

This page: The grand entrance hall to Karen Cohen and Jack Haylick's Long Island house contains weathered columns topped with tin urns packed with freshly cut hydrangeas. The mirror reflects a 19th-century Austrian iron-and-glass chandelier, and the large stone slabs on the floor are reminiscent of those found in Italian country houses. Opposite: Cohen and Haylick relax on one of their porches, surrounded by lush gardens and Palladian-style windows.



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AMERICAN PALAZZO



Karen Cohen and Ani Antreasyan combine forces on Long Island to create an Italian-style villa from a house originally built to resemble a Chinese temple

KAREN COHEN AND JACK HAYFLICK had their hearts set on finding a weekend house in the Hamptons. Not just any house would do; they wanted something they could make into a small Italian villa. When they discovered a house in Watermill, New York, they knew they had found what they were looking for—despite the fact that it had originally been designed to look like a Chinese temple (down to the pagoda-shaped doorways). “It had such great bones, there was so much that could be done with it, and the property was extraordinary,” Cohen recalls.

Although transforming a house that had not been updated in 70 years is no easy feat, the couple never wavered from their belief.

“I had been to Italy many times and loved it, and I wanted this house to feel like the houses I had stayed in there,” says Cohen. The couple even traveled to the Veneto region for

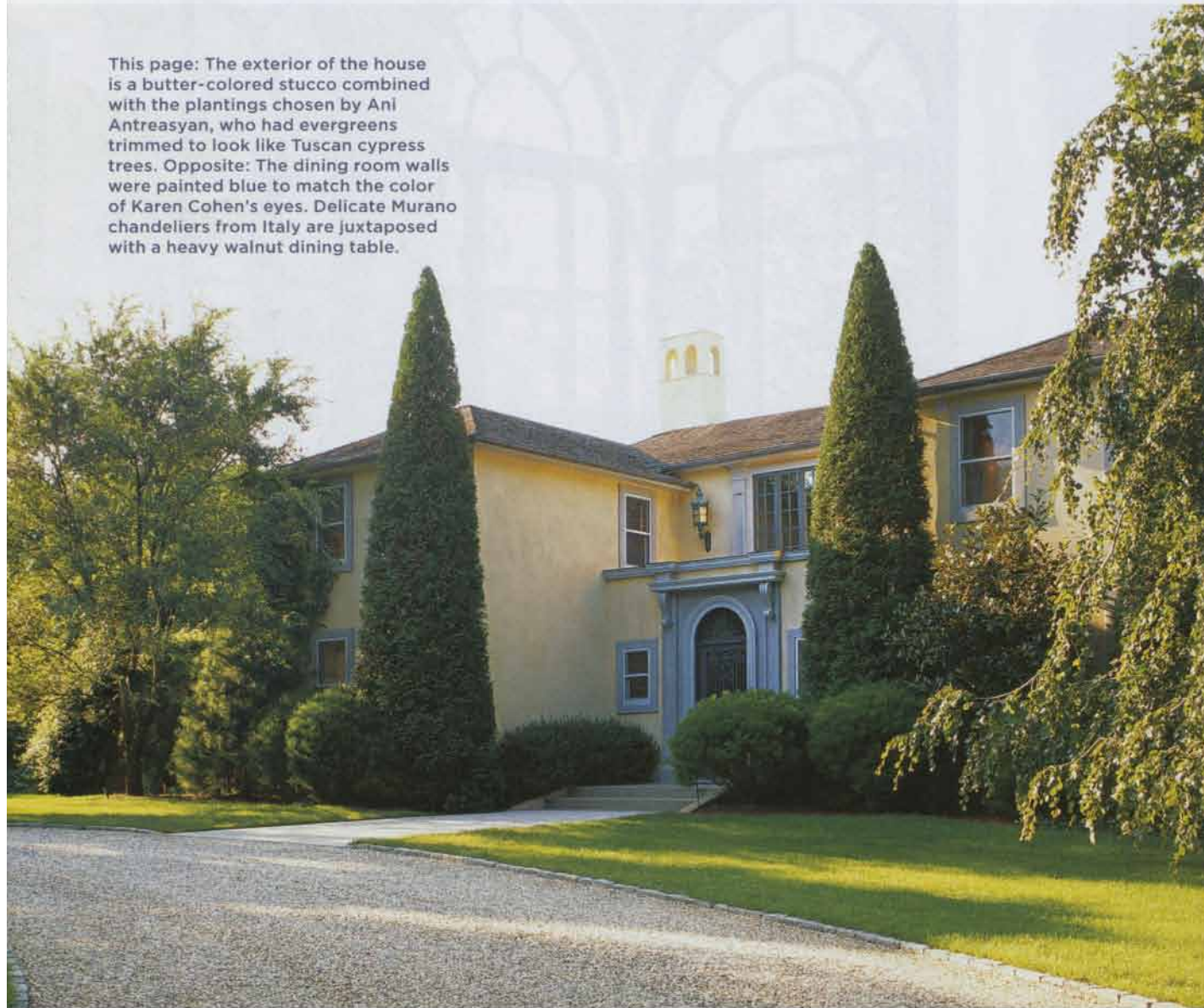
inspiration, to view the hillside villas of Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio.

