

# CTC & G

Connecticut Cottages and Gardens

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NEW SEASON OF  
STYLE





**Room With A View**  
(THIS SPREAD) The great room opens onto the swimming pool, which is surrounded by Italian limestone and lovely gardens. The chaises are from Pavilion Furniture. See Resources.

# ABOVE + BEYOND

A NEW WEEKEND HOUSE GIVES THE OWNERS  
EVEN MORE THAN THEY EXPECTED

BY ELENA BOWES | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELLEN MCDERMOTT





**Outdoor Elan** (THIS PHOTO) The gardens of this weekend getaway were designed by Louis Fusco Landscape Architects. **Living Well** (BELOW LEFT TO RIGHT) In the great room, a chandelier through Corbett Lighting illuminates Tomlinson sofas and chairs; the handknotted rug is from Exquisite Rugs. Semicircle black matte hardware by Richelieu makes a statement on cabinet doors. **Double The Fun** (OPPOSITE PAGE) The kitchen has two islands topped with Quartzite Taj Mahal from Stonehenge Marble & Granite. Vanguard Furniture stools are upholstered in Designer's Guild blue leather, the pendants are from Hubbardton Forge, and the backsplash tile is from Artistic Tile. See Resources.



# W

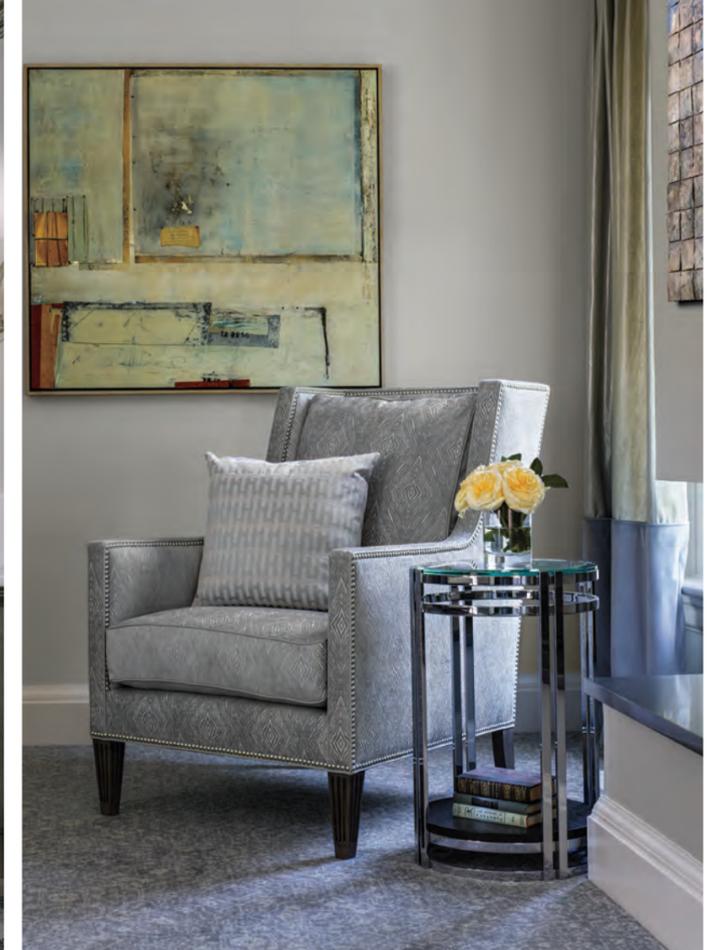
**HEN A NEW YORK COUPLE** inherited a weekend house in Litchfield County a few years ago, they turned to their friend and designer Denise Balassi of South Salem-based Spaces of Distinction for advice. Initially, they planned to renovate the modest 1950s house, but after showing Balassi some early architectural drawings and their wish list for the property, the designer recommended a different approach. "Perhaps it would be more cost effective to tear the house down," she suggested. After some thought, the couple agreed. "The house needed so many modifications and improvements that it made more sense to start from scratch," notes the husband. At the top of their wish list: having an elegant but cozy home where they could comfortably entertain friends and family (including young grandchildren), a smart house that could be managed remotely from an iPhone, a quiet space for the husband (who works in publishing) to retreat and read, and probably the most challenging item on the list, space to properly display his parents' vast and varied art collection.

