

America's Chicest Bookshop Just Opened in Boston—Here's a Look Inside

Designer Cathy Kincaid proves bookshops can boast a high standard of design and a thoughtful collection at Beacon Hill Books and Cafe.

BY [SARAH DIMARCO](#) PUBLISHED: OCT 21, 2022



Sarah Winchester

Boston's picturesque Beacon Hill neighborhood seemingly had it all—a delightful mix of Federal-style brick row houses lining the cobblestone streets, bustling restaurants serving delectable meals, and museums for all interests. Yet, when Melissa Fetter moved to the idyllic area in 2019, she noticed there was one crucial thing missing—a beloved bookshop.

Feeling a call to action, Fetter began envisioning a store that leaned into a high design standard while still having all the comforts and curiosities one expects to find when looking for a book. As fate would have it, not long after she embarked on this journey a charming 1840s building at 71 Charles Street went on the market, and Fetter wasted no time putting down an offer. With the location secured, Fetter knew the only person that could bring her vision to life was her longtime collaborator and designer [Cathy Kincaid](#).



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Most of Beacon Hill books is drenched in watery tones except for the "Aesthetics" which houses books on architecture, design, entertaining, art, fashion, and landscape.

Fetter made it clear to Kincaid that the bookshop needed to be a bit more residential so that made guests feel as though they are perusing the shelves at someone's well-curated home library. To achieve this, the duo enlisted the help of local Boston architect Monika Pauli of Pauli Uribe Architects to completely renovate the building, focusing on enhancing period details and adding a few modern amenities like an elevator. As architectural renovations went on, Kincaid and Fetter found inspiration in an American decorating legend for the interiors of the shop. "We imagined Sister Parish living on Beacon Hill and what she would have chosen for today's modern world," says Kincaid.



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A mix of fabrics from Sister Parish creates the perfect little reading nook.

It was only fitting that Kincaid reached out to the Sister Parish brand, run by members of the late decorator's family, to find the perfect fabrics and wallcoverings to create a cohesive and youthful look throughout the five floors of the townhouse. Banquettes covered in buzzy patterns and rattan benches (Amanda Lindroth) create cozy nooks for guests to dive into a new book or enjoy a cup of tea from the shop's cafe. Near the townhouse's fireplaces, simple yet chic wooden displays can easily be moved out to make way for longer tables and chairs for private luncheons or dinners.

While most of the walls are dosed in a custom powder blue shade (Farrow & Ball) that glows in the sunlight, two of the small alcoves take on darker, moodier tones. The "Aesthetics" room stands out with its fiery red shelves (painted Rectory Red by Farrow & Ball) housing an impeccable selection of books on architecture, art, entertaining, fashion, interior design, and landscape. The "Around the World" section (focused

on both fiction and nonfiction travel books) stays within the blue color family with richer tones that recall scenes from the deep ocean.



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The miniature room by Brian Lies was inspired by the book, *Paige of Beacon Hill*.

No detail was overlooked as Kincaid called in a local artisans to add special final touches; a French woodcarver created custom carvings like paint palettes seen over many shelves, and a classic sign painter designed gold-leaf signs to denote the different genres of the 10,000 books making up the shop.

Meanwhile, Fetter went as far as commissioning award-winning author and illustrator Sarah S. Brannen to write a fictional children's book about a little squirrel that lives at Beacon Hill Books entitled, *Paige of Beacon Hill*. Brian Lies, also an award-winning children's book author and artist, created a miniature house inspired by Paige's adventures in the book. Made entirely by hand, the house features clever details that relate directly to Boston and the shop, such as a replica of the missing Rembrandt painting stolen from Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and wainscoting covered in Sister Parish's Bolero fabric. It's this attention to detail and care that went into Beacon Hill Books and Cafe that makes it a special bookstore and haven for all.

"It's not just a bookstore," says Kincaid. "It's a community resource that can function as an extension of one's home. I believe people will not just visit Beacon Hill books in Boston, but people will travel to Boston just to visit Beacon Hill Books! It will become a destination in its own right."

Beacon Hill Books and Cafe is open Tuesday-Saturday 9 a.m to 7 p.m. and Sunday 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.



SARAH DIMARCO
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Sarah DiMarco (she/her) is the associate editor at VERANDA, covering all things design, architecture, art, gardens, jewelry, travel, wine and spirits. She also manages social media for the brand.
