

by ANN KAISER photographs STACY BASS



open air

A world-traveling couple creates a home that reflects their past and present.

"This was my vision house," says Terri Jaffe of her home in Westport. She and her husband, Joseph, originally hail from South Africa, where climates are warmer and homes are built to encourage year-round enjoyment of the outdoors. When they moved to Westport in 2003 after nine years in New York City, they found a lot of the houses drew a more distinct line between indoor and outdoor. "That wasn't the way I was used to living," says Terri. "That wasn't the way I wanted our family home to be."

After years of dreaming about building something to suit their lifestyle, the time was finally right—and who could better understand their vision than a fellow South African? Builder Peter Greenberg of Able Construction in Fairfield was uniquely qualified for the job. "I understand her vision because I share a similar vision," says Greenberg, who was instrumental in transforming the Jaffes' empty plot into the home and garden of their dreams.

In the living room, Terri suggested this recessed ledge over the fireplace instead of the traditional mantel. *opposite:* Lollipop topiary trees give the home's parterre gardens a modern spin.



"Our aesthetic has always been very consistent, it was just a matter of putting it all together," says Terri, who decorated the interiors in neutral and white tones with just a few touches of blue.





The glass staircase allows for views from the front door all the way through the home to the backyard. In the dining room, Phillip Jeffries's "Lacquered Walls" covers one wall. "The color that I picked was actually a bright white, but it casts a very pale blue—my intention was for it to be white!" laughs Terri. The buffet is an antique.

Together, they settled on a shingled New England Colonial style for the home's exterior, and a more modern interior with an open layout and a palette of stainless steel, concrete, and glass. From there, "it really evolved" says Greenberg. "We started with a basic set of plans, and then all the details—the glass railings, the windows, all the things that make it a special house—kind of came out along the way."

One very important feature of the home is that from the front door, one can see all the way through the back windows—left uncovered on the first floor—to the pool and patio in the backyard. And that open layout is as much for aesthetics as it is for function. "The entire house is used," says Terri. "When I sat down with the architect, one of the prevailing things that I said was that we wanted a house that was going to be lived in, and it really is." The open floor plan, which includes a dining room to the left of the front door and living and family rooms to the right, encourages family togetherness. "It's a very unifying house," says Terri.

The interiors are nearly all white—a bold move for a couple with

kids ages twelve, ten, and six. "We built the house that we wanted. With me it's always aesthetics first and then figure out how to make it work," says Terri, who decorated the home's interior herself. Although with all the glass used in the design, "we go through a lot of Windex wipes," she laughs. The kids also hang out in the comfortable, carpeted third-floor guest suite, and the arcade-like basement, complete with Wii, table tennis, gumball machine, pinball machine, and more.

Most of the home's furniture was purchased new, but the artwork is a different story. The couple found several pieces in galleries and markets in South Africa—including the three red (Joseph's favorite color) pieces by Glen Tong in the mudroom, and the painting in the dining room by Vicky Sanders. In the living room, though, there hangs a piece by Westport artist Janet Slom, which informed the brown and gold tones of the space—but the white fireplace is framed in Glassos tile. Terri also designed several ottomans for her home, and now a line of them is in the works.

"I'm the type of person that likes everything to look perfect immediately," says Terri, who purchased much of the furniture for the home prior to the move-in date. A dining table and chairs sit just inside the doors to the backyard.





"She was great to work with," says Peter Greenberg of his client, Terri. "She's got great style." Details like the glass stair railings were added on to the original plans. The sleek, modern kitchen features a Chroma Quartz countertop.

The modern style of the interiors was carried into the landscape's design, an equally important component of the family's lifestyle, as they spend much of their time outdoors. Able Construction brought in garden designer Kelly McGovern of Kelly McGovern Garden Design in Fairfield, who worked with Terri to create the grounds around the home.

"On the outside, it looks like this very traditional, center-entrance Colonial. On the inside, it morphs into this modern, open floor plan with white floors and white walls, and to me it was a surprise; so I wanted the gardens to be surprising as well," says McGovern.

The visual surprise starts as soon as guests pull up to the front of the house, where they are greeted by structured parterre gardens surrounded by strolling paths of white pebbles and edged in stainless steel. In the center of each is a lollipop topiary tree, which McGovern

spotted on a trip to Oliver Nurseries in Fairfield.

"So many people give away their front yard to the neighborhood, but this house doesn't," says McGovern. "If they have a party at night you'll find people walking along the paths with a glass of wine in their hand, the lights under the trees are on. It's magical."

A large concrete patio wraps around the house and leads to the rear yard, where the pool and soccer field (one-quarter size of a regulation pitch) are located. The "summer patio," which overlooks the pool, has spaces for dining and relaxing, delineated with ribbons of white Trex material that connect six planters containing Chanticleer Pear trees. McGovern kept the color palette of the plants to green and white, and chose shrubs that would look good year-round, including boxwoods, holly, green giants, and arborvitae. Blue glass pebbles around the base of each of pear tree break up the mass of concrete,



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—KELLY MCGOVERN




*Glass, concrete, and stainless steel are used in the outdoor design as well. A few years in, the grass in the planters was replaced with blue glass.
opposite: The seating and dining areas on the "summer patio" are surrounded by white Trex slats that break up the concrete of the deck.*

and for two weeks every April, the family enjoys the trees' gorgeous white blooms.

To the right of the pool and dining area is the "winter patio," with low curved walls and views across the soccer pitch, where the kids can play ball in the warm weather, and build snowmen when there's snow on the ground. Greenberg built all the outside structures—including the modern concrete wall, concrete pillars in the glass fence around the pool, and the framework for the deck.

The seamless relationship between the team members produced a flawless indoor-outdoor design, and after working so closely on the project, the team has become good friends. Since the completion of the property, the McGovern children have been to the Jaffes for a play

date. "I saw the kids get out of the pool and run through the gate just where I thought their traffic pattern would be, have a piece of pizza at the table, shoot over to the soccer pitch," says McGovern. "I looked at Terri and said, my God it all works!" 

RESOURCES

Kelly McGovern Garden Design, 617-953-8207

Able Construction, Inc., 203-849-3083, ableconstruction.com

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