

# AMERICAN FARMHOUSE

DIY YOUR DÉCOR  
THIS SUMMER

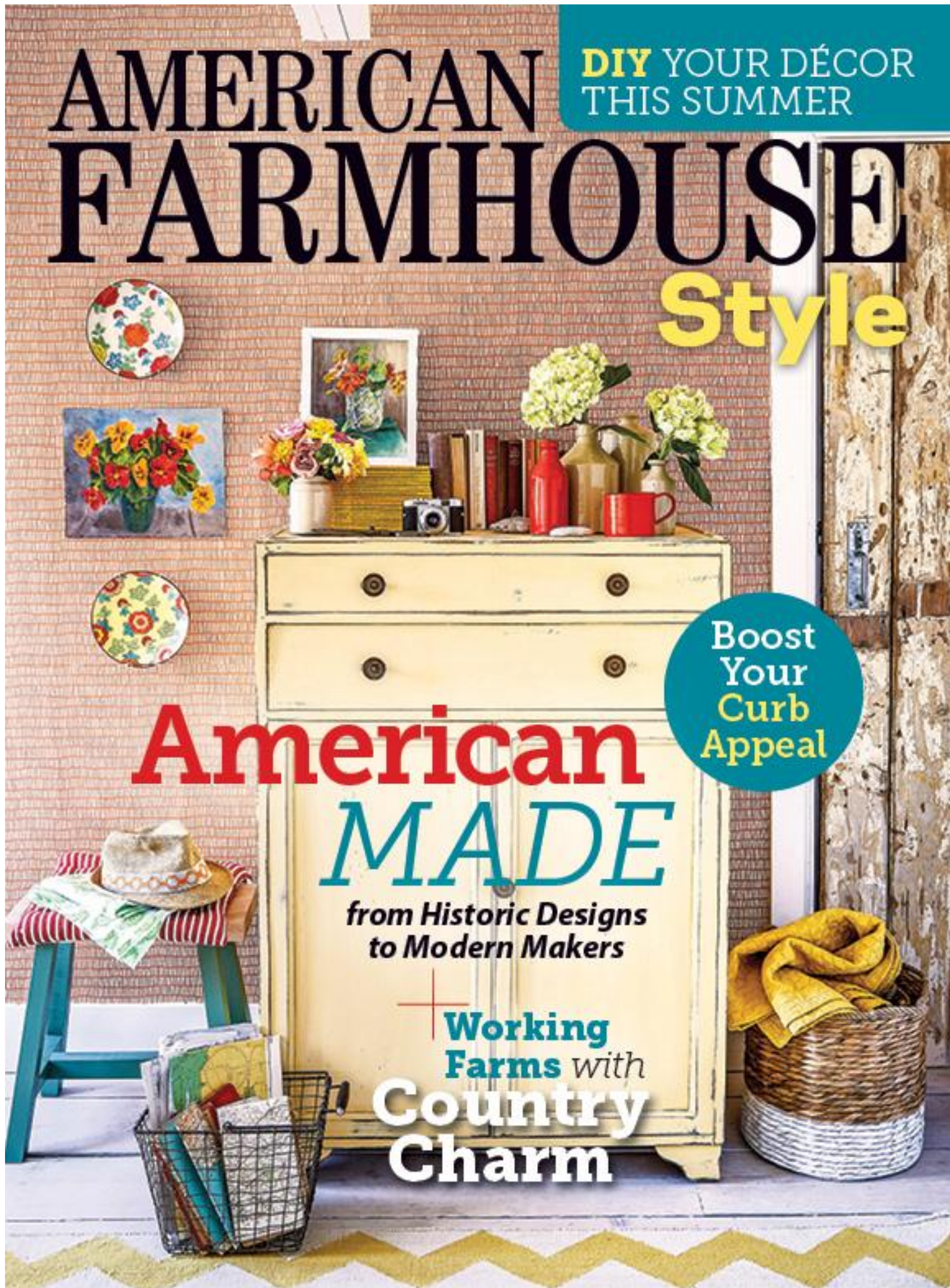
# Style

## American MADE

*from Historic Designs  
to Modern Makers*

+ Working  
Farms with  
Country  
Charm

Boost  
Your  
Curb  
Appeal







Brian describes his entryway as “a comfortable blend of disparate elements.” The space combines the usual white walls and wood furniture of the American farmhouse with artwork such as “an Ashcan School painting and a Mika Rottenberg work on paper.” Over the threshold, a simple sign reminds inhabitants to keep things tidy.

# Country ECLECTIC

Modern art and antiques come together in this fashionable New York farmhouse.

