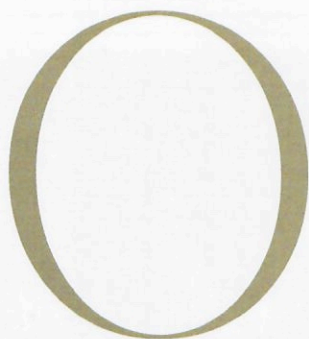






Model Home

PICTURE PERFECT FOR THIS FASHIONABLE FAMILY



owning one of the world's largest modeling agencies means jet-setting to places such as Paris, London, and Milan for Joel Wilkenfeld, who runs Next Model Management. But, when he comes home to Bedford, there's no glitz and glamor. Instead, he and wife Andrea embrace the understated elegance of the country home they share with their two children on Guard Hill Road.

While searching for a home with their agent, Muffin Dowdle, in 2007, the Wilkenfelds fell in love with a house on Sarles Street in Bedford Corners. "It was a perfect house but too small," says Andrea, a former model from the Czech Republic. "We loved the design and wanted a similar feeling—very French and filled with light." Dowdle suggested they hire the home's interior designer, Deborah Schmidt, who happened to be the owner, as well, and she soon joined their team. "As our search was winding down, Muffin brought us to the final option, and I knew we had found 'it' before I even went inside," Andrea continues. "It looked European on the outside, and we loved the setting."

The property was formerly part of a vast 1920s estate that once spilled onto both sides of Guard Hill Road boasting multiple buildings for family, staff, and recreational purposes. When the estate was subdivided, a four-acre parcel containing a greenhouse and ice house was lopped off and converted into a private residence. Decades later, standing in the driveway, the Wilkenfelds were instantly smitten and knew that with Schmidt's help they could make it their dream home.

"We clicked with Deborah right away because she understood that while we like the Old World European aesthetic, we appreciate modern amenities, too," says Andrea, who worked in partnership with Schmidt and architect Teo Siguenza while her husband teamed up with landscape architect Craig Studer of Studer Design Associates on the property design. The team soon hired P. Morrissey Contracting, a Mount Kisco-based firm, to handle the construction.

FAMILY FUN Architect Teo Siguenza designed the covered porch on the back of the house to extend the indoor living space to the outdoors. The six-foot-wide Spark fire ribbon in the family room was framed by a surround custom designed by Deborah Schmidt and fabricated by P. Morrissey Contracting's artisans. The arched doorways were thickened to mimic old European plaster walls, and the ceiling timbers were lightened to soften their appearance.





KITCHEN CONNECTIONS The kitchen is the heart of the home and is open to the family room. Its serene color palette reflects Andrea's preference for soft, soothing colors, yet a pop of color can be seen in the glass cabinetry that displays her collection of Bohemian crystal from the Czech Republic. A new mudroom and laundry room were added.



While Joel grew up on Long Island, his family had a weekend place in Bedford, so he knew from an early age that he wanted to raise his family in the sublime country setting he'd grown to love as a child. Andrea was equally eager to make a home where she and their daughter, Chloe, could ride horses and their son, Blake, an outdoor enthusiast, could enjoy the land. Now completely settled, the whole family embraces an indoor/outdoor lifestyle. On a late summer day, Blake harvests squash from his garden, and Chloe splashes in the pool with their three dogs. The crunching of gravel signals the arrival of guests. Winding past an old incinerator disguised as a towering stone wine bottle, the cars pause to contemplate the origins of a vintage, blue structure. According to some sources, it was an outdoor greenhouse for orchids, yet others claim it was a corn crib or a chicken coop. Drawn forward by the promise of more surprises to come, the guests continue on past a guest house to a parking court surrounded by mature trees and restored stone walls.

A stucco home with French garden doors and climbing vines exudes a Provençal air, as Joel and Andrea graciously open the hand-crafted front door, and the story-book setting comes to life. Inside, with enthusiastic greetings from four-and two-legged family members, visitors are welcomed into the foyer where an oversized painting by Julian Schnabel is bookended by arched doorways that show off 18-inch thick walls. To the left is a well-proportioned family room featuring a six-foot-wide Spark fire ribbon with custom marble surround. French doors draw in both light and views of the property. The couple eagerly shares photos and stories of their home's transformation. "Deborah lived



GREAT SPREAD

The great room was built in the 1920s as a greenhouse. The original coral slab floor is still in place. French doors were added to embrace the views and a mid-century fireplace was refurbished. The adjacent stone room once housed the boiler that heated the greenhouse in winter but now serves as a study. The addition of a sliding barn door allows Joel to close off the study for privacy.



and traveled in Europe before we met her, so she and I were on the same wavelength design-wise,” explains Andrea, whose modeling career brought her to the United States 15 years ago. “For years, I had been tearing out photos from magazines that each showed some aspect of what I wanted. Deborah was able to take all those clues and design custom pieces for us that put it all together.”

Moving on to the adjacent kitchen, Andrea carves watermelon for the children as Joel describes how they enlarged and renovated the kitchen. Glass cabinetry now showcases Andrea’s collection of Bohemian crystal from her homeland. A new hallway leads to the laundry and mud rooms and provides direct access to the back terrace and outdoor kitchen.

Next door, the dining room boasts eye-catching art. “This is by Daniel Peddle,” says Joel, who together with Andrea personally chooses each piece in their collection. “He’s the most amazing, up-and-coming artist I’ve ever met,” Joel continues while pointing out a rubbing that depicts New York City’s Christopher Street Pier. Beyond the dining room is the old indoor greenhouse, now transformed into a great room. The original coral floor is still intact, but the adjacent stone boiler room now serves as a cozy den. The exposed stone walls are an attractive, rustic backdrop for more art, and a new sliding barn door provides privacy when Joel works from home.

The family’s bedroom wing includes four suites. Joel and Andrea’s reflects a quiet serenity; it’s no wonder it is Andrea’s favorite room in the house. Their sumptuous bathroom opens to a private terrace with outdoor shower.





ENDING THE DAY Andrea's favorite space in the house is her bedroom, where peace and tranquility prevail. An amateur painter, she often sets up her easel in here to work. Schmidt's design for the master bath includes plenty of sumptuous amenities and clandestine storage.

Chloe's suite is a tween fantasy, complete with purple hues. An award-winning jumper, she has a passion for horses that is evident from the ribbons and equine-themed artwork on display. Tucked next door, Blake's construction-themed suite includes a mural of a worksite. An added bonus is his workroom upstairs where he has a variety of tinkering projects underway.

Joel's vision for the home included outdoor access from every room, and in keeping with his love for the outdoors, his favorite place to be is on the back terrace with its arresting views of the property. "I am a gardener at heart, so I love to be out here," he says with a smile. Despite his passion for landscape design, Joel gives Studer 99 percent of the credit for the transformation of the property, which includes a new rectangular swimming pool, an entertainment area shaded by a wisteria-covered pavilion, and French and English gardens.

While they are enthusiastic and frequent world travelers, the Wilkenfelds are happiest when they hunker down together at home. As the sun sets, they gather on the terrace, dogs leap up on laps, giggles erupt, and life is good. ■