

Master of Understatement

Acclaimed New Jersey designer Diane Boyer creates subtly elegant décor for award-winning, 16,000-square-foot Saddle River home

By Donna Boyle Schwartz

Call it a case of double vision: when a high profile music industry executive and his wife purchased a 16,000-square-foot, three-level house under construction in Saddle River, N.J., the pair had wildly divergent views on finishing and furnishing their home...and their ideas were substantially different from the concepts of the builder, who originally intended the residence for himself.

Enter nationally recognized interior designer Diane Boyer, ASID. With more than 30 years of experience, Boyer specializes in large-scale residences ranging from 6,000- to 20,000-square-feet.

From the outset, Boyer served as a “mediator” on the project, melding the builder’s vision for the home with the goals of the new owners; she also had to blend the husband’s desire for opulent traditional décor with the wife’s preference for a clean, contemporary look.

“We sat down in what I jokingly call a ‘marriage counseling’ session,” Boyer recalls. “I had to get to know the husband and wife as individuals. I gave them a bunch of design magazines and had them rip out pages of things that appealed to them, then we went over everything to look for areas of similarity so we could develop a comprehensive design concept.”

The end result was home décor that exudes casual elegance and truly reflects the eclectic personalities of the homeowners. The traditional furnishings are balanced by a soothing, contemporary color scheme and punctuated by various pieces of contemporary art. The color palette creates a flow throughout the home, using soft neutral shades, including off-white, crème, pale gold with accents of cranberry and touches of black.

“It is a real blend,” Boyer notes. “The owners are warm, welcoming and hospitable people, and the home reflects this.” The special nature of the home is clearly evident to others—the project was recognized with 2006 Gold Award for Residences Over 5,000 square feet from the New Jersey chapter of ASID (American Society of Interior Designers).

“I’m proud of the fact that both husband and wife love this home,” Boyer remarks, noting that the project took four years to complete. “We were able to capture the essence of what makes a house into a home for them. They have two very different tastes, but we were able to create an environment that they both love.”

The husband agrees, noting, “We started off at opposite ends of the spectrum but Diane negotiated and we reached a point of compromise—we like to call it ‘eclectically formal.’ The house has a quiet elegance and a sense of subtlety.”

This is the fifth home for the couple, now in their mid-50s with two adult sons, aged 30 and 28, one 21-year-old daughter, and one new grandchild. Due to the nature of the music industry, the couple does a lot of entertaining for business, but they also cherish quiet family time.

“One of the things that was clear from the get-go is that we wanted a house that the family would enjoy, as well as one that would be suitable for a large number of social activities,” the husband comments. “We entertain a lot—a week after we moved in, we had 200-plus people at the house. Also, our family is very close, and we wanted a comfortable environment for family events—Sunday dinners, holidays and get-togethers. We wanted a large, functional space, but one that had warmth and personality.”

Boyer achieved this objective through painstaking attention to detail. Virtually every inch of the home features special touches, including the ceilings, walls, arches and windows. The living room walls, for instance are upholstered in pleated silk. “The perfect finishing touch was a braid, but it only came with tassels attached,” Boyer notes. “So we removed the tassels one-by-one with manicure scissors.”

Other distinctive details abound, including elaborate millwork and burl wood architectural elements from Premier Woodworking. Real gold leaf adorns the walls and ceilings; in the living room, the fireplace and decorative columns sport a faux marble finish. The furnishings include case goods and upholstery from E.J. Victor, Century and Francesco Molon; fabrics from Old World Weavers, Beacon Hill, Lee Jofa and Scalamandre; custom upholstery and window treatments from Sav-Mor Interiors; and decorative accessories from Friedman Brothers and Nancy Corzine, among others. The dining room features handcrafted Karges furniture; the fireplace is finished in a deep mahogany shade to complement the furniture.

“The attention to detail was exhaustive,” the husband remarks. “All of the finishing work is really beautiful, including the mouldings and the millwork. Every ceiling in the house is different, with a different style and architecture to it. All of the wall treatments are different and interesting; there are no standard, painted walls.”

“The master bedroom suite is really special,” he continues. “Everything really works together to create a relaxing environment where we feel very comfortable.” The master bedroom features soft cream, taupe and grey shades and a pearlized medallion on the ceiling. Highlights of the master bath include white onyx floors and countertops, gold leaf ceilings and walls, and a hand-blown Murano glass chandelier.

The house boasts state-of-the-art electronics and lighting; Boyer partnered with lighting designer Robert Newell and electronics professionals to integrate and hide the

electronics. All of the electronics and lighting are remote controlled through a combination of wired and wireless systems.

“We have a home theater with a 35mm professional projector system,” comments the husband. “The whole house turns into an MP3 player, with automatic access to whatever is loaded into the central brain.” Nearly every room has a television set, and in the case of the master bathroom and the bar, the TV is hidden behind a mirror. “You can watch the news as you’re in front of the sink,” he notes.

The homeowners decline to comment on the price of the design and furnishings, but said the project doubled the original purchase price of the home. They are quick to add, however, that it was well worth the price. “Our level of enjoyment in this home is far greater than we had hoped for,” the husband declares. “The end result is far beyond our expectations.”

RESOURCE LIST (NOTE: Anne Marie Soto is working on an extensive list of the resources used in the photos.)

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