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Connecticut Cottages and Gardens

COTTAGESGARDENS.COM | MARCH 2018



AT HOME WITH
ARCHITECTURE

SIMPLE AND ELEGANT DESIGN ELEVATES A BACKCOUNTRY HOME
WHILE EMBRACING NATURE

BY JAMIE MARSHALL | PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL MORAN/OTTO

MODERN LOVE

AS SEEN IN
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Open & Inviting A new home by Amanda Martocchio Architecture has exterior walls in a mix of white and dark cladding over rainscreen by Equitone and custom anthracite panels from VM Zinc. The custom front door made of American black walnut is through Fontrick Door with hardware by Rocky Mountain Hardware. See [Resources](#).



Artful Arrangement
 (RIGHT) A sitting area features Poliform club chairs upholstered in Pollack's Accolade around a Dennis Miller Associate's ottoman in Edelman Leather's Cavallini Vanilla. A work by Yolanda Sanchez through Kenise Barnes Fine Art adds a colorful pop to the art wall. **Feast Of Design** (BELOW) In the dining area, a chandelier through Roll & Hill makes a statement above chairs from Design Within Reach and a custom walnut dining table. Kitchen countertops from Pentalquartz complement cerused-oak kitchen cabinetry. Miele appliances, a Liebherr refrigerator and Bosch cooktop are all through Aitoro Appliance & Electronics. See *Resources*.



Spacious Seating In the living room (TOP AND ABOVE), Minotti's Williams sofa and Blake club chair and ottoman invite relaxing, while a Holly Hunt cocktail table and golden bronze reading lamp add a minimalist vibe. The anthra-zinc paneled gas fireplace is through Heat & Glo; custom Venetian plaster walls are by Heidi Holzer. The custom wool and bamboo silk area rug is through Gary Cruz Studio, and the trio of totems are by Norwalk artist Sandy Garnett. See *Resources*.

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ANY EMPTY NESTERS sell large family homes and move closer to town. This couple went the opposite direction: They sold their five-bedroom waterfront home and

built a three-bedroom modern on two acres in the woods. Initially, a modern house wasn't even on their radar screen. "When I first saw the property with its 1960s ranch, I was ready to turn around and drive away," says the husband. The wife had a different reaction. "I loved the setting and location," she says. "I thought it had great potential."

The husband has worked in the energy business for years, and they had long toyed with the idea of lowering their carbon footprint. After buying the two-acre property, they lived in the existing house for about six months, while they developed a game plan. Besides energy efficiency, they wanted an open-floor plan, a relaxed environment with plenty of space for informal entertaining, and a strong connection to the outdoors. The couple tasked New Canaan-based architect Amanda Martocchio with bringing their vision to life. "We decided to embrace the whole modern thing," notes the husband.

"My clients are a classic example of empty nesters looking for an alternative lifestyle, where less is more," notes the architect. To that end, Martocchio conceived a design that is both simple and elegant, incorporating handcrafted





Pool Party (THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE) A James Doyle–designed landscape complements the pool, which the architect reconfigured from a 1960s-style kidney shape into a simple rectangle. A Kettal Maia club chair and ottoman sit alongside the outdoor water feature, which has a stainless steel spout from Bobe Water & Fire Features. The deck is made of sustainably harvested Machiche from Mataverde Decking and rimmed with Pennsylvania bluestone. See *Resources*.

THE NEW CONCRETE- AND STEEL-FRAMED HOME IS SPREAD ACROSS ONE LIVING SPACE WITH WINGS ON EITHER SIDE

materials and custom pieces throughout. Sited on the original footprint, the new 4,500-square-foot concrete- and steel-framed home is spread across one living space with wings on either side. “The shape echoes a big hug,” she explains. The front of the house is done in white panels with few windows to give it a formal, private feel. By contrast, the back of the house is completely transparent with a floor-to-ceiling wall of triple-glazed windows. “At the heart of the design concept was the relationship to the landscape,” says Martocchio. “We worked closely with landscape designer James Doyle to figure out how to knit the house to the site.”

Located just to the right of the front door, a thick metal wall bisects the house and continues to the backyard. Faced with dark bronze anthra-zinc cladding, the wall, which expanded upon the original fireplace foundation, helped determine the internal layout. Inside the foyer, a framed corridor leads right to a private wing, which houses a guest bedroom and the master bedroom suite. Straight ahead, a living area flows into an adjacent seating area, where a metal-framed half wall—dubbed the art wall—partially conceals the dining and kitchen areas without interrupting the flow.

“It’s a house designed to have friends over, to be in nature, and make great meals—to enable them to celebrate meaningful moments in their lives,” explains the architect.





Sleek Space (THIS PAGE) In the master bathroom, a custom-designed walnut vanity is topped with Corian and accented with Linnea polished stainless-steel hardware; Dornbracht faucets are through Klaffs. **Suite Dreams** (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP AND BOTTOM) The master bedroom is a serene, light-filled retreat with a custom bed from Avery Boardman covered in Pollack's Vintage velvet. Artemide wall sconces flank the bed; the ceiling fan is from Haiku Home; and the blue chair and ottoman are through Poltrona Frau, and edged by a sleek B&B Italia side table. A Stark area rug adds a soft touch. See *Resources*.



The LEED-certified house, built by Hobbs, Inc., contains all the bells and whistles of green living including solar panels, a robust thermal envelope and rainscreen cladding. Among the key design elements is a 360-degree clerestory that wraps the living space and master bedroom and adds to the abundance of natural light. "It's very even and quiet," says the architect, "like a halo." A sustainably harvested Machiche deck spans the back of the house, where a kidney-shaped pool was reconfigured into a simple rectangle and a water feature adds to the serene ambience. Downstairs is a mudroom, home office, garage and storage area.

When it came time for the interiors, Martocchio partnered with long-time collaborator Gary Cruz, a New York City-based designer. First and foremost, furnishings and fabrics were selected with comfort and durability in mind. "My clients like to put their feet up," says Martocchio. "And they have a dog, Maddie, who sheds." In keeping with the home's clean, geometric lines, the palette is neutral—white, creams and browns—incorporating jewel tone accent pieces and contemporary art for pops of color. Throughout, the furniture complements the overarching design. "Each piece was chosen or designed with a specific need in mind," Martocchio adds.

In the master suite, the wife's favorite chair for knitting projects takes advantage of natural light. Retractable privacy screens can be lowered at night while a clerestory reveals the night sky, which speaks to the couple's connection to the landscape. "We have lived outdoors here more than in our shoreline house," says the wife. "This is a real gathering place and a real inducement for the kids to come home, but just as guests. Now they even make their own beds." 🌞