

THE MODERN ESTATE™

NEW YORK / CONNECTICUT EDITION

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

SHADES OF GREEN | GETTING YOUR FEET WET | CLASSIC AMERICAN SHINGLE | MASTERPIECE MANSIONS



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Jackie Jaques Bill Thomas ▶

CONTRIBUTORS

"There comes a time for each of us to hang our hat on the hook and look back on what we did with our lives," says Jackie Jaques, who, with her husband, Bill Thomas, wrote "Shades of Green," on page 84. Bill and Jackie have spent 45 (combined) years in the construction and home-improvement industry. Concern about the damage our planet has absorbed has prompted them to devote their careers to helping clients live green. They design homes that use eco-friendly materials; build houses using those materials; and sell, in their showroom, green materials ranging from flooring and cabinetry to energy-saving products. Even their four children (ranging in age from 6 to 17) are involved: The children's business, Seeds of Green LLC, uses school events to promote eco-awareness and the virtues of recycling.



◀ Stuart Disston

Stuart Disston, AIA, one of three partners at Austin Patterson Disston Architects, has served as the project architect and manager on many residential, commercial, interiors, and institutional projects in the tristate area. His designs for residences in Quogue, Lyme, New Canaan, Westport, and Rowayton have won his firm awards from AIA Connecticut, a statewide chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Stuart's work on a Shingle Style residence (he has long been an admirer of that architectural style—as his article "Classic American Shingle", on page 106, reflects) recently earned Austin Patterson Disston an AIA design award. The award includes a statement from jury member Terence Riley, curator of architecture at the Museum of Modern Art, in New York, that aptly describes the firm's philosophy: "At a moment when many architects are interested in history, this is a rare house to hit a note of authenticity and not simply stylistic revival. The architect knows the traditional language of architecture and deploys it quite well, and also knows when to slow down."

Charles ▶
F. Hilton



Charles F. Hilton, a partner at Hilton-VanderHorn Architects, based in Greenwich, Connecticut, graduated from the Pennsylvania State University with distinction in 1988. An avid boater and fisherman with a lifelong appreciation of fine traditional architecture, Charles has designed a wide variety of traditional waterfront residences, in styles ranging from Cabin to Shingle to Georgian to Mediterranean, not only in Fairfield and Westchester counties but across the northeastern United States. See his article entitled "Getting Your Feet Wet" on page 96, warning of the complexities that homeowners will face if they decide to build on the waterfront. His firm's work has been featured on HGTV and in two brand-new books: *Dream Home: Metro New York* (Panache Partners LLC) and *Shingle Style Houses: Past and Present* (Schiffer Publishing).



◀ Terry Sullivan

Terry Sullivan trained at the renowned interior design firm Parish-Hadley. Prior to that, she had received a B.A. in interior design and decorative arts and had completed a Decorative Arts and Architecture program in Paris with the Parsons School of Design. She now collaborates with architects, contractors, antiquarians, and craftsmen to create unique custom interiors for her varied clients. She has participated as a designer in several decorator show houses, including the Greenwich Designer Show House, sponsored by the Junior League, and the "Rooms with a View" Show House, in Southport, chaired by Albert Hadley. She often custom-designs wallpapers, fabrics, carpets, and upholstery for her clients; her aim is to create warm, lovely, contemplative rooms for them to enjoy. To her article "The Beauty of Life" on page 51, Terry brings her love of the old gardens, Old Master drawings, natural fabrics, and beautiful craftsmanship.

Vincent Tyer ▶



For 20 years, Taconic Builders, a firm with offices in Westchester County, New York City, Long Island, East Hampton, and Seattle, Washington, has been building dream homes and renovating landmark buildings for an elite group of architects and homeowners. The company's president, Vincent Tyer, who holds a master's degree in business administration from New York University and has had management experience at an international conglomerate, joined the firm in 2000. Under his leadership, revenues have increased from \$5 million to more than \$90 million a year and the staff has expanded from 12 to more than 150. Those staffers know where to find beautiful specialty materials (granite, marble, wood, tile) and superior craftspeople (wood carvers, metalworkers, joiners, stonemasons) wherever in the world they happen to be. His article, "Sources of Enhancement," on page 43, offers our readers a primer on how they, too, can track these artisans down.



SOURCES OF ENHANCEMENT

Savvy contractors know how to search the wide world for the rarest marbles and granites, the most painstaking joiners, woodworkers, metal-forgers, and stone-carvers | BY VINCENT TYER AND ROBERT TROSTLE

LONGING FOR MILLWORK FIT FOR A KING to embellish your new estate? How about marble flooring with an international pedigree, or iron gates elegant enough for an ancient château? Often, what differentiates one fine home from another is the provenance of the materials that form and enhance it—the place where they were harvested, quarried, or fabricated. True, the Internet has made the world's resources available at the touch of a keyboard. Today, when homeowners and architects design a luxury residence, they can search the world for exotic treasures, treatments, and techniques. Yet even with this global tool they must do seri-

ous detective work to locate these often hard-to-find resources.

