way to residential neighbourhoods. The couple sensitively restored the house and time passed.

Their two daughters moved to nearby New York City, married and started families of their own. Eventually, the farmhouse was well beyond capacity when everyone came back to visit, so, in 2019, when the house next door – which had, at one time, been their property's barn – came up for sale, Mike and Becky decided that reuniting the contiguous buildings might be the expansion solution they were seeking. It presented the perfect opportunity to create a fully functioning abode, very much a part of the property, yet separate and self contained.

Over the years, the barn had undergone various renovations and alterations that, as Mike explains, rendered it 'neither historically preserved nor comfortably modern'. So he and Becky made the decision to replace the original structure with a sympathetically designed, contemporary alternative. Old photos and maps of the property helped to determine the new barn's exact location and shape, mimicking its original position in relation to the farmhouse. The brief they gave Halper Architects was 'to start with three bedrooms'. They also requested a large sitting and dining space, and a small kitchen. 'While the barn needed to work for our family in a multi-generational sense, I wanted it to be fun for Becky and me,' says Mike. 'We already had an old house, so we liked the idea of a barn with modern lines as a juxtaposition – a simple rectangle. We wanted to add onto the life we've had at the farmhouse for over 25 years, to build a place that references the area's roots and fill it with interesting things, our family and our friends.'

'We focused on a classic barn shape,' says their architect Jon Halper. 'And distilled it into the simplest interpretation of a New England barn without making it look too modern or out of place.' He notes that the guiding principle was editing down the architectural details to their key components and adds, 'Of course, its stark monochromatic appearance creates a contrast with the more ornate farmhouse next door.'

Today, as you walk across the gravel drive from the original farmhouse to the new building, there is an intentional gear shift. The farmhouse is made up of small, intimate rooms, but the new barn soars, with an interior height of nearly nine metres from the ground floor to the roof peak. Becky, who owns antiques, art and found objects store The Flat in Westport, Connecticut, credits growing up in old houses as a guiding influence when she was designing the barn's interiors. As both

a shop owner and a shopper, she has honed her ability to mix the old with the new: 'We wanted the barn to have a feeling of history, but with its own unique style. Now, when we feel like a different vibe, we just walk over from the house to the barn.'

On the ground floor, a huge double-sided fireplace separates the dining and sitting areas, acting as a semi-divider between the two. The chandelier over the wooden table, 'Broken Ice' by artist Deborah Thomas, was the first thing Becky bought for the project and one of the few contemporary items in the house. She is a magpie when it comes to gathering ideas and pieces, and credits a fellow shopkeeper with the idea for the terrazzo travertine floor in the kitchen and bathroom, 'They'd used it in an old clapboard house and I remember thinking, wow, that is unusual, I'd like to do that too.'

It was Becky's trips for work to London and holidays there that exposed her to British fabrics and decoration. 'I got hooked,' she explains. 'And Jon made sure that, if we had a reference to something traditionally rustic – like horizontal cladding – it was also refined. In the end, having a shop was helpful, because I can try out a lot of things.'

They are enthusiastic hosts, and Mike has a bar at the end of the dining room, designed by the architect and aptly nicknamed 'The Onion'. This is set off by a 19th-century Italian oil painting and a 20th-century photograph of a man holding an onion, both bought at Robert Kime in London. Flatweave rugs define the two seating areas: one is the inviting spot created in front of the fireplace, with two vintage Otto Schulz sofas covered in shearling and a Roger Capron coffee table; the other is for gathering round the television, which is hidden in an antique Northern Italian painted cupboard. The kitchen is sized for preparing meals on a small scale and is tucked away behind a sliding wooden door in a corner of the dining area, which playfully suggests an outhouse, as does its sloping roof with rustic, reclaimed, hand-hewn hardwood beams.

Upstairs, a mezzanine is put to work – literally – as flexible office space for the family or a sitting area for guests, with an upholstered banquette, an old Swedish pine table and a vintage Edward Wormley chair for Dunbar, reupholstered in linen and shearling. At one end of this area is the main bedroom, painted a terracotta colour inspired by a trip to Italy. At the other end, a children's playroom and nursery is large enough for grandchildren's sleepovers and indoor games.

The couple are longtime collectors. Mike retired from a career in private equity and is now fully engaged in the art trade, including a stint at Sotheby's as chief financial officer. He and Becky enjoy the scale of the barn's walls, which are large enough to accommodate paintings that the farmhouse, with its low ceilings, cannot. Becky describes mixing a Milton Avery and a Rufino Tamayo with the large Italian landscape in the dining room as 'giving us an opportunity to introduce colour on the textured white stucco walls in the main room'.

There is the art of the landscape outside, too, which is an important component of this project led by landscape designer Kathryn Herman. Mike and Becky had the idea of a connecting meadow between the farmhouse and barn as a nod to the land's agrarian roots, which Kathryn has used to link the two properties, while maintaining their identities. Behind the barn, at the edge of Mike and Becky's now unified property, there is a one-room schoolhouse that served the children of the local farmers in the late 19th century. It has obviously never been touched. One wonders if its turn might be next □

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Halper Architects: [halper.com](http://halper.com) | The Flat: [theflatwestport.com](http://theflatwestport.com)



**MAIN BEDROOM** (*above left and below right*) Walls in Farrow & Ball's 'Red Earth' showcase a vintage **standard lamp** from The Flat and an antique European **chest** and **mirror** from Lawton Mull. Rose Uniacke cotton velvet **curtains** complement the Katharine Pole antique **quilt** and a Nasiri **rug** based on a vintage design. Beside the door to the bathroom, a Danish Brutalist armchair sits below a 19th-century English portrait. **LANDING** A custom **banquette** in a Rose Uniacke velvet and a reupholstered Ed Wormley for Dunbar **chair** partner a vintage Swedish table. **CHILDREN'S BATHROOM** Handmade tiles set off a vintage Rayon Roskar **wall light** and a vanity unit **skirt** in Robert Kime's 'Swedish Ticking'

