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Everyday Elegance

MEETING THE DEMANDS OF A MODERN FAMILY — IN HIGH STYLE

WRITTEN BY MEG FOX | PHOTOS BY MARCO RICCA | DESIGN BY YELENA GERTS, ALLIED ASID, WCAA | ARCHITECTURE BY MICHAEL J. MONROE



Super lightweight wool drapes “create a sense of luxury you can see from every point in the house,” designer Yelena Gerts says. The area rug’s subtle abstract pattern — in shades of gray — became “the neutral foundation for the whole space,” she says. The main seating consists of an extra-long, tight-back sofa upholstered in high-performance white linen finished with contrasting black nail heads.

It’s a design scheme interior designer Yelena Gerts knows well: creating the feel of “everyday luxury” for a young family with four children in Colts Neck. “[They wanted] a contemporary space that wasn’t modern or traditional,” says Gerts, an allied member of the American

Society of Interior Designers and owner/principal of House of Style & Design in Holmdel. “Many of my clients gravitate toward this style.” She describes the look as “elegant, luxurious, timeless and yet functional and practical” — stylish spaces that are meant to be lived in and enjoyed.

Does that exist? “Yes!” enthuses Gerts, who has an innate sense of how function and style can work together. “Having a big family myself, I understand the needs and desires of today’s modern families.” Finding the balance between elegant and approachable is more attainable than it was

Mirrored surfaces keep the space soft and airy, the designer says. “For pattern, I added black-and-white contemporary art.”

OPENING PAGE | The two-story foyer, divided into three zones for style and function, establishes the home’s light, airy, elegant demeanor. A sculptural cage-style chandelier holds its own in a grand space tempered by contemporary millwork.



a decade ago, she says, thanks to the availability of fashionable high-performance fabrics that are durable and easy to care for, the services available to protect the furniture and the extended vendor support she is able to offer clients.

For this project, a 10,000-square-foot home on over 4 acres, Gerts took on the challenge with great pleasure for clients who are talented, design-forward and always open to new ideas and unconventional design, she says. Besides, it was a “clean slate ... every designer’s dream,” she adds. “A beautiful canvas with an open concept, large windows and a perfect layout.”

The two-story foyer — divided into three zones for style and function

— sets the tone for the home’s light and airy palette: tonal variations of gray and white, layers of texture, mixed materials and contemporary mill-work to warm up the home’s grand scale. While the main spaces share a harmonious palette, each one has its own voice, which seems to greet you as you move throughout the house.

In the formal living room, a mirrored coffee table and antiqued mirror above the fireplace reflect light from floor-to-ceiling windows dressed with “super lightweight wool drapes that create a sense of luxury you can see from every point in the house,” says Gerts, a member of the Window Coverings Association of America. “I love working with luxury fabrics,” she adds. “The way they drape and fall is just magical.”

Brushstrokes of abstract artwork in black and white lend a contemplative air in a space furnished with clean lines, hushed tones and minimal pattern. “I love all different kinds of art:” abstract, photographic, modern or other, she says. “To me it’s a conversation piece. It’s an unexpected element that finishes the room like an exclamation point.”

The more laid-back family room balances shades of gray, texture and comfort in a more relaxed setting with a hand-knotted wool-and-silk gray rug as the foundation. A textured light gray sloped-arm sectional accommodates the whole family comfortably, and swivel chairs and ottomans — upholstered in durable, high-performance crushed velvet or linen — provide versatile seating options. For extra measure, upholstery here and elsewhere

was treated with a fabric protection system to guard against stains. “You can never be too careful in a home with four children, especially in high-traffic areas,” Gerts says.

Nearby, in the mostly monochromatic dining room dressed in elegant but understated white velvet drapes, “stunning light fixtures became the artwork in the room,” she says. “I took a non-traditional approach that I see a lot of modern families do these days. We didn’t add any additional furniture and accessories besides the [mahogany] table and chairs.”

The calming, cohesive color story continues in the formal lounge/wine room, which seems to say, “Sit down, have a drink and stay awhile.” Guests can gather for drinks, appetizers and conversation around a waterfall-style

Upholstery in the more laid-back family room consists of high-performance fabrics: soft silver velvet on the wing chair and ottomans and gray linen on the swivel chairs. Light flows unimpeded through large windows dressed in sheer white linen drapes and acrylic rods.

Crushed-velvet pillows in subtle geometric patterns add flair to the textured, light-gray sloped-arm sectional. The abstract art is “a conversation piece,” the designer says. “It’s an unexpected element that finishes the room like an exclamation point.”



LOUNGE/WINE ROOM | “My clients wanted a formal lounge area that would look beautiful and functional and that would mix perfectly with the rest of the house,” Gerts says. Among the jewels in the room is a black chrome and nickel crystal chandelier. Another is the built-in wine unit: a statement piece crafted with walnut veneer and carefully aligned pegs that hold the clients’ own signature wine, all framed by panda porcelain stone. But the tour-de-force may be what you don’t see: a hidden door to the right of the unit that opens to a small kitchen housing a sink and refrigerator.

bar or on lush velvet swivel chairs. Crafted with walnut veneer paneling and panda porcelain stone, the built-in wine unit has perfectly aligned pegs that hold her clients’ own signature line of wine. Carpenter George O’Reilly

“helped us perfect all the angles to create a perfect three-dimensional unit, finished with contemporary walnut cabinets for storage,” Gerts says.

Overall, “I had so much fun working on this project,” says Gerts, who also designed many of the upholstered pieces, including the chic velvet bar stools in the wine room. She also cites a unique feature you can’t see in the room: a hidden door that opens to a small kitchen with a sink and refrigerator. The homeowner envisioned that feature from the start to serve the space without interrupting the flow. Says Gerts: “Brilliant, right?” The homeowner also weighed in on the collaboration. “Working with Yelena is always a pleasure. I love her design sense and creativity.” **DNJ**

SOURCES Overall: interior design, House of Style & Design in Holmdel; architect, Michael J. Monroe of MJM Services Inc. in Red Bank; carpentry, George O’Reilly Carpentry in Jackson. **Foyer:** table, Furniture Classics; custom ottomans and bench, House of Style & Design; chandelier, Visual Comfort & Co. through circa-lighting.com. **Living Room:** chairs and mirrored coffee table, Bernhardt Furniture; side tables, Uttermost; area rug, Stanton Carpet; artwork, Leftbank Art; wool drapery fabric, Dedar; fabric and furniture protection here and elsewhere, Fiber-Seal Fabric Care System in Clifton. **Family Room:** area rug, Kravet; custom sectional, House of Style & Design; swivel chairs, Huntington House Inc.; cocktail table/ottoman, Curations Limited (T); wing chair and ottomans; Bernhardt Furniture. **Dining Room:** table, Old Biscayne Designs; chairs, custom with performance fabric; chandeliers, Schonbek; velvet drapery fabric, Fabricut Inc.; window treat-

LOUNGE/WINE ROOM | Custom bar stools pull up to a panda porcelain waterfall-style bar. “Most of the fabrics used in the space are high performance and, for extra measure, we Fiber-Sealed everything too,” Gerts says.

DINING ROOM | Crystal chandeliers inject glamour to the mostly monochromatic dining room, anchored by a soft geometric patterned rug. The mahogany table, built to the clients’ specifications, has a dark black/brown finish.

ment hardware, Kravet. **Lounge/Wine Room:** built-in wine unit, designed by House of Style & Design and built by George O’Reilly Carpentry; wall-hung cabinets, Absolute Kitchen & Granite in Colts Neck; custom furniture and accents, House of Style & Design. T=To the trade.

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