Tapping a contractor who can both act as an advocate and ultimately get the job done is a critical step in the building of a luxury home. Some of the finest materials must be sourced internationally, where the indigenous (and sustainable) wood is grown, for instance, or the rarest granites and marbles are quarried. And superior craftsmanship is often found at lesser-known international specialty firms. These firms, which focus on woodcarving, metalworking, intricate stone inlay, or ornate plaster casting, use the same techniques that artisans have employed for hundreds of years. To build the



TOP: A fine reproduction of hand-crafted antique hardware with gilded accents. Unique hardware is often a signature of superb renovation. **ABOVE:** This intricate lattice was hand-carved from solid oak, giving it almost timeless durability.



LEFT: The restoration/conversion of a historic New York chapel (circa 1884) to a private residence included bringing these complicated ceiling vaults back to their original grandeur.

ABOVE: A study was created by constructing a loft. The focal point is a custom limestone mantel and arch.

ultimate modern estate, a homeowner needs a builder with experience working with the most exclusive materials and methods and—above all—the right international Rolodex.

To understand how complicated international sourcing can be, consider the request a well-known architect made to our firm, Taconic Builders. He had designed a unique floor as part of a multi-million-dollar residence. Conceptualized to resemble a carpet, the design featured an intricate floral pattern done in marble. The difficulty lay in trying to capture the fine details—the shading and the varying colors and sizes of the flowers—with the machinery available in the U.S.

In fact, the type of marble inlay required for this floor is done best by hand. So Taconic Builders went abroad to get the handwork done. We partnered with a local entrepreneur and importer of exotic materials from India; its craftsmen there could do the painstaking work. Once the design was finalized, full-size drawings and wood templates were made as models and shipped to India. This true-to-life scale ensured that the product, when delivered to the home site, would fit, eliminating the potential for error. The stone was sourced from India, Greece, and Portugal; the baseboards were fabricated in the U.S. In India, the individual pieces were worked by hand into the solid marble and assembled; finally they were shipped back for installation. The global enterprise took nine months.

Sometimes it is a particular design direction that drives the international sourcing. Many “hid-



ABOVE: Red hot, just out of the forge, this iron door hinge exactly matches others in a restored mansion in Europe.

A French artisan uses a centuries-old technique to pound out this reproduction—so appropriate to the period.

den gem” fabricators and suppliers can provide authentic resources for modern estates. For instance, the châteaux of France have captured the imagination of luxury homeowners since America was founded. For a project that requires period design from France, Ateliers Perrault Frères (established in 1760), a metal- and woodworking firm based in Brittany, has an impeccable lineage and is responsible for much of the major restoration of the country’s castles. This firm can provide handcarved wooden screens, traditionally joined wooden doors and panels, and handcrafted latches and hardware to complete the look (www.ateliersperrault.fr/english/entreprise.html). Ornamental metalwork can also be ordered from Les Métalliers Champenois (renovators of the Statue of Liberty’s flame). If they can’t fabricate what is needed in their shop here in Paterson, New

Jersey (www.L-M-C.com), they can always turn to their parent company in France (which has the same Web site). Bricard of Paris, founded in 1782 (www.decorative-french-locks.com/english/bienvenue.htm), has one-of-a-kind French locks and cremones. Those researching locks or doorknockers for American estates should consult the Web site of the Bricard Museum (Musée de la Serrurerie-Bricard; www.paris.org/Musees/Serrurerie), in Paris. The museum showcases the history of locks and features items that the firm has manufactured for castles and châteaux throughout Europe.

Of course, international sourcing has its share of difficulties and complexities. Language, different time zones, currency fluctuations, geopolitical situations, cultural differences, and local holidays must be built into equations and schedules. Also, when materials are coming from overseas, adequate time must be added to the schedule for transportation and for clearing of customs. And then there is always the unforeseen. What happens if the long-shoremen go on strike while a container is in transit? Choosing a contractor who is knowledgeable about sourcing rare materials and techniques and who can navigate the intricacies of international trade will determine whether your home will be simply a big house or your castle. **TME**

Vincent Tyler is CEO, and **Robert Trostle** is a senior project manager, at Taconic Builders, a luxury estate builder with offices in Westchester, New York City, Long Island, East Hampton, and Seattle, Washington. 914.698.7456; vttyer@taconicbuilders.com.