

3 East Coast Residences Inspired by the Classic American Farmhouse

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By C.C. Sullivan



Barns adapt readily for contemporary living and accommodate a wide range of modern interior styles. Opened up, their big volumes offer the fun of dwelling in an urban loft while surrounded by beautiful green pastures. It's a rare combination: homes that naturally respect their context while busting out of the vernacular. Here are three best-of-class examples from leading designers.

1. Firms: Mark Morton Design and Stephen Clark Design Group.

Site: Austerlitz, New York.

2. Firm: **Peter F. Carlson & Assoc.**

Site: Lyme, Connecticut.

Description: When he relocated an 1840's post-and-beam barn from rural New Hampshire to his coastal Connecticut property, interior and lighting designer Peter Carlson intended to use it as an outbuilding. "At first I thought it would make a good garage," says Carlson of the 4,400-square-foot

structure. “But the car never made it inside. Instead, I moved my bedroom into the hay loft and just rented out the main house.”

Downstairs, an old-meets-new aesthetic is on full display. Big new windows and the designer’s own acclaimed sconces and pendants cast light on a potpourri of furnishings and decorative art. Empire pieces dating from the 1820’s sit alongside contemporary works by artist friends and an array of 19th-century interior drawings, including French cabinetmaker renderings and maquettes of Pompeian decor. “Some pieces were given to me, some inherited, and some bought,” Carlson says. He stresses that it’s a rotating collection—“the house is a living, breathing thing”—especially given he’s run out of wall space.

Each piece is remarkable in some way, yet the effect is composed and unified. In the dining room, a chest of drawers shaped like a double bass adds curve and color while wicker peacock seats—Carlson calls them “Panamanian dictator chairs”—invite repose. A striking pair of metal palm trees from Genoa contrasts with a wink of pop culture found in Connecticut artist Kat Murphy’s *Ahoy*. The sculptural light fixtures enrich the materials palette: deep bronze and artisanal glass in the torch sconces, a flowery orb pendant made from tumbled crystal kiln shards, and the floating planes of dark bronze, cork, and frosted glass in a pennant sconce.

The barn is both home and studio for Carlson, and yes, a test-bed for his lighting designs. It is also a time machine: enter through a classic New England portal to explore the wide world of contemporary decoration.

Project Team: Kat Murphy: Interior Design. [George Penniman Architects](#): Architect of Record.

3. Firm: O’Neill Rose Architects.

Site: Sheffield, Massachusetts.



Designer Peter Carlson relocated a barn from New Hampshire to coastal Connecticut; Big Wheel, a painting by Kat Murphy, pops against the pine barnboard.

Photography by Eric Laignel.



Daylight floods the barn through new windows.

Photography by Eric Laignel.