BY STEPHANIE AGNES-CROCKETT

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRANCESCO LAGNESE

STYLING BY BRIAN MCCARTHY



When designer Brian McCarthy first visited Ulster County, New York, he was a horse show jumper, and the landscape didn't make much of an impression. But that changed while he was staying with friends years later. “I showed up at their 19th-century ‘eyebrow’ Colonial home, with its commanding views of the Catskills,” Brian says. “I knew instantly this was the region for me.” Brian now resides in Ulster County, and describes his relaxed, modern home in his design book, *Luminous Interiors*.

## FRESH FOUNDATION

Homeowners Brian and Danny hadn't anticipated building their home from the ground up, but when they began searching the region's realty, their dream home was difficult to find. “We just assumed, like optimistic house hunters, that we'd discover a place encompassing everything on the wish list,” Brian says. As the search began, however, it became apparent that the picture-perfect farmhouse was more firmly rooted in imagination than in reality. Having already fallen in love with a certain plot of land, Brian and Danny decided to purchase the property, “put shovel in the ground and get started.”



"Our place expresses that curious sensibility. It's always evolving, and some things work better than others—but in a way, that's what makes it home."



Combine energy with elegance for an invigorating look that will refresh your farmhouse. Zebra stripes bring zest and vivacity to Brian's living room. Beside the rug, a Louis XV armchair resides. "[It] looks very stoic, but it's incredibly comfortable," Brian says.



For furniture that's guaranteed to be one of a kind, consider commissioning a craftsman. Brian "had the twin beds made based on a Directoire daybed purchased years earlier," and personally designed the cherry desk. Atop the desk, matching lamps lend parallelism to the room, while the cannonball clock and mounted butterflies bring an extra flair to the space.

**Tip**  
 COMBINE DARK COLORS WITH GOLD ACCENTS FOR A SOPHISTICATED, COUNTRY-GENTLEMAN LOOK.

## ECLECTIC EXTRAVAGANZA

Designer and author Brian McCarthy's country dwelling shows you can mix any other style with your farmhouse décor.

### WALLS THAT WHISPER

Keep your walls quiet so the focus is on your décor—not the background. "I don't want to challenge the green beyond the windows or de-emphasize the personalities of the objects and pictures with surface sumptuousness," Brian says.

### ZESTY ZONES

Pair similar objects together to convey specific moods throughout your home. Then transition from space to space to create what Brian calls "zones." Zones are "a series of overlapping experiences that shift the mood from place to place and reinforce the emotional temperature of each," he says.

### COMPELLING CURIOSITY

If curiosity is key, then perhaps experimentation is the door that curiosity unlocks. "I'm always encouraging clients to just go and look at everything," Brian says. "The more you're exposed to, the more willing you'll be to go in unusual, unexpected directions."

### EVOLUTIONARY EXPERIMENTS

When you do take those risks, don't be afraid to let your home evolve over time. Feel free to make changes as you go, keeping what works and discarding what doesn't. "Some things work better than others," Brian says. "In a way, that's what makes it home."





(left, top) Brian's charming bathroom combines traditional farmhouse style with a dash of eclecticism. The two styles converge overhead in the lighting fixture. While chandeliers are a normal farmhouse feature, Brian's is far from conventional. "It was constructed by a New York artisan, Thomas Blake, from plumbing supplies," he says.

(left, bottom) Introduce quirky objects like this American sculpture to make a statement in your entryway. Not only is the piece eye-catching, but it also sets the tone for the rest of the home, which features a tidy art collection.



### STRUCTURAL STRATEGIES

Even with the advantage of constructing the home from scratch, the dream home didn't materialize overnight. "The house's design and construction proved to be a bit of a battle with the architect," Brian says. "But ultimately we prevailed on the most important elements." The home features "a twenty-seven-foot-long unobstructed entry hall running nearly the house's full width," as well as "a wonderfully generous fifteen-by-thirty-four-foot back porch" and "a three-bedroom-plus-study plan." Brian and Danny selected two types of window trimmings, as well as gorgeous pine flooring. The home also boasts a "grandly-shaped surround for the living room entry portal." The edging, according to Brian, "elevates [the home's] importance in the architectural hierarchy."

### INFORMAL INTERIOR

While Brian and Danny elected a more formal exterior "in keeping with the region's aesthetic traditions," the home's interior embraces a much more relaxed, eclectic farmhouse environment. "There's a casualness to the way the design took shape," Brian says, "an unfussy, unself-conscious ease that suggests a home that came together over a number of years."

»» SEE SOURCES, PAGE 128. ««



(above) "For the first fifteen months, Danny and I were so preoccupied, we didn't even think about the grounds," Brian says. Then he got to work "over a long series of Sunday mornings," sketching his ideas for the yard. "In a way, it's the opposite of the house, in which the elements have strong individual identities," he says. "Outside, everything feels soft and fluid, and right angles are few."



Freshen your outdoor furniture with floral patterns. These happy patterns bring a pop of color to the portico, delightfully contrasting the deep brown sofa cushions. And, of course, wicker is the perfect summer seating choice for the American farmhouse.



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