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An Historic Connecticut Inn Gets a Countryside Refresh



Mayflower Inn & Spa, Auberge Resorts Collection

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Celerie Kemble freshens up Connecticut's historic Mayflower Inn with just the right amount of wicker and whimsy.

By Jackie Caradonio on July 10, 2020

"There's something terrifying about renovating a beloved hotel," says interior designer Celerie Kemble. "If you get too fancy or trendy, or make it too newfangled, you might come to find your house burned down." That's especially true when you're refurbishing a property like Mayflower Inn & Spa. The western-Connecticut retreat, set on 28 acres of woodland, has been an institution for a century, having welcomed its first guests as a modest inn converted from a former prep school in 1920. It has grown to include 35 rooms, a 20,000-square-foot spa, and two restaurants that are filled nightly with locals and [New Yorkers](#) alike.



From left: Celerie Kemble; Botanical collages from Ornis Gallery. From left: Don Freeman; Mayflower Inn & Spa, Auberge Resorts Collection



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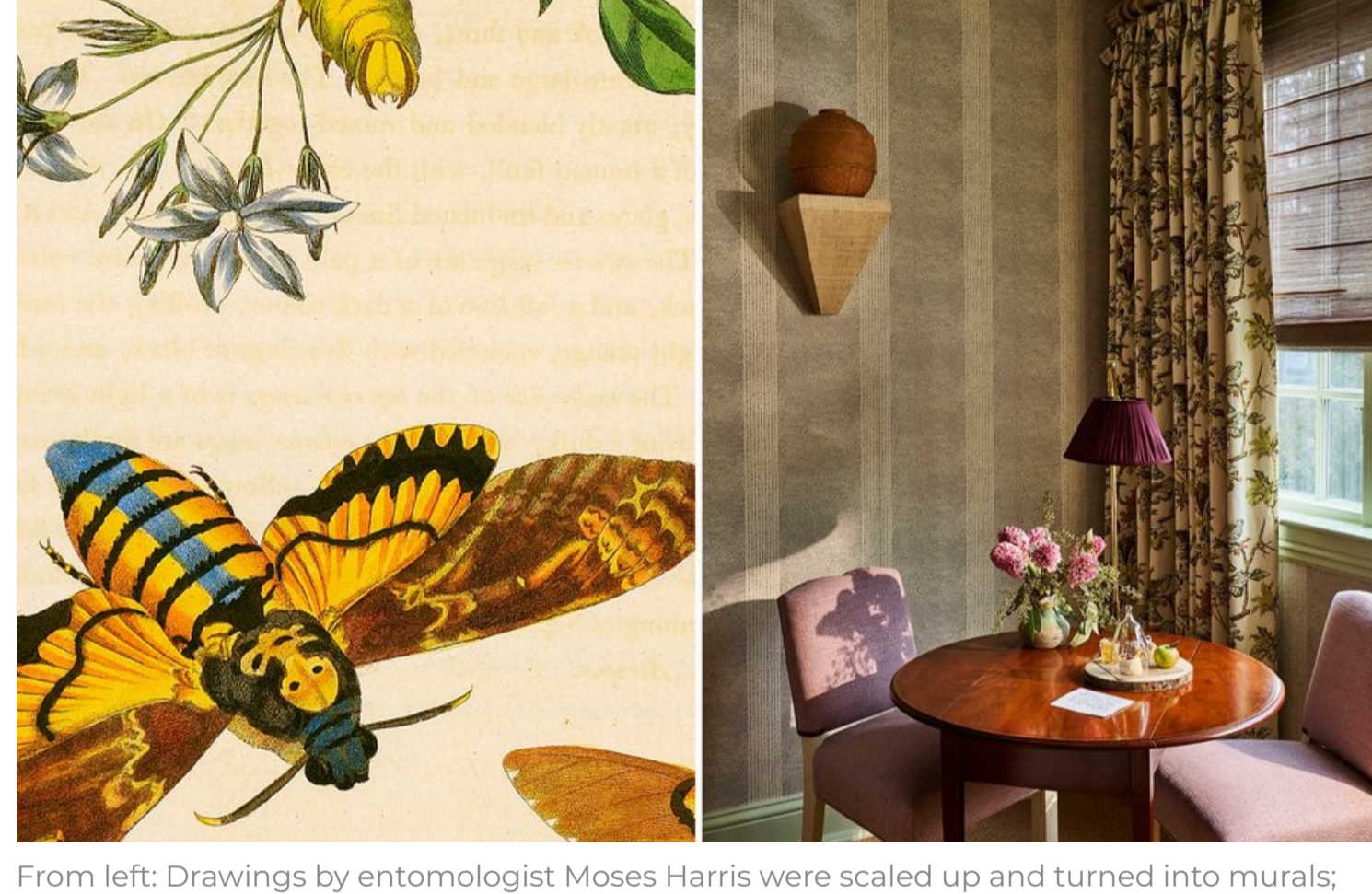
Tapped to renovate the property by Auberge Resorts, which acquired it in 2018, Kemble was intent on maintaining Mayflower Inn's "humanizing essence," as she calls it. To do so, she drew from her 20 years in residential design at Kemble Interiors, the firm created in Palm Beach by her mother, Mimi McMakin, in 1982. "There is a level of love that unifies a project when it's someone's home, and I wanted to bring that to this little hotel," Kemble says. "I spent a lot of time looking around, figuring out what stays and what goes."



