



Jewel on *the* Lake

A design team's warm and storied vision
brings a Greenwich estate back down to earth.

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hen a couple in search of a country home near Manhattan stumbled across the Greenwich, Connecticut property of their dreams, it almost felt too good to be true—but not quite. While

the land itself, with its shared private lake and secluded woodland setting, was perfect, the early '90s house felt dated and showy, more glossy hotel than casually elegant country estate.

Both on their second marriages, with grown children, and grandchildren on the way, the couple had hoped for a place more befitting the picturesque setting—one that would also accommodate their large, blended family. On the verge of walking away, and upon the recommendation of their designer, Erik R. Smith, they called upon architect Eric J. Smith, who convinced them the bones could be wholly transformed.

Alongside general contractor Eamonn Ryan and his team of master tradespeople, the architect began by connecting the house to its surroundings. Key to that task was replacing the original stucco and limestone exterior façade with local fieldstone, inspired by the signature old stone walls of Connecticut, as well as the stately homes of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, where the husband spent the early part of his life.

Inside, rooms were reconfigured to create a greater sense of openness, flow and most importantly, connection to nature. A new window program fills the home with “enough natural light to not use lamps during the day, enhancing the story that the house could have been there for quite a while,” says Eric J. Smith. Most of the main rooms also now showcase glimpses of the lake—significantly, in the entry, where the architect created a main axis for views of the water. “You can see through the glass in the front door all the way to the lake,” he notes, adding, “that view acts like a great piece of art.”

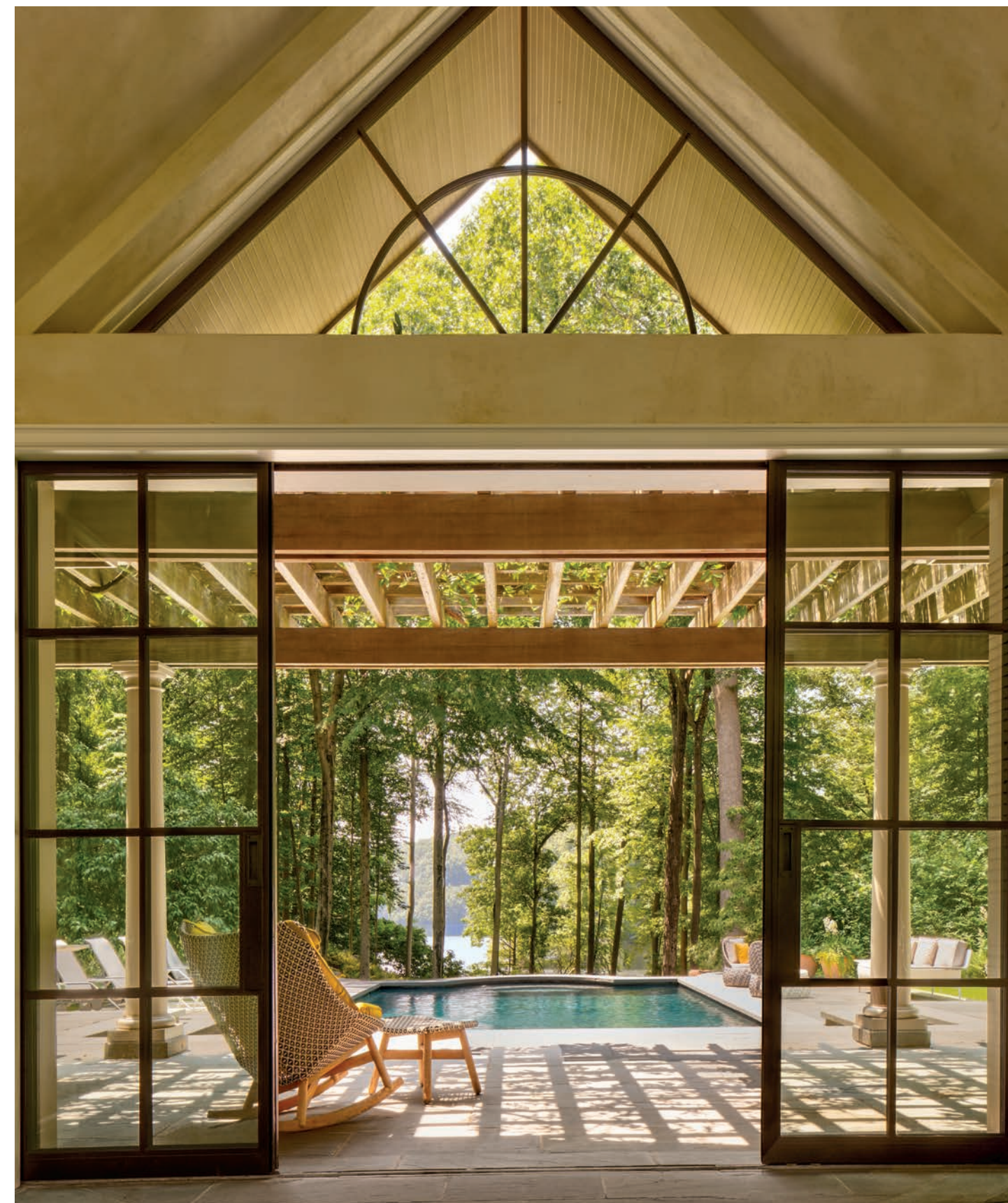
Alongside designer Erik R. Smith, the architect then altered all the interior finishes—plaster cove moldings, wood paneling, herringbone and oak planked floors—to reflect a more classical aesthetic. As a counterbalance to that formality, the pair also peppered the space with warm, tactile details, from reclaimed hemlock boards on the entry

