

WHAT I LOVE  
BEATRIZ WILLIAMS

## Books and Dog Hair: A Historical Novelist's Home Décor

By JOANNE KAUFMAN

Beatriz Williams, the best-selling author of historical novels including "The Golden Hour," "Summer Wives" and "A Certain Age," had not quite bargained for 11 years in Greenwich, Conn.

But her husband, Sydney Williams, had grown up in Greenwich, and when the couple returned to America in 2004 after five years in London, it was a convenient perch — an easy commute to Manhattan for Mr. Williams, then a banker, and a good school system — if not necessarily a congenial one.

"There was an undercurrent of competitiveness to everything there," said Ms. Williams, 47, whose latest novel, "Her Last Flight" the chronicle of an aviation pioneer and a war correspondent, will be published at the end of June.

Fortunately, her empty-nester in-laws had downsized some years earlier and relocated to the Connecticut River Valley, along the Long Island Sound. "We would go there for a lot of weekends, and the area became a second home for us," Ms. Williams said. "We loved that it was outside the New York bubble, but it had a lot of sophistication. There were museums and interesting restaurants."

She and her husband looked and looked for a place to buy along that swath of the Connecticut shoreline, but what they liked they couldn't afford and what they could afford — well, you know the rest. In 2015, as a stopgap, they rented a centuries-old house with a guest cottage, pool and tennis court on 10 acres in Lyme, about 80 miles east of Greenwich. Five years later, they are still

Name Beatriz Williams, 47

Occupation Writer

**Clutter is good** "This is not a Marie Kondo house, but on the other hand, it all brings us joy."

there — with their four children, three cats and Bailey the rescue beagle — happy as can be to have someone else take care of the grounds, someone else to repair what breaks.

The house was built near the end of the 18th century and renovated near the turn of the 21st. But the owner was sufficiently respectful to retain all that gave it character: the massive carved beams, the cunningly built-in cabinets, the doors with their original hardware.

"As someone who writes historical fiction, I love living in a house with so much history," Ms. Williams said. "You feel that that history is alive all around you. You think of the number of hands that touched the latch on the front door. You think of all the people who were born and got married and died in these rooms. Without sounding too woo-woo, I feel all of that is in the air."

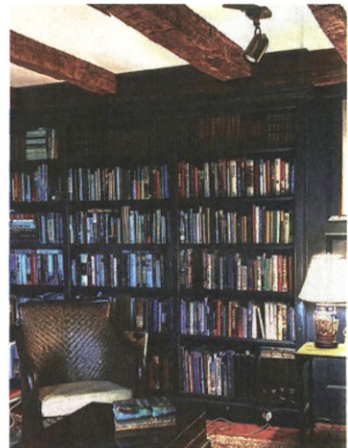
But it is also the case, she said, that there isn't a single right angle or straight line in the entire house; that in winter, the windows cannot be counted on to keep the snow outside; and that ye olde nails have been known to pop out of the broad chestnut floorboards. "I have to hammer and hang down the floor," she said. "But you just think of people cutting those boards by hand."

The library, with its wood-shuttered windows, paneled walls and working fireplace, was the initial draw. "Finding a place to rent with bookshelves is hard," Ms. Williams said. "And we have a lot of books, many my father-in-law gave us when he and my mother-in-law downsized."

She added: "There is no decorating scheme in place, unless you mean books. And dog hair."



PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEATRIZ AND SYDNEY WILLIAMS



**'I love living in a house with so much history.'**

Since their marriage almost 23 years ago, the couple have bought a few pieces of furniture, including a pair of Directoire chairs they found in an antiques shop on a weekend trip to the Burgundy region of France during their time in London, a wood rowing shell that had been converted into a bookcase, and a monastery dining table from Restoration Hardware. But for the most part, they have been the seemingly willing recipients of many pieces handed down through several generations of Mr. Williams's family, "in very WASP-y fashion," Ms. Williams said.

The haul includes an antique chest, a bagatelle table, a secretary, a wing chair, sculp-



tures by Mr. Williams's artist grandmother, lamps and photographs. And, oh yes, the squirrel gun ("without the firing mechanism," Ms. Williams clarified) on the fireplace mantel in the living room.

"It's easy to fall in love with sleek, modern interiors, which seem so restful," she said. "I love white jeans. I put them on and I feel so sleek and stylish, and then I spill coffee on them, which is not restful at all. The thing about furniture this old and lived-in is that it reduces the stress level. I don't feel I have to be so particular about keeping it pristine." (For the record, the cats are kept out of the living room, and the children, who range in age from 11 to 19, have little interest

in going in.)

Look to the hallway walls for what Ms. Williams herself will be handing down to the next generation. There are framed maps of the sections of London where she and Mr. Williams lived, and a particular favorite: a map of the London tube clipped from a newspaper. There are also English nautical prints (credit Ms. Williams's fondness for the seafaring novels of Patrick O'Brian) and equine prints (since childhood she has had a thing for horse racing).