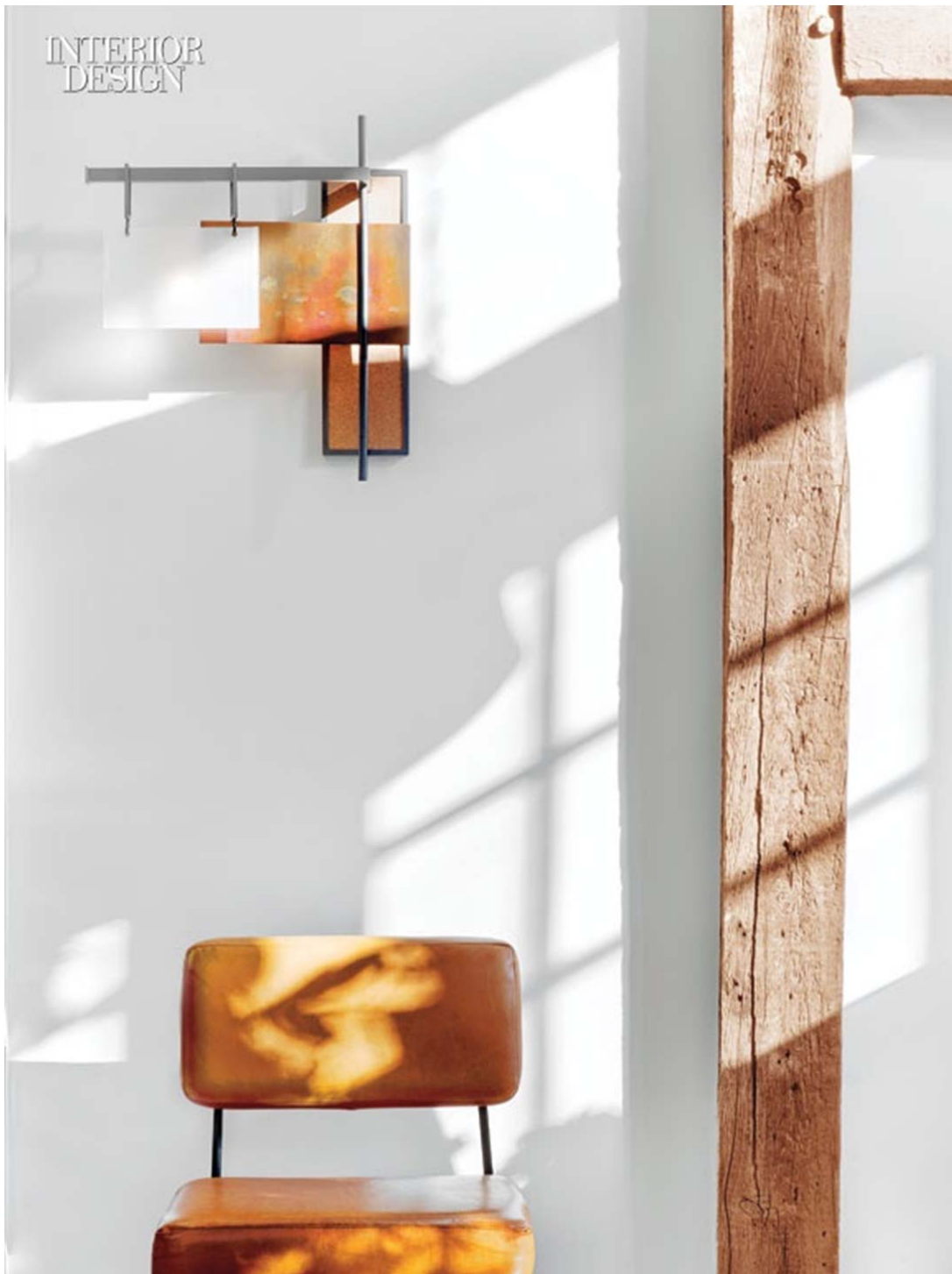
Chestnut columns and beams are complemented by a pine floor, stained with Japan paint.

Photography by Eric Laignel.



