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■ FIT AND TRIM ■

WRITTEN BY **JORGE S. ARANGO**
 PHOTOGRAPHY BY **PETER MARGONELLI**

“I WANTED THE LIFE OF MY CHILDREN TO BE ACTIVE AND HEALTHY,” SAYS THE OWNER OF THIS HOME IN THE AFFLUENT NEW YORK SUBURBS OF WESTCHESTER. Not a surprising desire for a 45-year-old man who develops fitness clubs, hotels and condominiums for a living. For a while, he and his wife even contemplated moving their three rowdy kids, ages 8 to 14, to California. But they ultimately decided on the East Coast.

He bought a two-acre-plus property in conservative Armonk and called architect Carol Kurth, AIA, LEED AP, of The Office of Carol J.W. Kurth in Bedford, New York, to design a modern idyll. “I didn’t want it to look like a center-colonial mansion,” he recalls. “I wanted a flat-roofed house. But I was told by the town’s architectural review board and Carol that they would never approve a 1960s-style modern structure.” Another challenge, adds Kurth: “He gave us a very large program—main house, indoor pool, basketball court and lots of flowing spaces.”

The solution was an assemblage of interconnected buildings based on vernacular barn forms that looks more like a tiny village than a hulking behemoth parked on this suburban street. “By breaking down buildings into smaller scale,” says project manager John Rapetti, “we could break down the program.”

Their client, aesthetically fluent from years in hospitality design, proved rigorously discerning and extremely clear about his desires. “He’s a *tour de force*, with his own vision and a passion for design,” observes Kurth. “He’d stop in and spend two hours at John’s desk asking questions and exploring possibilities, which made it easier when it came time for construction. By then he knew every inch of this house.”

STYLE SELECTION

Designed by Gordon Guillaumier, this contemporary chair features a walnut frame and woven leather cover, making it the perfect complement to sleek, streamlined settings. *Pasmore, price available upon request; ddcnyc.com*



ARCHITECTURE Carol Kurth, AIA, LEED AP, The Office of Carol J.W. Kurth		
INTERIOR DESIGN Marie Aiello, Marie Aiello Design Studio, LLP		
HOME BUILDER Tom Yaroscak, Legacy Construction Northeast, LLC		
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE Scott Williams, Scott’s Landscaping & Nursery		
BEDROOMS 6	BATHROOMS 6	SQUARE FEET 7,000



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After close collaboration, the team reduced their palette to a handful of unpretentious materials: cedar shakes, copper, vertical barn siding, some clapboard, indigenous stone and solid walnut. Kurth and Rapetti layered these materials, alternating them to articulate specific structures. In true modernist tradition, a two-story stone wall moves from interior to exterior, creating a “spine” running the length of the house and separating front- and back-facing spaces. “We used traditional materials, but in modern iterations,” says Kurth, which is why the town’s review board pronounced the structure “refreshing,” and it eventually won an AIA design award.

POOL SHARK

A Connelly Billiard table takes center stage amid customized Erwin Hauer Continua architectural screens, bright M2L Little Apollo stools and Carbone & Vudafieri’s Cellula chandelier for Anthologie Quartett.

STONE HEARTED

A stone wall “spine” bisects the house into front- and back-facing rooms. Its organic quality is contrasted with a dramatic cantilevered concrete fireplace covered in encaustic plaster.



PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER KRUPENYE

BARN RAISING

The house is a combination of rural vernacular forms, each articulated by different materials—cedar shakes, vertical clapboard, New York State stone and copper work.



IT'S A WRAP

The living room's custom white sectional embraces a Noguchi low table set over The Rug Company's colorful Paul Smith rug, and a DDC woven leather chair. A TV is concealed behind Jason Poteet's *Clocks*, a painting from Vision Art Galleries.

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Landscape architect Scott Williams, of Scott's Landscaping & Nursery in New Milford, Connecticut, helped give the house context amid the conventional neighborhood backdrop. "I drew from modern painting, particularly Diebenkorn and Mondrian," says Williams. Using ground covers that would not spread beyond determined boundaries, he created "blocks of plantings," concentrating mostly on grasses or grass-like plants whose bushiness "softened and balanced all that hard wood and stone." These mass plantings function like Mondrian's grids and Diebenkorn's fractured planes of color, in this case filled in with contrasting textures and shades of green.

For the interiors, the client called on Marie Aiello, of Marie Aiello Design Studio, LLP, in Bronxville, New York, for support. "I knew 75 percent of what I wanted," he says. "I just needed someone who could understand my concepts, who would just sit with me and draw. It was also important that I use a woman because I wanted the house to have a feminine touch and a sexiness."

Egged on by her client, Aiello dove in. "He had no fear," she recalls, "so he let me push the envelope." For her, "It was about carrying your design throughout the house." For instance, she and her client devised multiple ways to incorporate walnut (in large-format panels on living room walls, smaller opposing-grain cubes around a pantry and on long horizontal planks in a gallery hallway).



DINING IN
 A sleek white Bulthaup kitchen has accents of cool stainless steel—Gino Sarfatti's customized 2097 chandelier for Flos and Harry Bertioia stools—as well as warm wood.



STAIR MASTER
 Walnut is the star in the stairwell, warming up the preponderance of stone with a grid of panels in contrasting grain that create a woven effect.

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Another guiding principle came from the hospitality industry—the “wow” factor, grand architectural gestures deployed to impress visitors. “I wanted to feel like I was living in a beautiful hotel-spa environment,” says the homeowner. “But I didn’t know how to translate that into a home.” Aiello and Kurth helped create equilibrium between impactful moments and a quieter continuity of natural materials. Arguably, the most spectacular example is a concrete cantilevered fireplace open on three sides, a feat so tricky that it required, says Rapetti, the expertise of a structural engineer. Other “wow” elements include sculptural Erwin Hauer room panels and a two-story wire mesh curtain subtly separating the living room and kitchen.



PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER KRÜPPE

SPLIT PERSONALITY

A stone wall separates the master bath, with its Bisazza tile walls and Michael Graves tub from Hoesch, from the master bedroom, which boasts a custom white leather bed against rich brown Venetian plaster.



PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER KRUPENY



EN PLEIN AIRE
The indoor pool goes *au naturel* with the help of glass sliders and a ceiling that partially retracts, opening it up to the elements.

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“But, at the end of the day, he’s a family man,” observes Aiello. “It was always, ‘How would my kids like this?’” Aside from the basketball court and indoor pool (a mosaic of fish set into its floor), the house is rife with child-friendly features: a water fountain, a kids lounge with built-in homework stations, a snack center in the pantry area, a home theater, and whimsical touches like a bubble chair and curtains with hand-applied decorative strings in the daughter’s room.

Of course, it springs from the imagination of a client who is young at heart himself. And, after all, what is passion anyway, when one thinks about it, but the blossoming of your earliest obsessions? **L**

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