"My Christmas present every year was a subscription to *The Thoroughbred Record*," she said, referring to the now-defunct publication of a newspaper. There are also advertisements for prints from Richard Stone Reeves, who was the premier thoroughbred artist.

Gallop forward a decade from an adolescence steeped in bits and bloodstock. On display in the home of her prospective in-laws were two fine Reeves prints, one of Secretariat, the other of Ruffian. "They gave them to us, knowing my passion," Ms. Williams said.

It's not necessarily that the surroundings are conducive to writing or that they inspire Ms. Williams. "It's just that the house is so in tune with what I do for a living," she said, "and so in tune with what I love."

INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE  
GREECE

## A Sugar Cube Overlooking the Aegean Sea

By MARCELLE SUSSMAN FISCHLER

This five-bedroom villa is nestled in a rocky hillside overlooking Kalo Livadi, one of the longest sandy beaches on Mykonos, a Greek island in the Aegean Sea.

The 2,600-square-foot house, a three-story version of the quintessential sugar-cube homes of the Cyclades Islands, was built in 2015 from whitewashed concrete with accents of local stone. It sits on half an acre in the southeastern part of the island.

The property was designed with a sense of fun and romance, said Savvas Savvaidis, president and chief executive of Greece Sotheby's International Realty, which has the listing. "You have the luxury to enjoy outdoor living," he said, with several separate entertainment and relaxation areas, from the curved infinity pool and cliffside hot tub to a screening area with comfy seating to a beach bar with a D.J. booth and room to dance. The outdoor kitchen has a beer station and a barbecue grill.

A gated driveway shared with the neighboring house winds uphill to a separate parking area above each villa. Steps curve down to the main floor on the middle level, with an entry door opening to a vestibule intersecting the open-plan kitchen, dining room and living room.

Straight ahead, the dining room easily seats 10 and has a window overlooking the property and the Aegean Sea beyond. To the left, the living room has sliding-glass doors to a covered terrace with a similar view.

A curved staircase next to the kitchen leads up to an antique wood door opening into the master bedroom, with en suite bath and private veranda with sea views.

Each of the four bedrooms on the lower



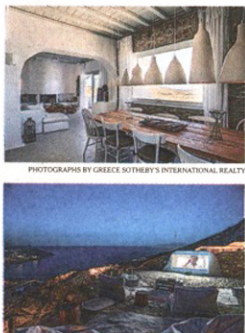
\$2.1 million

Clockwise from above: This five-bedroom house sits on half an acre in the southeastern part of Mykonos; the dining room has a picture window overlooking the Aegean Sea; an outdoor screening area with comfortable seating.

level has an en suite bath with a shower; three open to the outdoor areas. The front bedroom has a sliding door to a covered terrace with a Paola Lenti double-seater swing. The property is being sold furnished.

The Greek island of Mykonos, with about 10,000 residents, beckons tourists with its sunny climate and vibrant culture. The villa is a five-minute drive to Kilo Livadi beach, and just over a mile away is Ano Mera, a traditional Greek village with shopping, tavernas, bakeries and cafes.

The house is a 15-minute drive from cosmopolitan Mykonos town, also known as Chora. Mykonos International Airport is 18 minutes away.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREECE SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY

## Market Overview

For the past few years, Mykonos has been a global magnet for the rich and famous, drawn by its premium nightlife, restaurants and 16th-century windmills.

"Mykonos, because of its robust luxury property market and its strong appeal to high-end tourism, led the recovery of the Greek property market as early as 2014 while the rest of the country followed a couple of years later," Mr. Savvaidis said.

Since 2015, the luxury market, ranging from about \$1.1 million to \$13.6 million, has grown in sales volume "on average by 15 percent year to year, per year," he said.

The island "gained a lot of visibility

around the world by attracting second-home buyers," said Georg Petras, chief executive of Engel & Volkers in Greece.

Mr. Savvaidis said that despite — or perhaps because of — the coronavirus pandemic, during April and May his agency had an "explosion of requests," registering a 166 percent increase year to year in "qualified leads." He attributed the inquiries to Greece's flat curve during the crisis, a result of the "immediate lockdown measures" taken by the government when neighboring Italy was overwhelmed. (There were 180 recorded deaths in Greece as of June 8, compared with 33,899 in Italy.)

## Who Buys in Mykonos

"Mykonos is an international destination which brings buyers from around the globe," said Ioannis Revithis, owner of Mykonos Real Estate and a former president of the Greek Real Estate Federation. Foreign buyers are mainly from the United States, Britain, Germany, Switzerland and France.

## Buying Basics

A tax identification number is needed in order to begin the sales process. "There are no restrictions for European buyers, but other foreign buyers must have a VAT number," Mr. Petras said.

## Taxes and Fees

Closing costs run 8 to 9 percent of the purchase price. The property taxes on this villa are about \$1,700 a year, Mr. Savvaidis said.

## Contact

Savvas Savvaidis, Greece Sotheby's International Realty, 011-30-210-968-1070; sothebysrealty.gr