From left: In room 38, a peony-pink armchair and matching ottoman fringed with raffia; Dot wallpaper by Sister Parish Design and a ceramic matchstick holder from Atlanta's Currey & Company. Mayflower Inn & Spa, Auberge Resorts Collection

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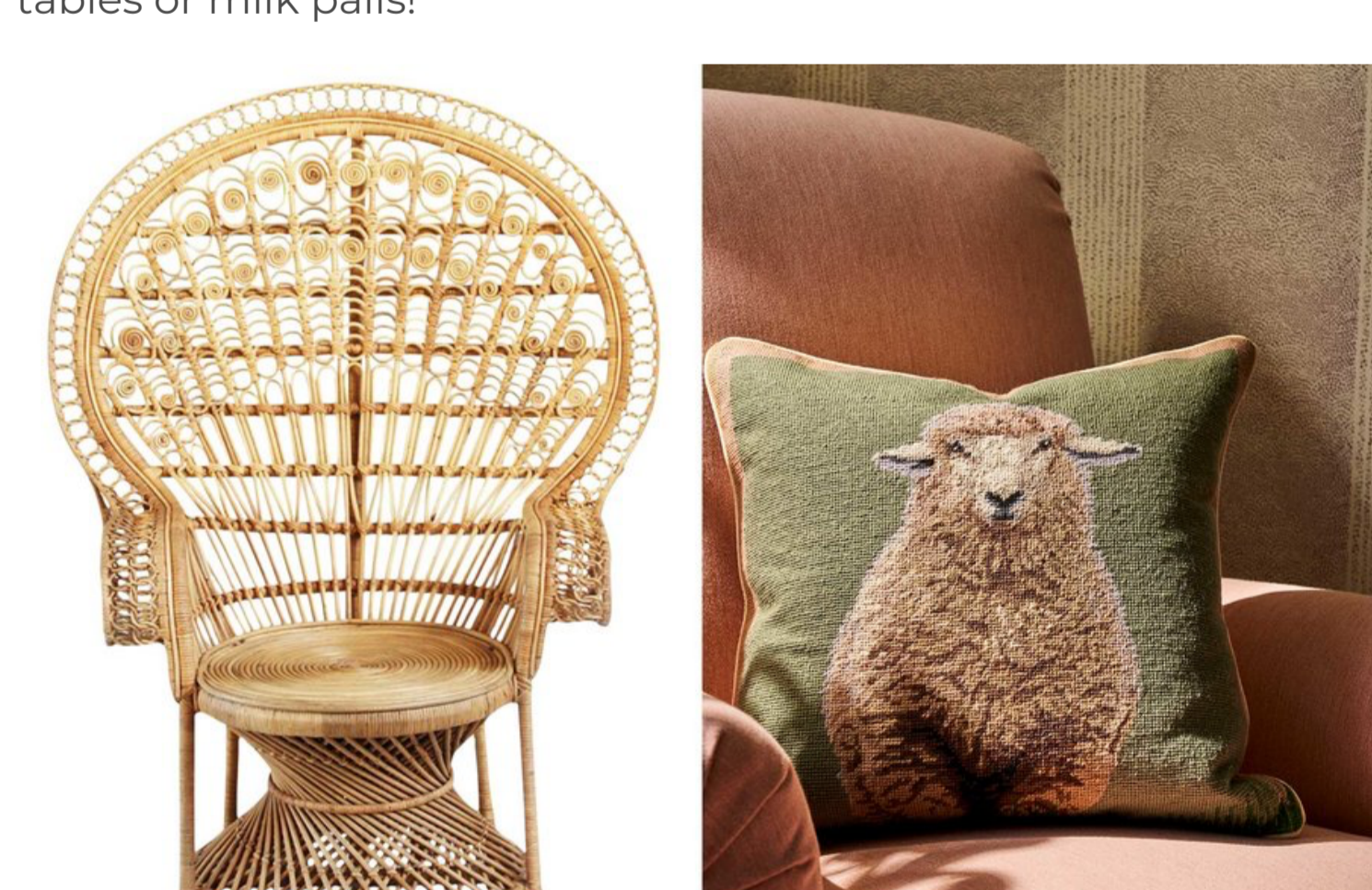
What she wasn't looking for was uniformity. "Like any real home, things come in and fall out over time—it's that element that makes each room here feel true," she says. Out was anything beige, which was replaced with whimsical palettes inspired by the colors of an English country house: blush and aqua in one room, yellow and pink in another. Safe were the portraits of Puritans and George Washington and the four-poster beds, which were joined by Scandinavian antiques, Napoleon chairs, and wicker—lots of it. "Having grown up in Palm Beach, I have such a thing for Victorian wicker," she admits with a laugh. "It's in my DNA." Wicker lampshades found their way onto custom ceramic lamps by Penny Morrison and braided raffia fringe was added to peony-pink ottomans. Though Kemble opened her black book of artisans for this project—Schumacher and Raoul for the wall-coverings; Connecticut artist Gary Komarin for the paintings—she wasn't afraid to slip in the occasional nod to simple country life. "We snuck a lamb into almost every room," she says.



