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Urban Opulence

Atoosa and Ari Rubenstein's Flatiron loft undergoes a dazzling and dramatic renovation



Colonial Charm

Matthew Patrick Smyth's late 18th-century home in Sharon, Connecticut, sets 21st-century contemporary style against classic Colonial charm

BY ANNIE KELLY

Like many busy New York decorators, Matthew Patrick Smyth enjoys leaving the stresses of the city and driving out to peaceful Litchfield County. With his partner, author Jean Vallier, he also maintains apartments in Paris and Miami, but they are too far away for a quick weekend escape. If he is lucky, he can add an extra night or two in Connecticut by visiting clients in Greenwich and Westport en route.

Nearly eight years ago, Smyth came across his house in Sharon on the Internet while searching areas near train stations for an easy commute to New York. The town's main street has many well-kept 18th- and 19th-century houses on either side of a small green, and Smyth's "find" was set back a little on this road as it continues through the

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIM STREET-PORTER





The comfortable seating area on the sunporch is upholstered in linen from Hinson, with pillow fabric from Claremont.



Smyth designed the living
room furniture. Painting by
Sweet Siliman.



Opposite: The sunporch dresser is filled with a collection of objects found all over the world, including tankards from Germany and a tip box from New York state.

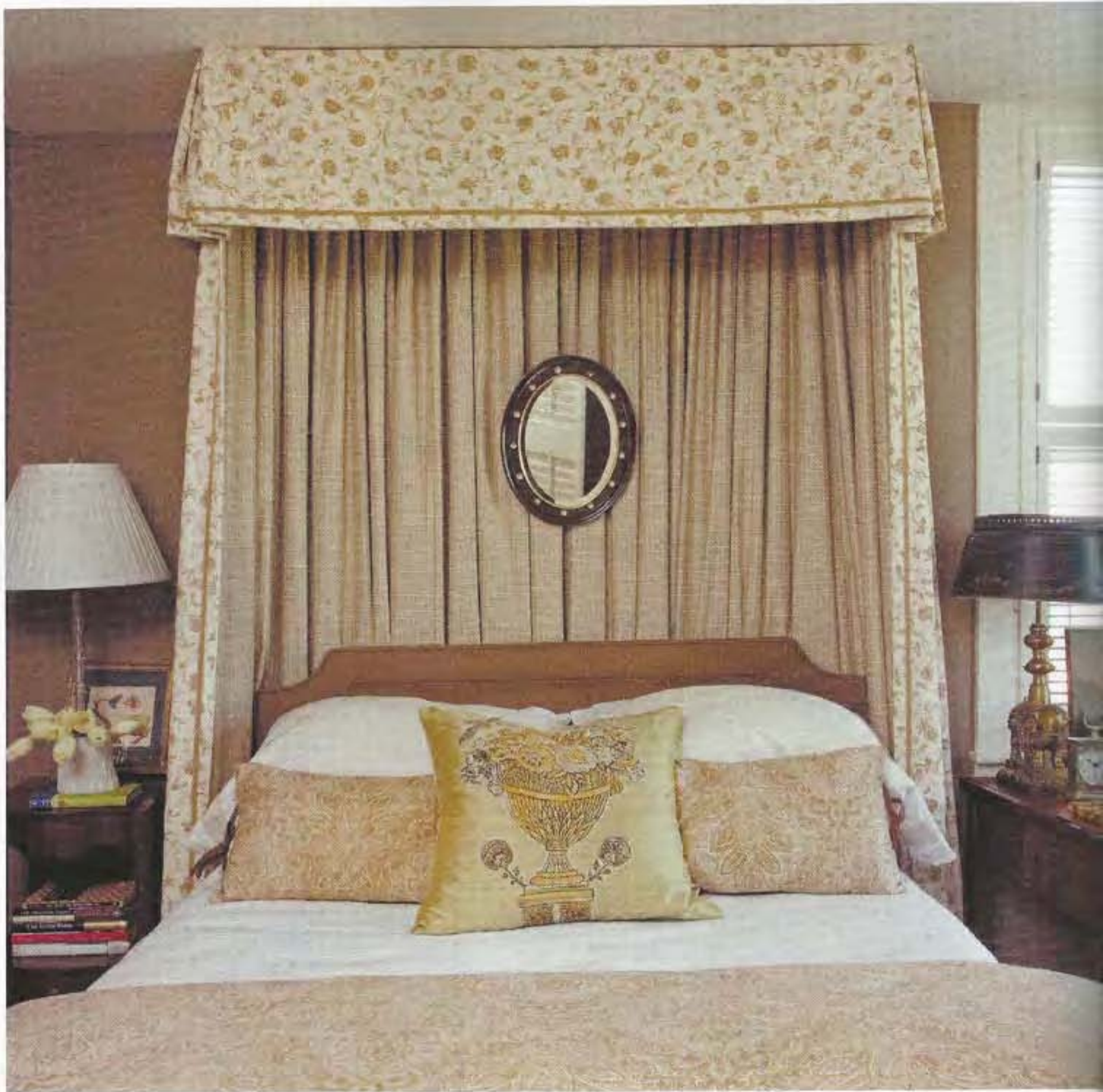
Right: An eclectic mix of objects on the dining room table.

town. It was probably a good thing he saw the house in winter, as its run-down appearance was not hidden by summer foliage—allowing an unvarnished look at the actual work that was needed. With a long waiting period before the property could be bought, Smyth was able to get all his plans and the necessary quotes in place so he could start immediately upon the deed being filed. Luckily, the house took only a short five months to renovate.

Smyth learned that his late 18th-century house was once the Iron Cauldron Inn, a hotel for teachers from the school next door. Since 1790, when the house was built, the upstairs had been cut up into many different rooms. After a hundred years as an inn, the Iron Cauldron became home to families with lots of children. Smyth feels that he is giving the house a rest, as it is occupied most weekends only by the couple, who enjoy it for its peace and quiet. Vallier likes to write here, and the two can stroll into town and enjoy the small village atmosphere without using their car.

During the restoration, there were surprises. A beautiful tiger maple scar tail was discovered under a later-period wall, and the Palladian-style





front window, found hidden away on the stair landing, was reopened to the interior. This mezzanine space then became large enough to use as a small, informal sitting room. Smyth converted the upstairs into three useful bedrooms and put some of the spare rooms to work as adjoining bathrooms. Downstairs he gave the house a new kitchen and reworked the back into a comfortable living and dining space.

An entrance does double duty as a dining room, and its wall of

antique maps of Paris remind the couple of their home in France. The living room, to the left, was created from several smaller rooms and is furnished with an eclectic collection of furniture, making it seem traditional and modern at the same time. Smyth loves being in the country, especially here in northwest Connecticut. Smyth's favorite town? He enjoyed renovating the White Hart Inn in nearby Salisbury, but, according to the designer, "it's hard to say what the prettiest town is!" in the beautiful area.

The guest bathroom wallpaper was custom-designed for Smyth by Dennis Lee for Tyler Hall.

Opposite: An antique Irish mirror hangs inside the guest bed canopy.