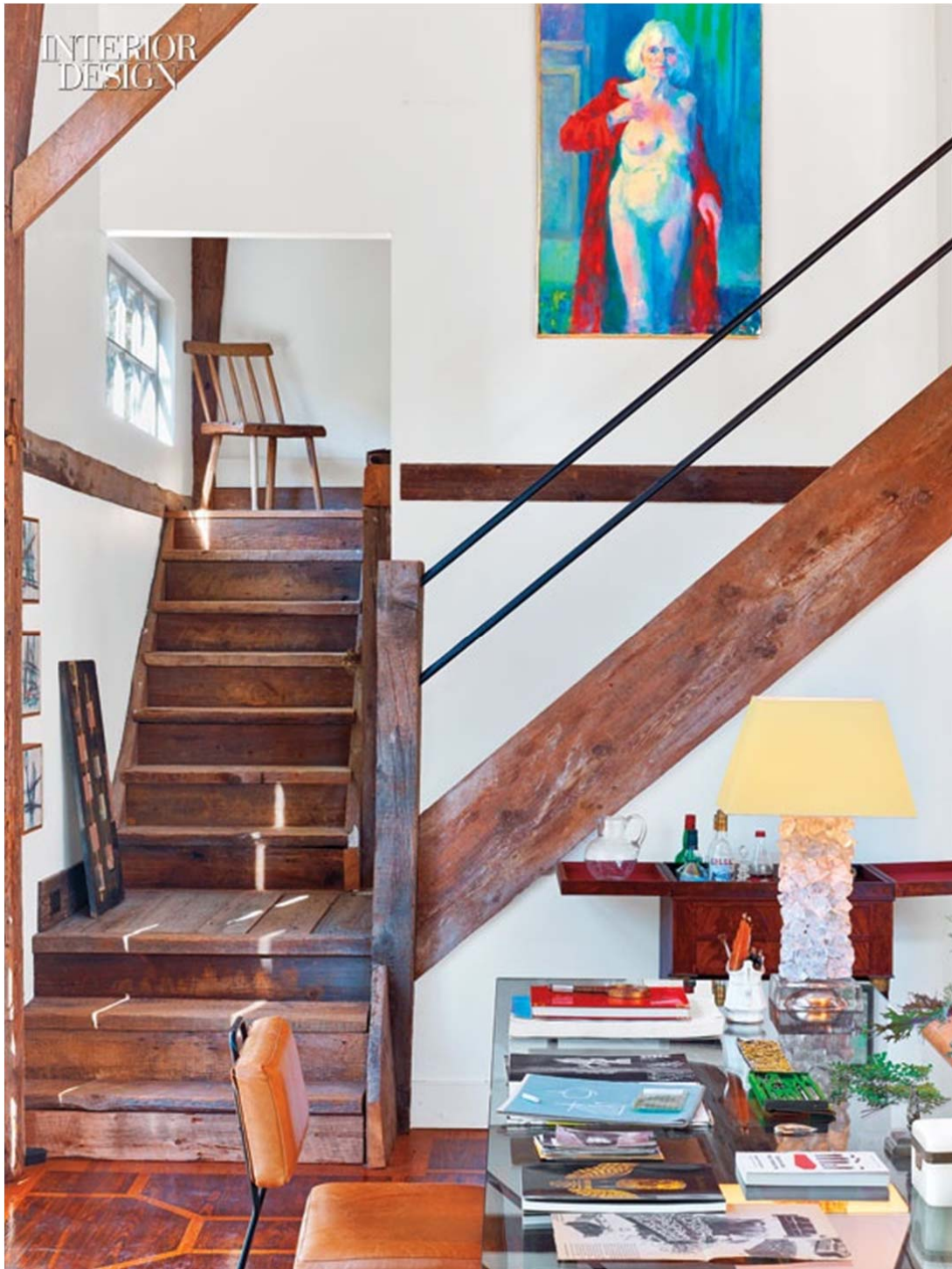
The loft bedroom's banquette daybed is covered in cotton-velvet.

Photography by Eric Laignel.

