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A PAINTERLY GARDEN | TRAVEL FOR GOLF AND ANTIQUES

IDEAS FOR SUCCESSFUL OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING

WATCHES FOR HIM AND HER

Rooms With A View | This beachfront home (THIS PAGE), designed by Bartels-Pagliario Architects, is one room deep, providing a water view in each room.

Geometry Lesson | Roger Bartels' signature curve (OPPOSITE) allows the eye to sweep through the kitchen into the family room. Sleek chrome and leather stools from Dovecote let guests visit with the cook. See Resources.



GEOMETRY

GRACIOUS CURVES, MASTERFUL WOODWORK AND PANORAMIC WATERFRONT VIEWS
EXPAND THE SCOPE OF A 'ONE-ROOM-DEEP' HOME IN WESTPORT



OF JOY

BY ANNETTE M. ROSE-SHAPIO | PHOTOGRAPHS BY OLSON PHOTOGRAPHIC LLC

Approaching this beachfront home, the tan stucco exterior gives the impression that you're looking at a rather whimsical sandcastle. The sensuous curves seem like they were smoothed by a giant trowel, small glass block windows and two-story turrets seem randomly placed just for the fun of it. But this project was an unprecedented challenge of engineering for both the architect and builder, and a labor of love for everyone involved.

The Westport home of Victoria and Charles Gelber, designed by architect Roger Bartels of Bartels-Pagliari Architects, celebrates the natural beauty of its surroundings. The movement of its exterior is reminiscent of the Art Nouveau style, but



that is the only part of the inspiration for Bartels' design. "Architecture has a broad scope," he explains. "People in the Northeast have a narrow definition of what residential design can be. I wanted to avoid a cliché." And he has most certainly succeeded.

Partner Chris Pagliaro describes Bartels as a "mad scientist. He looks at the lot and sees the potential. Roger draws on his vast knowledge of architectural history when he's thinking about the design." C.F.A. Voysey, a 19th-century British architect known for his stucco homes, was an inspiration, but Bartels' contemporary aesthetic makes this structure unique. Pagliaro is responsible for turning that vision into reality—he refines every interior detail to the homeowners' exact specifications.

Those efforts paid off—the Connecticut Home Builder's Association awarded the structure several honors, including the 2008 HOBI Award for Best Custom Home to Miro Builders of Westport

and Architect of the Year to Bartels. Builder Don Miro claims the design represented some unusual challenges for his firm. "Given the enormous amount of detail in the scaled-down footprint, this endeavor was truly similar to building a Swiss watch," says Miro, adding that he was grateful to be a part of the project. The unusual structural elements, such as curved walls, conical turrets that house shower enclosures, decorative metalwork and custom doors demanded the highest level of craftsmanship from his team.

Bartels feels the influx of Eastern European craftsmen has expanded the architect's palette, especially in the stucco and metalworking techniques. The decorative metal chimney caps call to mind an oceanliner of another era, and curved metal railings also show a maritime influence. Custom detailing on both the exterior and the interior belie the small scale of the home. One detail in particular, the four-square pattern found in the staircase and in the interior doors, is a nod to Charles Rennie



House Aglow | Virtually the entire back of the house (THIS PAGE) is constructed of windows, allowing pond views in every room. **Best Seat In Town** | A perfectly placed window seat (OPPOSITE TOP) is upholstered in DeLany & Long fabric. Custom doors with the architect's iconic square motif pattern open to the master bedroom. **Grand Entry** | Interior designer/homeowner Victoria Gelber repainted and recovered a beloved bench (OPPOSITE BOTTOM) in fabric by Robert Allen. A subtly hued custom silk rug from Mark Inc. Fine Carpets marks the entry hall. See [Resources](#).



THE WETLANDS RESTRICTED THE FOOTPRINT OF THE HOUSE,
BUT IT DID NOT RESTRICT ITS DRAMATIC IMPACT



Coastal Bliss | The living room décor (LEFT) allows the panoramic view of the pond to take a star turn. The concrete-surfaced fireplace, with the sand-and-stone hues of the furniture and accessories, complement Mother Nature. A Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams couch and Milo Baughman vintage club chairs provide seating around the fireplace, while a rug from the Rug Company defines the space. An Oly bench from Dovecote is a graceful perch for taking in the view. **Maritime Studies** | Charles Gelber's office in the turret's first floor is a study in fine woodworking. Two vintage Parisian leather club chairs from Ellen Scarborough Antiques add to the masculine vibe. See Resources.

