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five days: That's
the deal at a new,
very refined
destination spa
in Connecticut



MAYFLOWER COMPACT

BY BARBARA LAZEAR ASCHER • PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUSIE CUSHNER



IT'S THE ROOF OF THE NEW SPA BUILDING AT THE Mayflower Inn that catches your eye first: It dips, then curves upward as though taking flight. Only later do you notice that it rests on a New England shingle-style body that is just as graceful, yet solidly grounded. It precisely expresses the message this new destination spa—easily the most luxurious, most exclusive one in the country—tries to imbue in its guests during their five-day sojourn. Be grounded, be strong, but also be light. Take wing.



The new 20,000-square-foot spa is the vision of Adriana Mnuchin, Memphis-born and raised—you can still hear it in her now-and-then gently rounded consonants—but for long a civic-minded citizen of Manhattan and Connecticut. She's a former trustee of the Whitney Museum of Art, a cofounder of the New York Shakespeare Society, and a successful businesswoman in her own right, having founded Tennis Lady and Cashmere-Cashmere. Her husband, Robert, retired from Goldman Sachs as managing partner in the late '80s and has since devoted himself to dealing in major works of art—in 2002 he paid nearly \$3.8 million at auction for de Kooning's *Woman* (1952)—and, at the Mayflower, landscape

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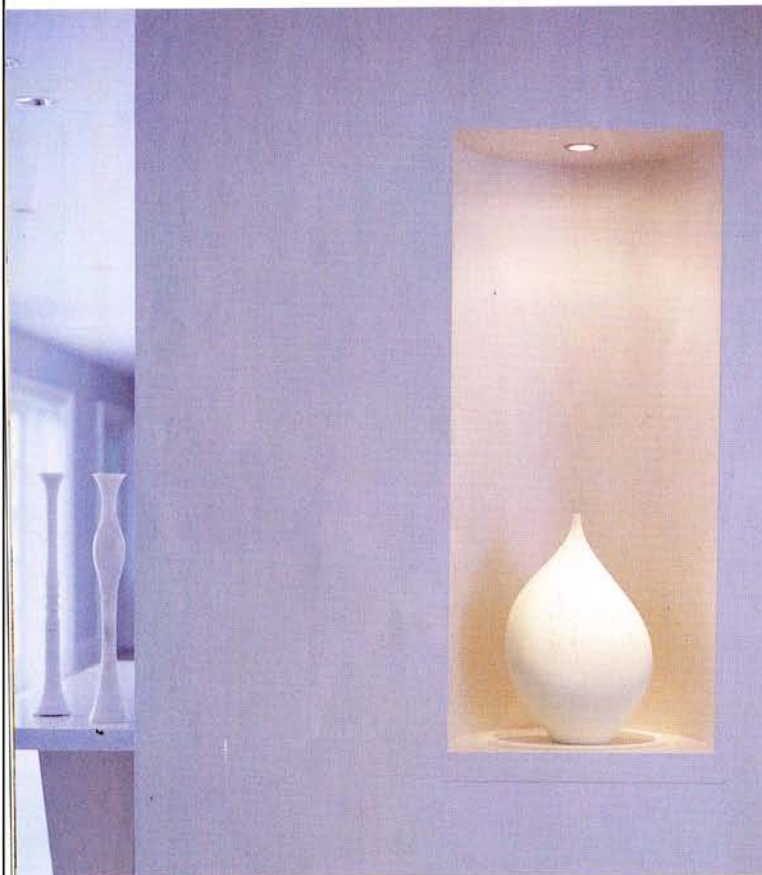


The shimmering Garden Room (this page) is the heart of the new spa at the Mayflower Inn, which occupies its own 20,000-square-foot building. Above the couch hangs a painting by Willem de Kooning called *Untitled 1986*, drawn from the collection of Mayflower owners Adriana and Robert Mnuchin. Opposite: A curtained dressing area in the women's changing room.



design. (The weeping trees on the property, and there are many, are part of his specimen collection.) In the late '80s the couple bought the Mayflower, then a somewhat worn local hotel, and did what seems to come naturally to them: go to the nth degree, here in taste, service, and creature comforts. When it reopened in 1992, the Mayflower was a category of one in New England. (Today it's in a category of two: Only Twin Farms in Vermont compares.)

