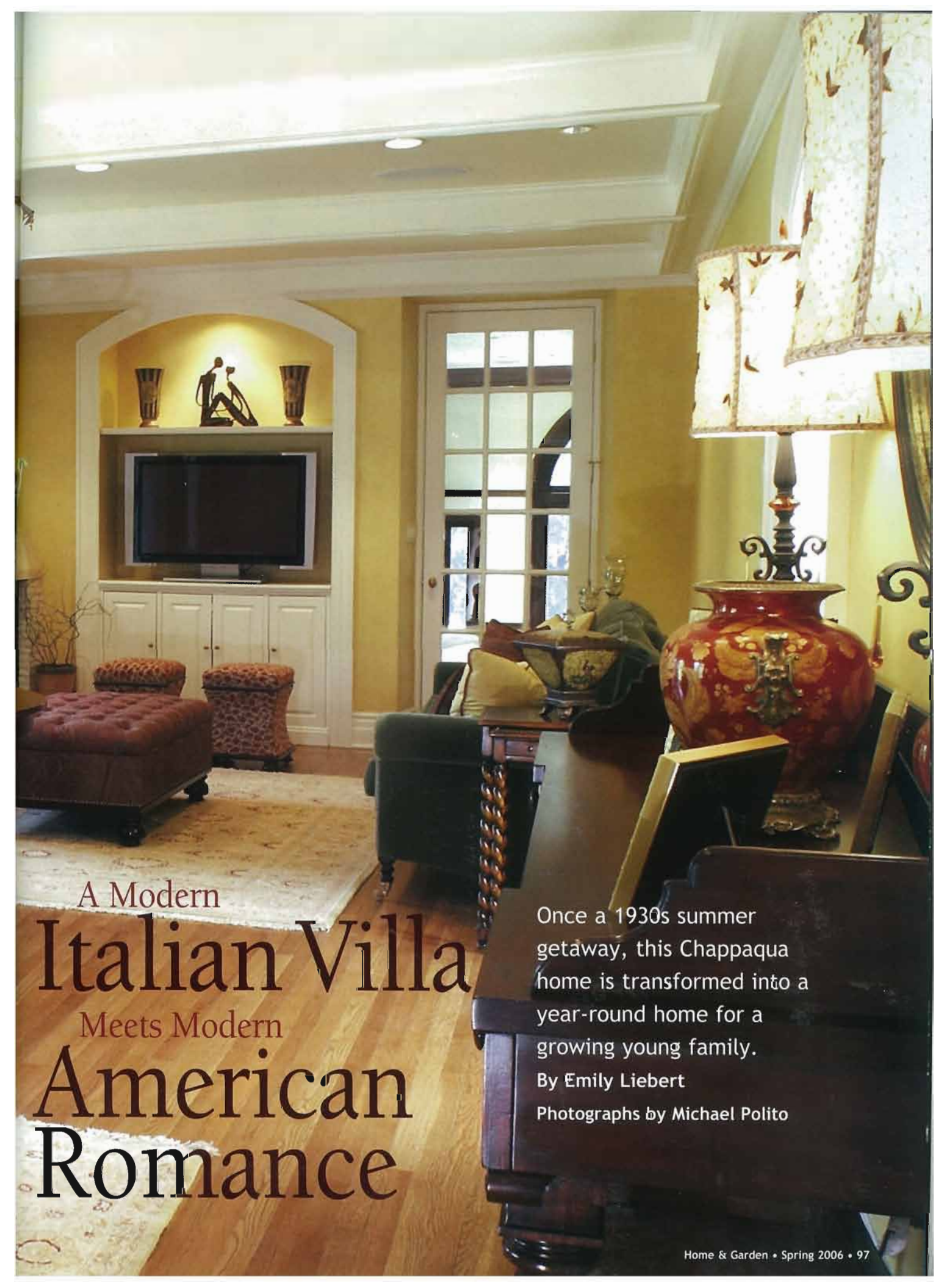


The salon spans the entire width of the house—32 feet.
Beams hide sprinkler pipes.





A Modern
Italian Villa
Meets Modern
**American
Romance**

Once a 1930s summer getaway, this Chappaqua home is transformed into a year-round home for a growing young family.

By Emily Liebert

Photographs by Michael Polito

hen New York City investment banker and bachelor Donald Truesdale set his sights on a 3,700-square-foot, 14-room country home in Chappaqua eight years ago, the town's first-rate school system wasn't even a consideration. "Initially, I didn't find enough land there, so I shifted my search to Bedford and Pound Ridge," Truesdale says. "Then, my broker found a 'unique Tuscan home with a lot of privacy,' and I was sold."

