

# Globe Magazine

THE BOSTON GLOBE | MAY 15, 2022

YOUR HOME

## Make It Your Own

How to infuse personality into any space with bold color and clever design.

BY MARNI ELYSE KATZ



Saurabh Lele and Minal Patankar with their children in East Walpole.

YOUR HOME: MAKE IT YOUR OWN

## A TASTE OF HOME

Chai and Bollywood dance lessons are among the things a couple originally from Mumbai took into account when decorating their house in East Walpole.

BY MARNI ELYSE KATZ

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOYELLE WEST

Minal Patankar and Saurabh Lele appreciated that the East Walpole home they purchased was a blank slate. It allowed the first-time homeowners, who moved from Braintree with their sons, to make their mark. To be sure they got it right, the couple called designer Soni Konduru. Her marching orders from the couple were that the rooms remain light and bright, but also vibrate with color. “They wanted enough color to make people go, ‘Wow!’” Konduru says.

Over the course of the project, Konduru visited the couple’s home to discuss ideas and review progress, often over chai and Indian snacks that Patankar prepared. Every few weeks, the trio went shopping. “We got



24 THE BOSTON GLOBE MAGAZINE

**Facing page:** An illustration by Chaitanya Limaye includes the popular Mumbai street food vada pav, which is among the couple’s favorites. The teapot is from Mumbai-based brand India Circus by Krsnaa Mehta, and the walls are painted Benjamin Moore Caribbean Blue Water.

**This page:** In the music room, wallpaper from Drop It Modern sets an artistic tone and sofas from Article are easy to move to make room for dancing.



an item from every store,” Lele says with a laugh. “It’s the first time we didn’t have to build furniture ourselves.”

Konduru, whose firm name Daastann is from the Hindi word for “story,” likes to weave anecdotes about her clients into their homes. For the dining room, when she inquired about places the couple is most drawn to, they answered “Mumbai!” in unison. “They fancy all that is quirky about their hometown,” Konduru says.

Inspired by Mumbai’s coastal geography, Konduru lined the back wall in board and batten paneling painted teal.

Simple off-the-shelf mirrors bounce light around the room, while Indian-themed art prints add whimsy: Mumbai landmarks rendered by Indian comic artist Chaitanya Limaye; a graffiti-style print with Mumbai slang; and an illustrated how-to for making Masala chai by Chumbak, a Bangalore-based lifestyle brand. “Every meeting at their home started with a tea party of sorts,” says Konduru, relaying the origin of the visual reference.

The sideboard, large enough to store Patankar’s multicolored tea sets, has capiz shell doors that add to the coastal narrative. But it was the linear chandelier with its white globe lights that brought the essence of Mumbai home for the couple. “In Mumbai, there’s a road next to the sea called Marine Drive, which is known as the Queen’s Necklace because it looks like a string of pearls when lit up at night,” Patankar says. “It’s a very Mumbai thing.”

The family, who love to sing, dance, and host karaoke nights, turned the formal living room into a music room. Over time, they plan to fill the space with instruments. For now, their 8-year-old is teaching himself to play Bollywood songs on the electric piano. Konduru layered framed fabric prints of instruments over swirling abstract wallpaper that she says “feels like music.” The shaggy geometric rug reminds Lele of piano keys.

The most important requirement for the room was that the furniture be easy to move so that the boys can practice dancing. “Before the pandemic, they took Bollywood dance lessons in person, but now we do them online,” Patankar says.

The family gathers around the Barclay Butera tiered coffee table in the living room against a “tropical explosion” backdrop painted by local artist Pauline Curtiss of Patina Designs.

### RESOURCES

**Interior designer:** Daastann  
Interior Design Studio,  
daastann.com

**Decorative painter:** Patina  
Designs, patina-designs.com

**Contractor:** Coelho’s Building &  
Painting, 978-569-6312



THE BOSTON GLOBE MAGAZINE



The basement design revolves around the retro-style red fridge, which the family spotted while doing errands at Home Depot. Louis Poulsen pendants are mid-century style.



In the family room, Konduru commissioned decorative artist Pauline Curtiss of Patina Designs to create a backdrop for the television. The hand-painted, backlit panel stretches 18-foot high, to the top of the two-story space. The concept is a tropical explosion occurring behind an old wallpaper that, as it is peeled back, reveals the jungle behind it. The couple, who admit they

didn’t initially understand Konduru’s vision, were amazed by Curtiss’ process and adore the finished product.

Guests love it, too. Even when the family entertains crowds in the expansive lower level, fitted with a retro bar that Konduru designed around the couple’s red fridge, friends wander upstairs to take selfies in front of the artwork.

“We’ve had a lot of fun moments because of that wall and they’re often posted on Facebook,” Patankar says. “Every room is a showstopper.” ■

Marni Elyse Katz is a contributing editor to the Globe Magazine. Follow her on Instagram @StyleCarrot. Send comments to magazine@globe.com.