"My parents, primarily my father, bought whatever they liked," he explains. "My father built a huge diverse collection of American Indian art and African art." The eclectic collection also includes some big-name artists like Chagall, Calder, Christo, Picasso, Motherwell and Chihuly. Balassi began by assembling a team of builders, architects and landscape designers, including James T. Best Architect + Associates, Louis Fusco Landscape Architects and once the house was built, Neal McDonough, a New Jersey-based art handler. The architect re-sited the house on the 11-acre wooded property to capture sunlight throughout the day—the bedrooms getting the morning light, the screened-in porch receiving the afternoon light, and the kitchen and living room bathing in light throughout the day. "The house itself was designed to showcase the art collection," says Balassi. More than 100 works of art needed to find a home. "We didn't see the art in person until the installation," she adds. "It was all held in storage." Armed with only a catalog detailing sizes, values and some imagery, Balassi needed



WALLPAPER  
SOFTENS  
THE WALLS OF  
THE GALLERY AND  
THE DINING ROOM,  
WHILE **MILLWORK**  
**ON THE DINING**  
**ROOM CEILING**  
**DELINEATES IT**  
**FROM THE GALLERY.**  
THE COLOR SCHEME  
OF THE HOUSE IS  
**A PALETTE OF WARM**  
**BLUES, GRAYS**  
**AND TAUPES WITH**  
**POPS OF COLOR**

**Elegant Setting** Glass candleholders from Wildwood top a custom walnut dining room table, manufactured by Dan Parish, that is surrounded by Dorya chairs. The chandelier and sconces are from Fine Art Handcrafted Lighting, and the mirror and fireplace screen are from Uttermost. See [Resources](#).



**Inside Stories** (CLOCKWISE ACROSS SPREAD FROM ABOVE) Textured Osborne & Little wallpaper softens the walls of the gallery, staircase and dining room. A painting by Alexander Calder hangs outside the powder room, where a Currey & Company chest was converted into a vanity; the mirror is from Uttermost. The armchair in the primary bedroom is from Vanguard Furniture and is upholstered in a Robert Allen pattern. The pendant lights in the primary bathroom are from ET2 Lighting. In the primary bedroom, the headboard is covered in Vanguard's velvet pattern Vesna slate with silver nailhead trim. The crystal and bronze bedside lamp is from John-Richard. See Resources.

to figure out what should go where. Her clients wanted the most valuable works hung in the gallery, so she ensured it had maximum wall space with lighting specially designed to highlight the art. Also in Balassi's remit were several sculptures, including two life-size bronze horses, an antique carousel and a wooden coyote.

Instead of a formal living room, the couple preferred a more casual great room—something fun, not too serious. "I knew the house would be large," says the wife, "but I wanted it to be cozy. Denise is such a fantastic designer. She ended up giving us exactly what we wanted." When visitors enter the house, they look directly into the great room with its 20-foot cathedral ceilings, and then through to the swimming pool and gardens beyond. Every room on the first floor, except the kitchen, has doors leading out onto the terrace.

To achieve the elegant-but-cozy look her clients desired, Balassi used natural

finishes to create warmth, especially in the great room with its towering proportions. For the fireplace, a limestone mantel surround is complemented by ash-wood shelves. "The furnishings are appropriately scaled so that the furniture isn't overbearing or underwhelming," says Balassi. Wallpaper softens the walls of the gallery and the dining room, while millwork on the dining room ceiling delineates it from the gallery. The color scheme of the house is a palette of warm blues, grays and taupes with pops of color.

At the project's big reveal, the wife walked through the door and burst into tears of joy; the husband was similarly impressed. "When we first started, I wanted a one-room log cabin," he jokes. "We ended up with a large home that's like a resort. Our friends and family come up every weekend. It's just a wonderful place for people to gather and have a nice time. And we were friends with Denise when we started—we're even better friends now." ✨