Before tackling the interiors, they enlisted Hamptons-based architect Frank Greenwald to help with structural plans and to reorganize the layout, along with enlarging windows and doors along the back of the house to gain better views of the garden and pond.

Cohen, who had worked as an interior designer some years ago, amassed piles of design books and magazines for ideas. And, at the annual Bridgehampton Antiques and Garden show, she found Ani Antreasyan selling stone sinks, garden vessels, lanterns, fountains, and other odd artifacts from Turkey.

A native of that country, Antreasyan has sources for these exotic items, most of which come from Beaux Arts-style European houses in her homeland. In color and character they

This page: The exterior of the house is a butter-colored stucco combined with the plantings chosen by Ani Antreasyan, who had evergreens trimmed to look like Tuscan cypress trees. Opposite: The dining room walls were painted blue to match the color of Karen Cohen's eyes. Delicate Murano chandeliers from Italy are juxtaposed with a heavy walnut dining table.



This page: The living room is a study in tranquil hues and understated elegance. The old carved wooden doors (left) are from Indonesia. A local metal worker refurbished the rusted ironwork on them and the piece is now used to close off a bar area. Opposite: In the sunroom, a set of split-reed furniture was found at an antiques shop and re-covered with an Osborne & Little print.



resemble Carrera, but are actually made of Marmara, marble. Stylistically they corresponded to the look Cohen had been searching for, and she asked Antreasyan to come over and see her ongoing project.

"I wasn't expecting to see this kind of architecture in the Hamptons," Antreasyan recalls. "From the exterior, it already looked like a small Italian palazzo, just waiting to be revived."

Their collaboration had begun, and Antreasyan set off for Turkey to bring back pieces for Cohen. They focused on adapting old elements to fresh, newly constructed spaces; an instinctive response for Antreasyan, who tends to put a historical spin on interiors, having grown up around Ottoman palaces and gardens filled with stone antiquities.

The pair searched Manhattan and beyond: from the Brimfield fair to the D&D Building; from antiques shops to the Chelsea flea market. Their mission: to unearth pieces that had

a certain patina; a well-worn beauty. This is evident in the house's grand entrance hall, where weathered columns serve as bases for tin urns that in summer are always filled with freshly cut hydrangeas from the garden. The double stairway has an expansive ceiling height, so a large mirror was installed to reflect a 19th-century Austrian iron-and-glass chandelier.

The original living room ceiling was in bad condition. As it needed to be levelled, they decided to add coffers, even though that idea was not in the plan. "We looked at the door and window moldings to match the profile for the ceiling," Hayflick explains. It was one of many decisions that he says were "made on the spot, using the skills of the carpenters and contractor."

One remarkable piece of the original house was the Chinoiserie-painted wallpaper done years before. Water damage and time had ruined all but one-third of what was there. But Cohen was smitten with it, so she hired highly skilled painters to precisely match the existing patterns. They

This page: The kitchen is filled with light from panels of doors that open onto a cooking area and garden. The table is made from applewood, with metal folding chairs. Opposite: The outdoor dining porch has 10-foot-high ceilings. The screens are framed in tinted gray mahogany surrounds and separated by pre-cast concrete columns. The custom dining table top is a fired-finish bluestone.



This page, left: The master bedroom is painted in a quiet Donald Kaufman hue of seafoam green, Italian lace covers the headboard, and all the bed linens were bought in Italy at the Pratesi outlet. Below right and opposite: Floors in the master bath are covered in mosaic tiles with a pattern copied from a photograph Karen Cohen took of a table top in Tuscany. For more details, see Resources.



succeeded brilliantly, and the newly revived wallpaper is undistinguishable from the original.

"The kitchen was done to honor Karen's incredible cooking," says Antreasyan. Along with all the modern amenities, an old-world atmosphere prevails. The wood floor was hand-painted in a two-tone gray-and-white diamond pattern. On the ceiling beams were created—using new wood—that look old and worn. "They cut four-by-fours and laid out a grid on the ceiling," says Haylick. Then notches were cut, and the faux-beams were bolted to the ceiling. Haylick went so far as to have holes drilled into the beams and, by hand, he added what looked like old pegs, which imbued the beams with a more authentic look of age. (The pegs were actually 1½-inch hardwood dowels that Haylick shaped and glued into the holes.) The wooden beams were then bleached and beaten with a hammer and chain to achieve a weathered look.

For the screened outdoor dining porch, Haylick searched the Internet. He found a website for old barn wood beams from Canada and used them on the ceiling as well as in the porch off the living room. The rough-hewn barn wood served as sturdy legs for the custom dining table.

The master bedroom and bath again reference the past. Towel bars were made from sections of rusty and neglected garden fences after Antreasyan found them. "They were lying in a stone yard in Istanbul, I knew if we painted them matte black they would look great with beautiful Italian linen hanging on them," she says.

The imagination and ingenuity displayed in details like this are testament to Cohen, Haylick, and Antreasyan's vision. Their reward is the house, reborn to evoke the warmth of an Italian family country villa; a home both perfectly detailed and well lived-in. ●