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View from the Top

On a hill overlooking the Hudson Valley, a home is designed to change with the seasons.

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Architecture: Andrew Kotchen, Workshop/APD Interior Design: Nickie Anderson, Workshop/APD
Home Builder: Anderson Alves, ABC Construction Landscape Architecture: Frank Giuliano, Frank Giuliano & Assocs.

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ome pen memories, others build homes. When one longtime Armonk couple saw their children off to college, they saw a chance to rewrite their future. Wanting to stay in the area, they sought a location that would let them live more

in sync with nature, and the site they found—the highest point in Westchester County—was beyond their expectations. It offered extraordinary views of the countryside, yet far in the distance, the twinkling lights of New York City. Surrounded by sugar maples and ancient oaks, the property was rich with wildlife, including a resident eagle. It was perfect. When residential designer Andrew Kotchen presented them with plans for a dwelling that not only melded with the natural environment, but captured breezes and the movement of the sun, the couple knew they had found home.

“The way we situated the house is pretty spectacular, but it took a lot of site-sculpting gymnastics,” says Kotchen. “We had to chip away about 500 tons of granite,” adds general contractor Anderson Alves, who repurposed said stone for a retaining wall. (He also repurposed tree trunks as a protective ring around the worksite, lest there be any run-away boulders.) The result is a structure that follows the topography, while paying quiet homage to historical styles. “Our homes take their cues from the region, but this is a more progressive vernacular,” Kotchen says. “There are recognizable elements, like the horizontal shiplap we chose that’s a spin on popular clapboard exteriors.” He also gave the windows narrow mullions that hint at panes and create a cosseted feel without disrupting the views. These little tricks “tone modernism down,” he explains.

“The house has an interesting three-dimensionality; every space is its own experience,” Kotchen continues. “We utilized all the tools in our box to create hybrid spaces that perform throughout the year.” The great room affords the living, dining and kitchen areas ever-changing woodland views, while the sun room is glazed in winter and screened in summer. The couple’s suite, set at the far end of the house, has its own

sheltered terrace. Upstairs, the kids’ bedrooms double as guest rooms for friends lucky enough to visit, and downstairs are a gym and a second great room with a media lounge, games table and bar, all opening directly to the pool. At any given time, the interiors glow with natural light and “unbelievable shadows—all day, all four seasons,” says Kotchen.

“This house is beautiful but approachable,” adds designer Nickie Anderson, who followed Kotchen’s cues but brought a few surprises of her own. “There’s a nice mix of materials—glass, light woods, soft fabrics—but there are unexpected moments, too. We could have gone traditional in the foyer, but we selected a three-legged table for a playful element.” Similarly sculptural pieces grace every room, from blown-glass light fixtures to curved ottomans and custom upholstered headboards. “The shapes are soft to balance the lines of the architecture,” she explains. Tying it all together, a palette of blues, sands and whites brings softness and drives home the natural setting: “In winter, it relates to the snow, in summer, to the sky,” she says. Artworks, including landscape photography by Gray Malin, James Ogilvy and Nick LaVecchia, add a soothing, ethereal layer.

To harmonize house and hilltop, Kotchen worked with landscape architect Frank Giuliano on a plan that allowed for flowering shrubs (hydrangeas, roses, lavender) and a modicum of lawn near the home, along with native grasses and over two acres of wildflower meadows giving way to forest. “You can plan for the long term with clients like this,” says Giuliano. “It takes two to three years for a meadow to grow in, but it will mature and get better and better.” As a final surprise, he also designed a half-mile loop through the parklike setting, giving the owners a place for daily walks and the immediacy with nature they so desired.

“If clients are designing a home for themselves, they want it to tell their story, and these clients were building for the future—for a time when their kids return with their own families,” adds Kotchen. “It was a chance to freshen up and focus on a more modern indoor-outdoor lifestyle.” One they can now comfortably enjoy year-round and hopefully, for generations to come. ■

The entryway is an “open, sunny space at the center of the home,” says residential designer Andrew Kotchen, who collaborated with designer Nickie Anderson on this Armonk residence. The three-legged table establishes a theme of playful form, which threads throughout the interiors. The lighting fixture is Vantot via 1stdibs and the rug is Merida.



Kotchen designed the sun room to be used year-round with doors that open fully to the adjoining patio. A Rene Cazares swivel chair is joined by Perennials-upholstered ottomans from Disc Interiors and a sofa from Vanguard Furniture. On the wall is a photograph of Nantucket by James Ogilvy alongside a trio of Lostine pendants.





Above: The great room's dining area features a Tod Von Mertens table, Ben Whistler chairs upholstered in Holly Hunt fabric and a chandelier from Ochre. Beyond, the open kitchen melds a Miele cooktop with integrated appliances from Sub-Zero. White ash wood paneled ceilings warm the scheme.

Opposite: From the patio, the home's immersive windows and doors (all from LaCantina) are on full display. The RH dining set and Vondom planters sit atop custom-cut white granite paving from Bedford Stone, which spans the exterior living spaces.





Above: The homeowners' bedroom is anchored by an RH platform bed set against a Phillip Jeffries wallcovering. Above the custom nightstand is a pendant from Articolo. A chandelier from Circa Lighting and drapes of sheer Elitis fabric finish off the space.

Opposite: A pergola-covered terrace off the main bedroom offers "a quiet space to enjoy the natural surroundings," says Kotchen. The teak lounge chairs and ottomans are RH with cushions of Perennials linen. The sconce is from Bega.





Above: Minimalist Mermel USA shades trim the windows in a forest-facing guest bedroom. Grounded by a wool rug from Serena & Lily, the space features benches from Made Goods, an accent chair from Anthropologie, a Four Hands concrete cocktail table and a bed dressed in Hudson Park linens.

Opposite: In the homeowners' bathroom, a Victoria + Albert soaking tub is sited to enjoy the privacy and views. Marble flooring from Artistic Tile and Apparatus Studio's Cloud 19 chandelier create an envelope of crisp serenity, while a Made Goods stool adds a rustic touch.