That was before he met his wife, Christina, a California transplant who was living in Manhattan and working for the promotions and licensing division of the Cartoon Network. "A few months after I met Don, he decided to update the kitchen and the master bedroom," says the now stay-at-home mom. "We'd come up on weekends. He started saying things like, 'This is our house,' and I was thinking, 'No, it's *your* house.' But it became clear that the relationship was progressing quickly."

That's when they—together—started interviewing architects. "We screened about five different firms in the area and decided on Mark LePage and Annmarie McCarthy of Fivecat Studio [in Armonk] because we really liked their spunk and their drive," says Christina. "Annmarie seemed exceptionally focused, as if it was her own house."

What ensued was a whirlwind romance, a spectacular at-home wedding for 150, the births of the Truesdales' daughter Camilla (today 2) and son Calder (5 months), and a four-year-long renovation of the Westchester residence that they now occupy full time.

The home is a modern interpretation of a traditional Italian villa set on two-and-a-half acres. Built in the 1930s—the beginning of the modern period—the house was a pared-down version of a Mediterranean, but still

possessed many of the traditional qualities of the style, such as a tile roof, stucco walls, casement windows, and iron railings.

The original owners, a prominent family by the name of Ginsburg, maintained the beauty of the property and made extensive improvements to

The previous owners "obviously took great pride to build and maintain a spectacular but simple home on a truly unique parcel of land with wonderful landscaping. It's my hope that if they looked at the property today, they would recognize it."

the landscape. "Mrs. Ginsburg was a renowned gardener, and people traveled from all over to see her work," says McCarthy. World travelers, the Ginsburgs returned from their journeys with some innovative ideas, particularly for the Japanese garden.

Don installed a swimming pool and did a bit of landscaping around the house after the construction, but essentially left Ginsburg's beautiful outdoor landscape intact. "They obviously took great pride to build and maintain a spectacular but simple home on a truly unique parcel of land with wonderful landscaping," Don says. "It's my hope that if they looked at the property today, they would recognize it."

(Opposite page, top) The front of the house. (Opposite bottom) The back of the house, with its pool.





Once an exterior porch with cement walls and screens, the garden room enjoys views of the Japanese garden outside. Expansive windows, Jerusalem limestone floors, and mahogany woodwork ease the transition from inside the house to the outdoors.







Modern Italian Villa

As for the house itself, that's a different story altogether. The finished product—a 6,500-square-foot home with 23 rooms (four bedrooms, four full baths, and two half-baths)—was a massive undertaking, a collaboration between the Truesdales and Mark and Annmarie, who are also married and have become close friends of the couple. "When we first started renovating, Don and I weren't even engaged," says Christina. "Our priorities have changed. The upstairs nursery was originally going to be Don's office. What is now the playroom was then going to serve as his office. Finally, what became the media room was going to be his office." The office is still in the planning stages.

The original vision—to enlarge the small, galley-like kitchen and garage—was soon an afterthought. In addition to these changes, the Truesdales relocated the main entrance, which was located on the basement level in the original house. A front "tower" was created, with stairs leading guests to the main level to enter the home through a proper foyer with Italian marble floors. Once Christina was pregnant, the couple moved forward with two children's bedrooms (one is a nursery with an enchanting woodland creatures mural on the walls).

Once a screened-in porch, a garden room with Jerusalem limestone floors and rich, mahogany woodwork amid hues of cream and gold, was created. Velvet and silk paisley fabrics enhance the semi-formal furniture from George Smith. Under an opulent rock crystal, oval-shaped chandelier, the dining table can seat 12. There's a media room with theater seats and an exercise room, which Christina confesses is her favorite spot, second only to the sitting area in her master bedroom.

(Opposite page, top) The master bedroom swathed in earth tones. (Opposite page, bottom) The kitchen with its custom-designed antique-white cabinets and Viking range. Its marble floors are from Klaff's in South Norwalk and verde vecchio counters were found at Walker Zanger in Mount Vernon.