Adriana is the chatelaine of the Mayflower. She and her daughter, Lisa Hedley, orchestrated the lavishly serene spaces



SPA HIGHS AND LOWS

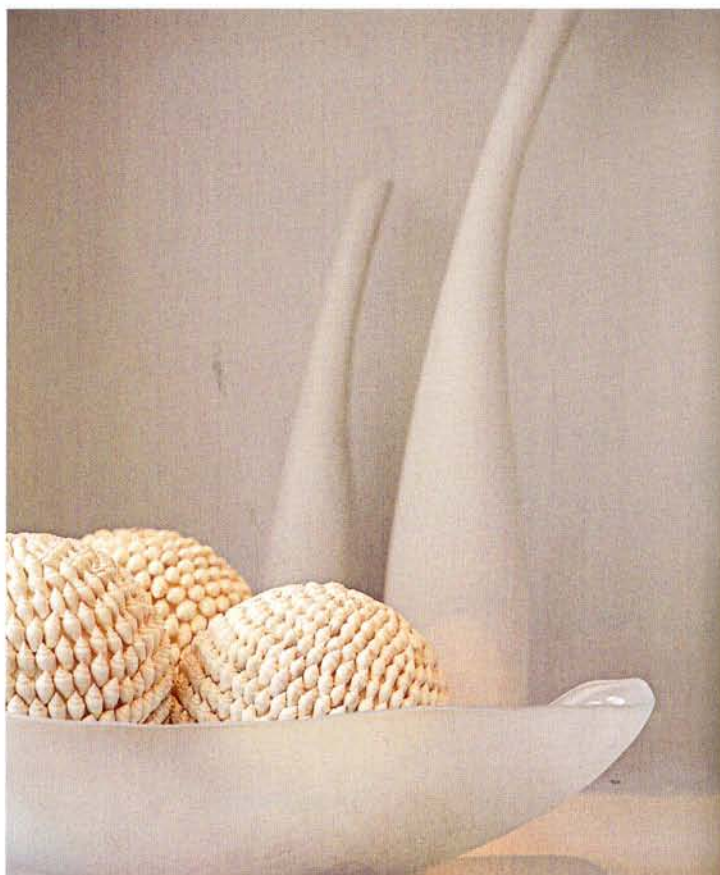
- High The exquisite design: serene but not self-conscious
- High The pre-arrival telephone consultation with a personal spa adviser, who really does craft an individual program
- High The unlimited-treatments policy. My favorites: Thai massage, Sweet Surrender, Thermal Sanctuary
- High The Stretch and Release class
- Low Having to leave

The spa has its own dining room (this page), where guests gather for lunch. Opposite, clockwise from top: The spa building; one of the wet treatment rooms; a 1920s Venetian-glass candleholder on a side table outside the massage rooms; and a porcelain vessel by Kose in the spa lobby.





that are the hallmark of the new spa. They visited some 20 spas around the world as research, including the major U.S. destination spas, Canyon Ranch, Cal-a-Vie, and the Golden Door. They've retained some aspects of the destination-spa formula, like the fixed stay—guests check in on Sunday and depart on Friday afternoon—the women-only policy (most weeks), and the emphasis on diet. Adriana developed a spa menu (1,600 calories per day) in conjunction with Cary Neff, one of the top names in spa cuisine. The beef is grass-fed, the chicken has lived the way chickens are supposed to live, the



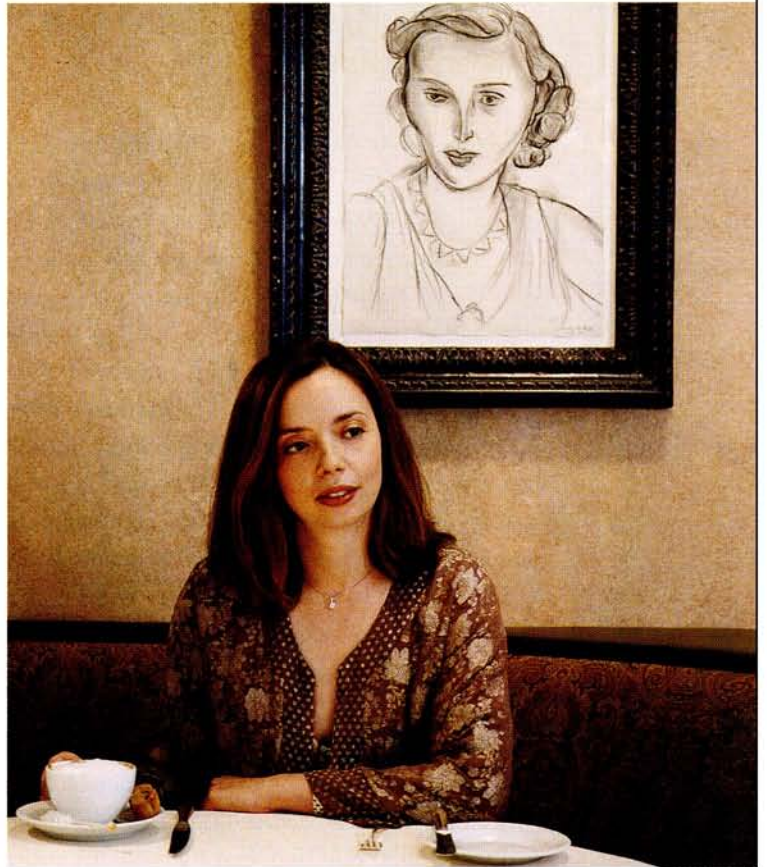
vegetables are organic, and the portions are controlled. Spa guests take lunch in the spa building and dinner in a separate small dining room in the inn, to build community but also, one suspects, to reduce temptation.