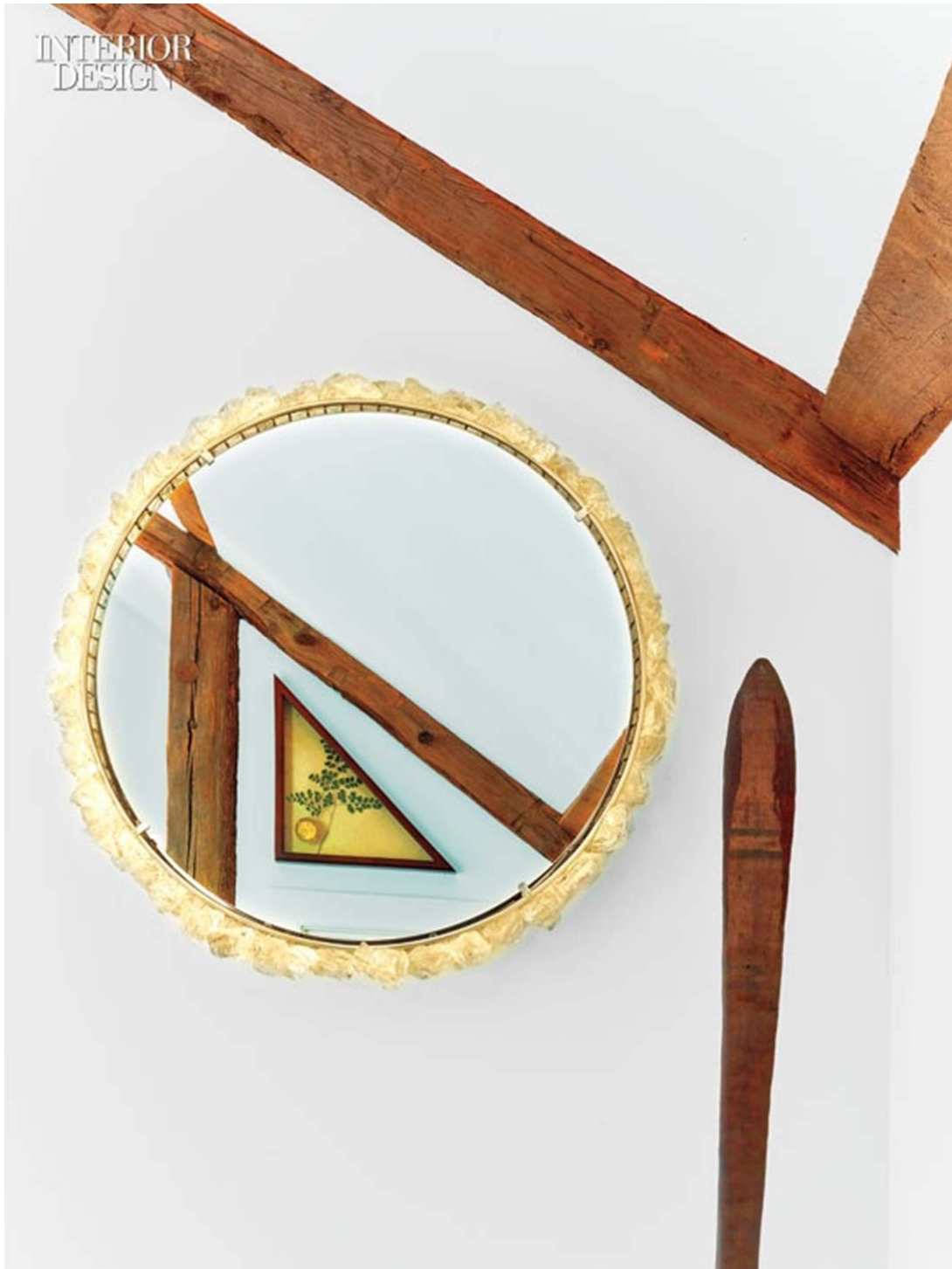


Carlson's own pennant sconce has a moveable glass panel that travels along the arm.

Photography by Eric Laignel.



A self-portrait by Barbara Eckhardt-Goodwin hangs in the stairwell.
Photography by Eric Laignel.



Carlson's circular vanity mirror is rimmed with illuminated rock crystal.

Photography by Eric Laignel.



His Torch light in bronze-finish brass is made with cased glass molded by artisans in Portugal trained to make port bottles.
Photography by Eric Laignel.



A cluster of 19th-century renderings on display in the kitchen.

Photography by Eric Laignel.



Drum pendants hang indoors and out, this one lined in International Orange
(the color of the Golden Gate Bridge).

Photography by Eric Laignel.