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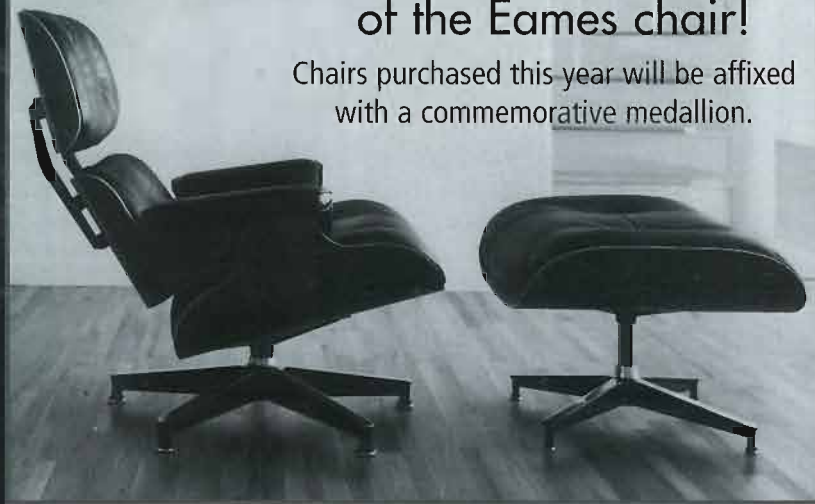


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The master bath, with its Carrera marble and soothing blue tones. A stained glass window above the Jacuzzi was inspired by a quatrefoil window in the front tower.

Swathed in earth tones, the master suite takes on an old-world elegance with hand-painted wood furniture, a stained glass window, Pratesi bedding, and a lavishly large walk-in closet, where Christina can apply her makeup at a vanity overlooking the garden. The closet isn't the only luxury Christina put on her list: the marble bathroom features a custom-designed sink console from Urban Archeology in New York City, a Jacuzzi bath, and steam shower.

"I can't wait to use the Jacuzzi," Christina says. "I want to shut the door and have a nice bath and a glass of wine. I was pregnant when we moved in, so I couldn't have either one. And I still haven't found the time!"

One area Christina does find time to enjoy is her kitchen. The kitchen—which was once situated where the cur-



rent dining is situated—has custom-designed antique white cabinets in maple, designed by Fivecat Studio and built by Woodworking Loft in Winsted, CT. Her top-of-the-line appliances include a Viking range and Sub-Zero refrigerator.

With the help of decorator Maja Lithander Smith for Alegria Designs, formerly of New York City and now based in San Francisco, the Truesdales replaced every piece of furniture. “We figured that we were putting so much time and effort into this house that we wanted all the furniture to be exactly what we wanted. None of the pieces that we had before really worked, so we donated it all,” says Christina. “We had interviewed several big-time decorators and realized that we just didn’t want a designer who says, ‘I choose the color on the wall. I choose your china.’ I wanted to be a big part of it. Annmarie was involved with everything, right down to the paint shades and the bathroom tiles.”

With her “team,” Christina was able to



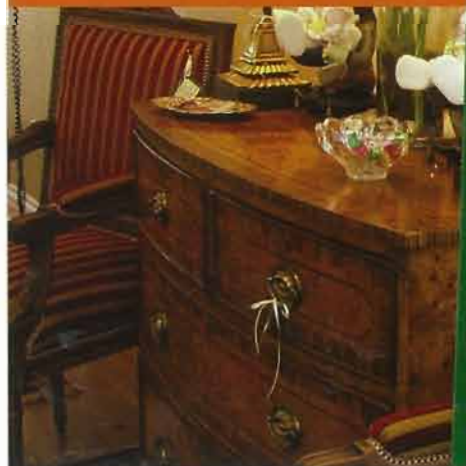
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Modern Italian Villa

establish her themes—Mediterranean, luxury, and comfort—which were realized through multiple trips to George Smith, Julia Gray, the D&D Building, and the New York Design Center. Fabrics are from Coraggio, Nobilis, and Schumacher helped create the feeling she was after.

“With young kids running around, we didn’t want a lot of antiques,” says Christina. “We don’t have much art either, because we’re just starting.”

The flow of the home is deliberate. “The sequencing of events was very important,” says McCarthy. “From the time you pull into the driveway, moving up the front stairs, coming in the door to

“I can’t wait to use the Jacuzzi. I want to shut the door and have a nice bath and a glass of wine. I was pregnant when we moved in, so I couldn’t have either one. And I still haven’t found the time.”

the foyer, you have a straight visual shot through the whole house into the backyard, which is fairly rare. The kitchen is a little bit more private, set off to the side. Depending on how Christina and Don choose to entertain, they can keep the garden room or the salon open or bring guests right out into the pool area. So it was very much a conscious attempt to set up how people would view each room and where their eyes would go next.”

Christina agrees. “It’s definitely a very different house than most in the area. Many are Colonial and compartmentalized, whereas ours is open.” And pausing to reflect for a moment, she adds, “The house has been a constant in our relationship. It’s always been a happy place for us, a special spot.” **H&G**

Emily Liebert is a writer based in New Rochelle.