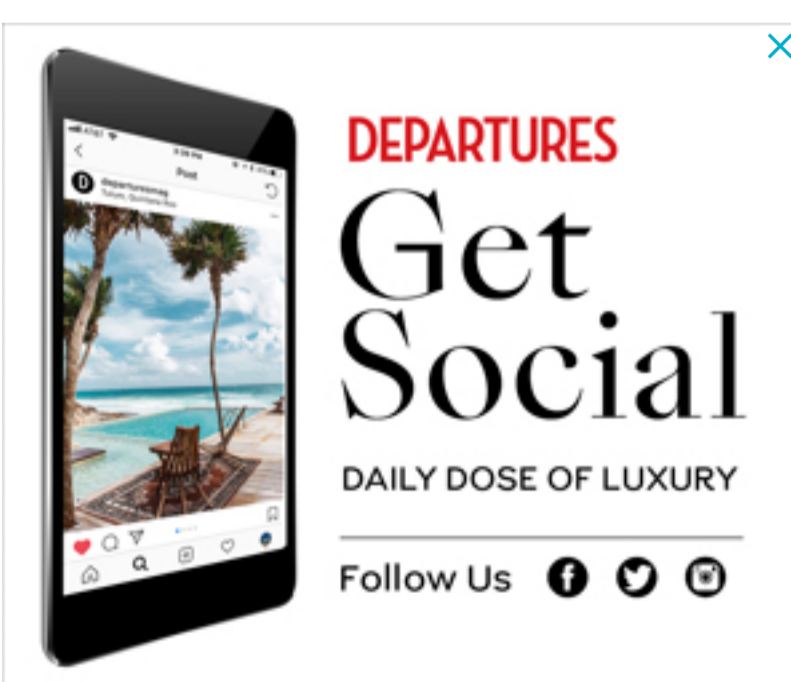
From left: Drawings by entomologist Moses Harris were scaled up and turned into murals; Augustin floral curtains from Raoul Textiles. From left: Courtesy Zoe Designs; Mayflower Inn & Spa, Auberge Resorts Collection

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Kemble's transformation of the Mayflower Dining Room aligned with the restaurant's new farm-to-table concept, led by executive chef Lacey Lou Franklin, who arrived from Napa Valley's Michelin-starred Auberge du Soleil. Moses Harris botanical prints were turned into wall murals, latticework covered the ceilings, and bell jars were strung with lights above the tables. "But we weren't too thematic about it," she insists. "There are no farm tables or milk pails!"



Kemble added "little sweetnesses" to every room: wicker chairs and needlepoint lamb pillows. From left: Courtesy Chairish; Mayflower Inn & Spa, Auberge Resorts Collection



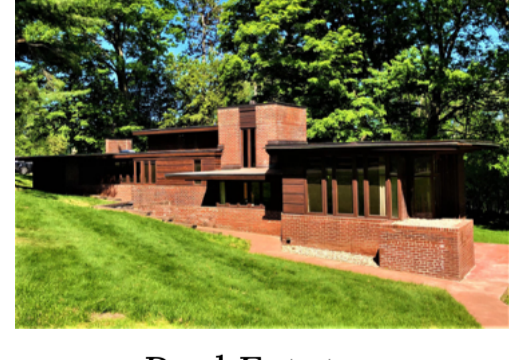
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The change that Kemble believes will leave her—and her house—in good standing with Mayflower Inn's loyalists, however, is the one she didn't make. "I didn't mess with the spa," she says of the eight-treatment-room sanctuary. "I've done my best to keep what is already perfect about this place—and the spa is perfect."

From \$699; [aubergeresorts.com](#).

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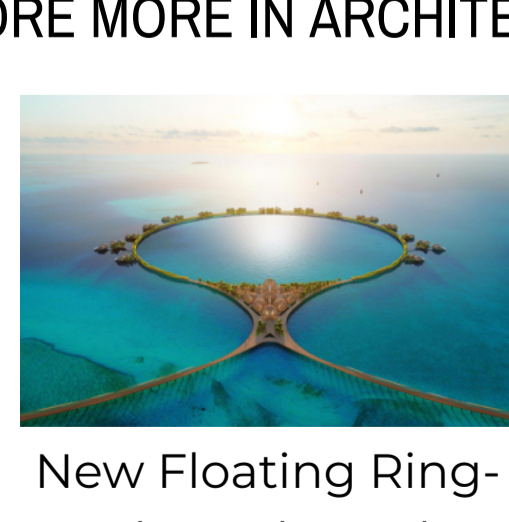
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