walls to a textural handmade African wallcovering in the upper stair hall. Meanwhile, the dining room features an immersive hand-painted mural on burlap of the trees outside. “We wanted the material choices to be appropriate for a traditional structure, but to also feel approachable,” says Erik R. Smith. “The client didn’t want the home to feel too Greenwich-appropriate. She wanted something more relaxed, artistic and to her taste.”

Emblematic of this deeply personal spirit, a walk-through galley with three-sided, full-height glass cabinets was conceived to display the wife’s china and ceramics, part of a collection of heirlooms inherited from her mother and grandmother. A pantry off the dining room (where she loves to arrange flowers) offers additional artful china storage. “To me if you don’t see it, you don’t tend to use it,” she says, thrilled to see her beloved pieces liberated from boxes and closets.

Determined to do the same for the rest of her inherited treasures, Erik R. Smith breathed new life into piece after piece, restoring and reimagining them to live in harmony with a bevy of newly acquired antiques and custom contemporary furnishings. Infusing the house with color, pattern and artful touches, per the wife’s request, the designer also kept his eye toward practicality and comfort, which were paramount priorities for the husband. Every piece underwent rigorous testing. “They wanted pets to be welcome in every room and for people to feel they could put a glass down without destroying something,” says Erik R. Smith, who found unexpected ways to fuse utility with style. In the television room, for example, he used a marbled rubber material most commonly used on elevator floors to create tabletops that can withstand countless drinks (no coasters required).

During the deep days of quarantine, the home was put to the ultimate test when the extended family convened there for six months. From morning coffees in the cozy library and evening cocktails (served in vintage crystal glasses) in the Moroccan-inspired bar, to poolside lunches and kayaking on the lake, the many ways in which the family has enjoyed the property suggest it passed with flying colors. “The house now looks and feels as though it’s always been there. There’s a sense of permanence and solidness,” observes Eric J. Smith. “A sense that the house has seen generations of families come through.” ■



The pool house, a favorite gathering spot for the owners of this Greenwich, Connecticut home, boasts a prime view of the scenic property’s woods and secluded lake. Architect Eric J. Smith employed versatile steel-and-glass pocket doors to enable the space to swing between an enclosed eating area and open-air pavilion.



Designer Erik R. Smith drew from modern and traditional elements to give the living room an eclectic feel—including a custom sofa, vintage Italian armchairs, a 19th-century Ceylonese cane chair and a 1950s French coffee table. A Marie Suri fire screen dresses up an antique mantle from A&R Asta. The paintings are both by Katherine Bradford.

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Above: In the dining room, Brooklyn-based artist Patricia Arnillas hand-painted a mural, based on the surrounding woods, on a base of burlap and plaster. French iron chairs from the 1930s and an antique Italian console are grouped with a custom dining table. The antique French chandelier is an heirloom.

Opposite: The pantry showcases the wife's selection of mismatched inherited and purchased china plates in cabinetry fabricated by Grace, Ryan & Magnus Millwork, LLC. An antique pendant hangs above a bleached pine island with a zinc countertop, where she often arranges flowers from the garden.



Above: Painted millwork inset with gesso-weave wallpaper panels creates a cozy vibe in the den, which includes a sofa of Claremont fabric and Erik R. Smith-designed coffee tables with onyx marble tops. The photograph is by Tania Brassesco and Lazlo Passi Norberto.

Opposite: Paved with handmade Moroccan tiles, the wet bar features a laser-cut wood and colored plastic ceiling. A handmade ceramic pendant by artist Colleen Carlson and a tufted seat cushion covered in a striped fabric by Michael Smith contribute to the fun, eclectic vibe.

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Family heirlooms are peppered throughout the home, including a vintage pendant, a Biedermeier writing table and an antique mirror in the main bedroom. A cream Doris Leslie Blau rug and silk Fromental wallpaper craft a soft envelope, while a pair of Fritz Hansen club chairs dressed in a fuchsia stripe Schumacher fabric add a bold dash.



Overscale urns and creeping vines ornament the landscaping, whose lush design both Simon Johnson Landscape and Garden Design and Lear & Mahoney Landscape Associates contributed to. Perfectly placed, a Dedon daybed and loungers, and white Gloster chaises cater to relaxing by the pool.