But the two have also tweaked the equation in three significant ways: upping the luxury quotient, altering the ambience, and redefining the term *all-inclusive*.

The surroundings at most destination spas are low luxe at best and often slightly spartan, a reminder that you have a mission. The Mayflower Spa, in contrast, is as luxurious as a Riviera Relais & Châteaux. The carpets in the spa are custom-designed, the shower hardware is Grohe, and the light-

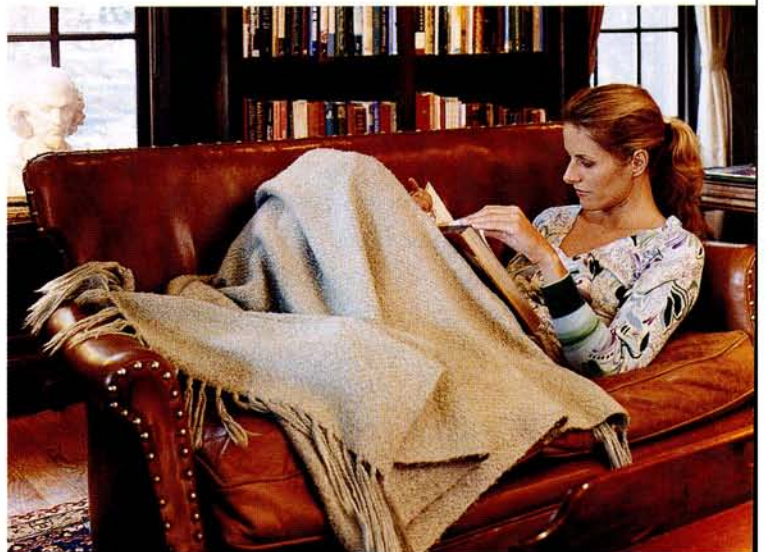
ing is ethereal. It's not just for show but a reflection of Adriana's belief that beauty is itself calming and uplifting. (And it makes this spa a category of one.)

Moreover, the Mayflower Spa feels like a residence, not a retreat. (That's why its official name is Spa House.) "It could not look like a commercial spa; it had to look like an extension of a home. That was our biggest mandate," declares Adriana. Next on the list was quiet. The entire spa is soundproof, and the colors and space induce library registers "so there is a hushed feeling," says Adriana. Indeed, once you're in



the lobby of Spa House, everyone's voice—even those of two perfectly coiffed, expertly tucked and plucked high-powered New York businesswomen speaking in the city's sharply punctuated enthusiasms—drops to a sweet church murmur.

Like most destination spas, the Mayflower is all-inclusive. Unlike them, it is really all-inclusive: The \$6,700 fee buys you an unlimited number of treatments. (Most top destination spas limit the number and type of treatments included, for example, one massage a day or three facials over the course of a week.) That actually makes the Mayflower a good value if you work two or three treatments into your schedule each day. "Lisa and I both think, What greater *Continued on page 129*



CENTER RIGHT: JACKET BY MATTA.
LOWER RIGHT: SWEATER BY LORO PIANA

Mullioned windows, elegant cornices, and an oculus—the pool building (this page) shows architect Reese Owens's affinity for the classical idiom. Opposite, clockwise from bottom: Mnuchin and Hedley chose yoga mats with cushions that foster correct posture; therapist Eleanor Bristol at work; getting ready for a dip in the Jacuzzi; and decorative items in the Garden Room.

