



family values.

WRITTEN BY JORGE S. ARANGO | PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICK JOHNSON

HOUSES NECESSARILY MORPH TO ACCOMMODATE THE NEEDS OF GROWING FAMILIES. An addition here, a renovation there, and pretty soon you're looking at a pastiche that feels cobbled together rather than cohesive. Of course, there's a certain eccentric charm to this kind of structure. But, practically speaking, it doesn't function too efficiently.

Such was the case with this Weston, Connecticut, weekend retreat of a fifty-something couple—he a movie producer, she a philanthropist—with four children ranging from 4 to 20 years old. “As our oldest son got taller, he couldn't stand up in his shower because of the eaves,” recalls his mother. “Somehow, we went to renovate the bathroom and, before we knew it, we were taking off whole sides of the house.”

Interior designer Elissa Cullman, who oversaw the decoration with her senior designer Lee Cavanaugh, recalls the husband joking, “The only thing I'm left with is my address and phone number.” But, a full-scale renovation was really



STYLE SELECTION
Glazed in a pale-green terra cotta finish, this French baroque-style lion casts a watchful eye with raised paws resting on a regal shield. *French Baroque-Style Terra Cotta Seated Lion*, \$6,800 for pair; epocasf.com

INTERIOR DESIGN	Elissa Cullman and Lee Cavanaugh, Cullman & Kravis, Inc.
ARCHITECTURE	Elliott Rosenblum, Izumi Shepard and Jason J. Hwang, Rosenblum Architects
HOME BUILDER	Jim Hanley, Taconic Builders
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	Wesley Stout, Wesley Stout Associates
BEDROOMS 7	BATHROOMS 11
SQUARE FEET 20,000	



PHOTO FINISH

Candida Höfer's monumental C-print of a palace convent fills the wall behind the living room's Chanel sofa from Anthony Lawrence-Belfair, covered in Zimmer & Rohde fabric. Antiques (a French circa 1815 side table and 19th-century armchairs) mix with new items, such as a Todd Alexander Romano coffee table and a Beauvais chenille and rayon area rug.



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the only way to adequately satisfy the present-day requirements of the family. "They're city people who come to the country," explains Cullman. "They wanted to have everything in one place so their friends and their children's friends could visit."

Translation? Lots of sleeping quarters, as well as all the modern amenities necessary to keep the younger residents entertained. But the wife worried: "In doing such a large project you often lose the intimacy. I didn't want to sacrifice the feeling of charm the old house had, and I most definitely didn't want it to be a showpiece."

To sensitively super-size the home's country French *maison* atmosphere (square footage basically doubled), the owners brought in the late architect Elliott Rosenblum, who spearheaded the architectural design along with his partner, Izumi Shepard (currently with John B. Murray Architect) and project architect Jason J. Hwang (today head of his own namesake practice) under the now-extinct firm Rosenblum Architects.

PALATIAL PORTAL

Simple sconces from Remains Lighting illuminate the entry, which is flanked by a pair of Julius Lowy mirrors above two Thomas Messel leather consoles. Faux limestone walls painted by Mark Uriu frame the oval parquet de Versailles floor. NE & WS Metalworks executed architect Jason Hwang's ornate iron banister design.



WINGING IT

Almost nothing of the original structure remains, though the architects did work with the existing footprint. The octagonal sunroom to the right, as well as a wing off to the left, are completely new. Outdoor spaces extend the already doubled square footage even further during warmer months.



DISTINGUISHED PANEL

Hallmark Woodworkers wrapped the library in warm oak millwork. Designers Elissa Cullman and Lee Cavanaugh commissioned Sterling Upholstery to make the extra-long sofa, covered in Kravet fabric. The photo is a work by Elger Esser titled *Fraisans*. Underfoot is a wool plaid carpet by Stark, while a circa 1860 chandelier hangs above.



EASY ACCESS

Architect Izumi Shepard designed the formal bar, which is swathed in millwork executed by Hallmark Woodworkers. It is centrally located off the foyer, living room and dining room so that it can easily service all three spaces during cocktail parties or preceding sit-down dinners.

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“We used a lot of wood, a key element in country French homes,” explains Shepard. “We also brought in stone and wrought iron, and we distressed new beams to make them look old.” To humanize the newly taller interior spaces, she adds, the team designed white oak ceilings in various rooms, alternating their form—a diamond-shaped grid in the dining room, rectangles in the living room, imposing Gothic trusses in the family room—thereby imbuing each with unique character.

Hwang slaved over the vast oval foyer (30 feet across at its longest and 35 feet high) to ensure the stairway did not mar its perfect elliptical swoop. He sought inspiration for the custom banister from photographs he’d taken of Parisian ironwork. Additionally, Hwang designed millwork with lots of furniture details to instill even more warmth in certain rooms.



LOOKING GLASS

The home—a traditional brick Georgian design—boasts generous windows and French doors that enhance the communion between indoor and outdoor. The grounds were planned and planted by Wesley Stout Associates to create attractive yet naturalistic views all around.

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Seeking a balance between comfort and sophistication, Cullman and Cavanaugh took the owners shopping in France, where they purchased mantels, chandeliers, antiques—even a 1920s zinc-topped bar from Marché Serpette for the billiards room. These were complemented with the modern comfort of oversize upholstered pieces. Also, remembers Cavanaugh, to sidestep a stuffy period aesthetic, “The clients embraced the idea of modern, large-scale photography, which is what gives the house a slight contemporary edge.” Collaborating with art consultant Lorinda Ash, the designers assembled works by Candida Höfer, Robert Polidori, Clifford Ross and other heavy hitters.



WELL ROUNDED

The sunroom is “a very exciting room architecturally,” says the wife, who spends most of her time there. It is filled with generously proportioned wicker furniture from Palecek, as well as bamboo armchairs from Mecox Gardens. The spectacular chandelier is an upscaled version of a Paul Ferrante design.



TO THE RAFTERS

The family room is filled with interesting contrasts: neo-Gothic trusses above a quilt-like Beauvais carpet; a modern coffee table from Mecox Gardens with a custom chandelier from Murray's Iron Works overhead; and neutrally upholstered furniture (sofas in Cowtan & Tout; chairs in Norbar) against colorful works from Clifford Ross's *Harmonium* series.



WILD LIFE

An antique zinc bar from Marché Serpette in Paris and a Blatt billiard table occupy a section of the family room. Howard Kaplan provided the billiard light, while a Joe Andoe horse painting references the children's equestrian interests. Under everything is a carpet designed by Cullman & Kravis.

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"Every room is a room you can lie down and read a book in," says the wife happily. Even the über-sophisticated living room? "Well, Elissa is basically a formal woman and you can only push her so far," she concedes jokingly. "She was willing to be more floppy in other rooms, but because the living room is the first room you see, it had to be elegant and perfect."

Still, grandiosity was clearly kept at bay. And with added amenities (such as a bowling alley, movie theater, arcade room, miniature playground with built-in trampoline, etc.) it's easy to see that this home, no matter how immense, is about relaxing with beloved family and friends. "Basically," says Cullman, "they never have to leave the house." **L**