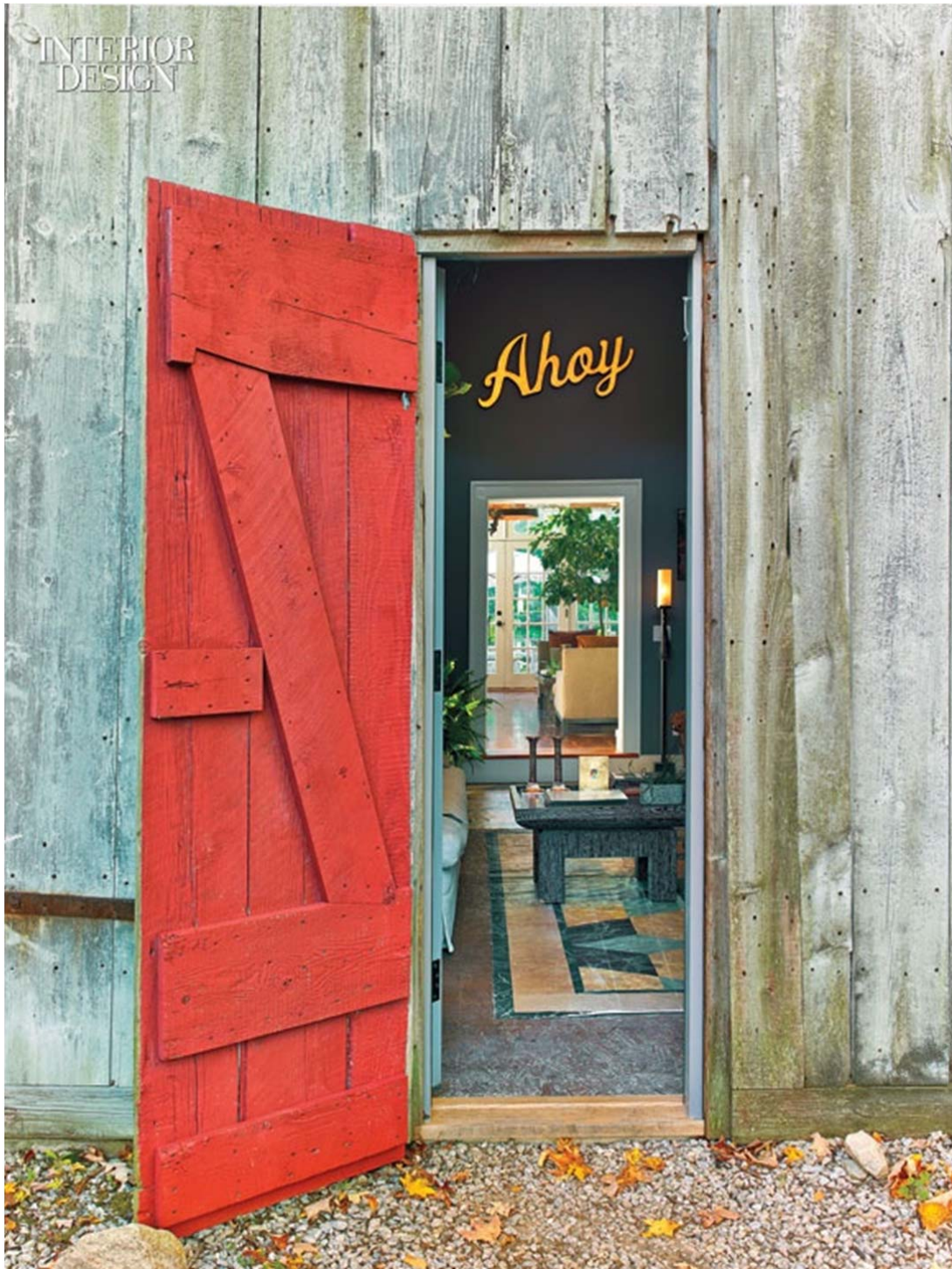
The bedroom mélange includes Empire pieces alongside the designer's own table lamps.

Photography by Eric Laignel.



An orb pendant by Carlson is crafted of leftover crystal from kiln bottoms, tumbled in a cement mixer and then wired to a frame.

Photography by Eric Laignel.



Ahoy, another work by artist friend Kat Murphy.

Photography by Eric Laignel.