Mackintosh. Bartels also admits that the square is an easy proportion to work with, and he uses it inside and out in unexpected ways.

The house is essentially one room deep, due to the restrictions of the lot size and proximity to the water. "But in a waterfront home, you only want to be on one side anyway," explains Bartels. Its East-West orientation provides spectacular sunrise and sunset displays. The homeowners take advantage of their location with two Adirondack chairs placed strategically at the shoreline, where they can view the waterfowl population and ever-changing scenery of the pond. A small balcony at the back of the house also provides an intimate spot to enjoy the setting.

The scenery inside the house provides much to look at, as well. The extensive woodwork, with unusually curved walls, lends solidity. Santos mahogany flooring throughout allows the eye to sweep through and follow the curve to the next room. Bartels' use of white paint throughout is carefully planned. The white palette reflects the light off the water, making the house glow. The ceilings are equally well planned. "The ceiling is one of the most important surfaces

of the house. The use of different woods and treatments define each space," says Pagliaro.

The wetlands restricted the footprint of the house, but it did not restrict its dramatic impact. "The house is like performance art," says homeowner Victoria Gelber. "It has to be experienced." She was involved in every step of planning the home's décor. Her careful editing of furniture, fabric, art and color graciously complements what she refers to as "the geometry" of the house.

Aided by Kathy Groener of K & D Design, Gelber worked tirelessly to introduce just the right combinations of fabrics, textures and colors that would not distract from the home's architecture. "I had an obsessed determination to realize the vision that I had for the interiors," Gelber says. "It must have driven Kathy batty, but she was unfailingly gracious, supportive and generous with her advice and connections." Gelber paid close attention to the details of Bartels' design and devised some original solutions. Living room window seat cushions are covered in Kravet's Moon Phases fabric; the circular pattern complements the four-square pattern in the home's



staircase. The eclectic mix of furnishings, in period, style and materials, adds to the drama and points to the spirit of collaboration between Gelber and Bartels.

The kitchen is one of Gelber's favorite rooms in the house. An accomplished cook, her well-appointed workspace includes a convection oven, traditional oven and a range top conveniently situated with a view of the pond. The adjacent family room and dining area is perfect for entertaining; guests are able to enjoy both the interior and the exterior views, and the cook's able to participate, as well.

The pond view is given center stage as you ascend the stairs to the second floor. A window seat is strategically placed at the top. The three bedrooms all enjoy water views, but the antique French soaking tub in the master bath has pride of place and provides a peaceful respite. A glass-walled shower area to the left of it is balanced on the other side by a glass-enclosed water closet. Sinks

on either side of the doorway are set into vanities that have the look of solid furniture.

Bartels' signature custom doors give way to the master bedroom, whose high ceiling is punctuated by yet another maritime element—a wooden joist supports it and adds an interesting detail. But along yet another curved wall, glamour awaits. Gelber's sitting room on the second floor of the turret—her husband's office sits below it on the first floor—is a celebration of femininity and a reflection of her refined sense of style. A chaise longue was fashioned from legs she found in a bowling alley; she had a custom base and cushion made to complete it. A chandelier made of seashells adds drama and sparkle to the room's neutral palette. Bartels' unorthodox window height invites you to sit and enjoy the view.

Gelber perfectly sums up the experience of living in this waterfront home: "When I walk into this house, the immediate feeling that I get is one of pure joy." 🌞



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHARLES GELBER

Glamour Girl | The wife's sitting room on the second floor of the turret (OPPOSITE) has an eclectic décor and with a mix of periods and styles. The Oly seashell chandelier from Dovecote adds sparkle to the neutral fabrics, and pieces such as the vintage vanity table and stool (ABOVE) add more than a hint of glamour. The window height is an invitation to sit and enjoy the view. **Ahhhhh!** | A 19th-century French bateau (TOP RIGHT), strategically placed to take in the master bath's pond view, is sure to melt away the day's stress.

Let In The Light | A glass-enclosed shower (RIGHT) allows in streams of light from the center window. The bathroom cabinetry has the solid feel of furniture, with matching vanities on both sides of the door. See Resources.

