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Accessorise all areas

When queen of the clutch Kate Spade needs a break from the pressures of New York City life and her ever-expanding accessories empire, she heads for the tranquility of her Long Island farmhouse By Honor Brodie. Photographed by George Holz

This page, top, Kate created an informal feel in the living-room by mixing antique rugs and patterned fabrics with the couple's contemporary art collection; below, the den, where Andy's 10-speed lives. Opposite page, Kate cuddles up with Henry, the Maltese terrier



Kate and Andy Spade are lolling about on the back porch of their 1870 Southampton, Long Island, cottage. It is their lazy Sunday afternoon ritual, punctuated only by the occasional yap-yap of Henry, their Maltese terrier. As the dog darts from his master's lap to the red-painted toenail peeking from his mistress's lime-green mules, Kate describes her latest undertaking: the elaborate party she threw in Manhattan two days before for Andy's 40th birthday. She whipped herself into a complete frenzy making sure it was one of the best nights of his life — hanging childhood photos of him around the rented loft space, contacting old friends, and even commissioning a touching film.

It's the kind of showstopping attitude Spade brings to both play and work at home in New York City. But on Long Island, any ambition drops precipitously. "Out here, we have no projects. I just like to mooch around the house and town," says the handbag designer of how she downshifts once they pull into the driveway on Friday nights. At their beach hideaway, talk of purses, paper and perfume is banned in lieu of such weighty matters as which CD to play. ▶



This page, top, the master bedroom's vintage wallpaper inspired Kate's new beauty line's packaging; below, antique combs and brushes sit on her dressing table. Opposite page, top, a selection of her new 'lotions and potions' adorn the bathroom shelf; below, chilling out on the patio with Henry, a Sunday afternoon ritual



Standing in the entrance hall lined with raffia linen, Kate explains that the house was originally a barn before being converted into a farmhouse in the Twenties. By the time the couple bought it eight years ago, it was falling apart. Their game plan: make it less rustic but don't strip away the charm. They kept the tin ceilings, but freshened up the downstairs with bold paint and the three bedrooms with vintage wallpaper. Like many style-makers, Spade likes to sample from the past – whether she uses an early-20th-century Swedish chandelier or a pair of mid-century lamps – and the overall aesthetic oozes personality without looking decorated. “I don't fixate on what style a piece is. I buy it for no other reason than that I like it,” she says. This same sensibility infuses her own accessories designs, which add a mod twist to a long-lost suburban style, evocative of cocktails at country-club dances, not soccer moms in minivans.

Buying this place before they could afford an apartment in Manhattan is one of several ways the couple has courted success by putting the cart before the horse. Back in 1993, they were working and living together in a rented SoHo loft not much bigger than one of Kate's clutches. “It was difficult,” says Andy. “We'd wake up on the weekends and still be in the office. There was no separation.” So the couple made it a priority to find an affordable place where they could escape the pressures of launching a business. Call it a necessary indulgence. “I don't buy a lot of basics. When I shop

I don't buy a lot of basics. When I shop for

for black trousers, I come home with a scarf and pink shoes," says Kate of this accessorise-first, ask-questions-later attitude.

Heading into the old-fashioned kitchen, she notes that she and Andy were a brand before they were husband and wife. Kate, who comes from Kansas City, where her father owned a construction business, met Andy while they were both students at Arizona State University and working at a clothing store. Later, as a 30-year-old accessories editor at US women's magazine *Mademoiselle*, she realised no one was making the type of bag she wanted to carry. So in 1991, she quit her job, and she and Andy sewed her first name – and his last – on to the label of the first six prototypes of her colourful boxy bags, launching what today is a \$70 million business.

When they entered the accessories market, fortified by Andy's advertising background, the couple never dreamt things would take off so fast. But Andy's brother, the actor David Spade, could have predicted it. Recalling a time in the eighth grade when he was en route to a school dance, David says, "I was in my light-blue cords and my light-blue alligator shirt, and Andy said, 'You can't wear that, it doesn't match.' I said, 'You idiot – it's light blue and light blue; there isn't a better match in the world.' As I walked out, I heard over my shoulder, 'At least break it up with a belt.' That's when I knew he would be a multimillionaire."

The Spades have watched what began with a smart-looking handbag expand to a corporation that boasts eight stores selling everything from handbags, luggage, baby bags, wallets and menswear to paper, pyjamas, sunglasses and shoes. But just so Kate doesn't ever forget where she came from, three clocks line the wall of their showroom, set to Paris, New York – and Kansas City.

This country house also keeps her humble. "We didn't really want anything high-maintenance or grand," says Kate. "We come here to relax." They ride bikes into town to Sip 'n Soda for ice-cream cones or hang with pals at home. Her best friend, entrepreneur Eleni Gianopoulos (of Eleni's Cookies), and Eleni's husband, Randall, live just down the road. On a typical weekend, Eleni will come over to test-drive new pastries while Kate makes place cards using crayons and seashells. "Table settings are a sickness for both of us," says Eleni. With pride, Kate shows off the collection of plates she has amassed from local antiques shops and far-flung travels. Later, her mind jumps to another passion: lotions and potions. Her mules click-clack upstairs to the master bedroom where Kate shows off her newest baby, a line of beauty products she just launched with Estée Lauder. The honeysuckle scent passes muster with at least one discerning critic, Andy. "It's sexy," he says. "I wear it when I miss her." Kate throws her head back at the absurdity of the comment.

If there's a whiff of mischief in the air, who knows where it may lead? In fact, the designing duo say they'd love to expand their family. "Andy will be an amazing dad," says Kate. "He's always trying to impress my nephew with his skateboarding."

Wonder where the handles go on a skateboard bag. ■

*black trousers, I come home with a scarf
first, ask-questions-later attitude*

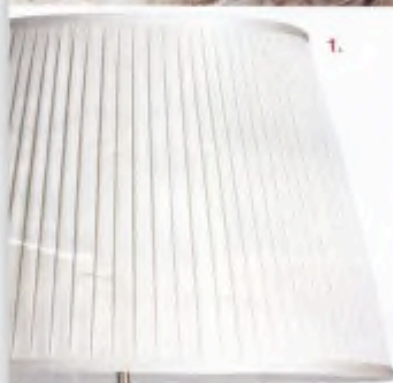


at home

Get the look of *Kate Spade*



Kate Spade's house in Long Island is all about relaxed chic. With its mix of vintage finds, cosy cottage printed wallpapers, cushion fabrics, Persian rugs, and paintings on every wall, it's the perfect place to spend lazy afternoons reading and sipping fresh lemonade, relaxed by the soothing leafy green and sunny yellow hues of summer inside and out. ■ **Fiona McCarthy**



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1. Ceramic table lamp with gold fittings, base, £513; empire silk shade, £168, by Bella Figura (020 7376 4564; bella-figura.co.uk) 2. Sultan side table, £65, by OKA (0870 160 6002; okadirect.com) 3. Spiral jug, £9.95, by The Pier (0845 609 1234; pier.co.uk) 4. 'Emily' dining chair, unpainted, £150; painted, £220, by Marston & Langering (020 7881 5700;

marston-and-langering.com) 5. Black tote bag with white floral print, £275, by Kate Spade at Harvey Nichols (020 7235 5000) 6. Perfume, from £49, by Kate Spade at Harvey Nichols and Harrods (020 7730 1234) 7. Flowers, £50; with vase, £70, by McQueens (020 7251 5505; mcqueens.co.uk) 8. Travel case, £50, by Kate Spade at Harvey Nichols and Harrods

at home

