A Modern Makeover

Old meets new in this full renovation in Greenwich, Connecticut

Story by Emily Ballard | Photography by Peter Brown & John Woodruff

The reconstructed front entry was built with a stone veneer masonry to blend with existing structure. Custom gas lanterns were added to provide a warm welcome.

Originally built as a spec house, this almost 14,000-square-foot home sat vacant for years after the 2008 market crash. A young family that resided in the same neighborhood took notice of its potential and saw the opportunity to upgrade the property and customize it to the home they desired. They hired Ben Krupinski Builders to make their dream a reality.

Ben Krupinski has been in the building business for nearly 40 years. What started as a window installation for someone who needed help has grown and evolved into a well-respected business that focuses on residential projects of various scales, including new homes, renovations and remodels. With three offices and projects that cast a wide geographical net, the firm always strives to deliver quality work and build trusted client relationships.

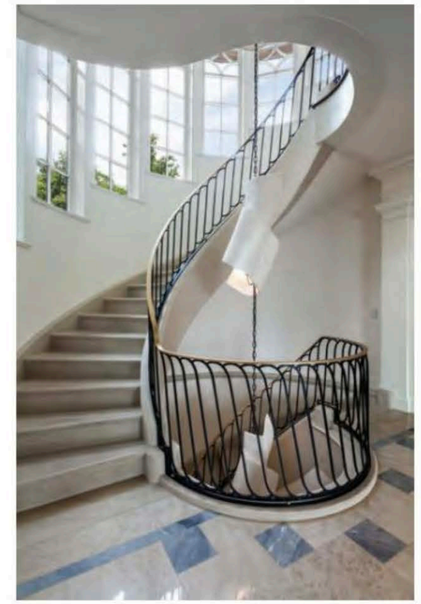
Christopher Quinn is the managing director of the Connecticut office, covering Connecticut, Westchester and New York City. Coming from a construction family, Chris comes by his craft honestly. Shortly after graduating college he started working with Ben and has stayed on for over 12 years. He believes that their collaborative, hands-on approach with clients is what sets them apart from other firms. "We pride ourselves on being custom builders that are custom solution finders," says Chris. "We never try to repeat something because it was easy."

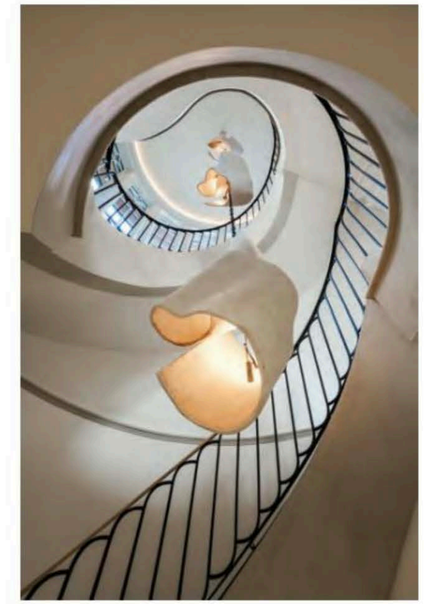
Getting to the Bones

This Belle Haven waterfront property was in need of a major overhaul to fit the clients' needs and wants. The owners hired architectural firm Robert Cardello from Norwalk, CT, to draw up the plans, and enlisted Brian J. McCarthy of New York City for a full interior design.

After the architectural set of plans was decided upon, Ben Krupinski Builders was asked to develop a budget number for the project. The firm took that number directly to the homeowner and began deciding how to allocate the funds, where to spend money and what alternatives were available to cut costs. Chris refers to this as "value engineering," a process by which the team

The custom-built lighting fixture cascades down three stories, and was commissioned by an artist to fit this unique structure with an awe-inspiring statement.





works with the client to optimize the budget to capture the same look as the architectural design, but goes about it in a different, cost-efficient manner. This involves determining the most important elements and must-haves of the client. "That was one of the biggest things the owner liked about it," says Chris. "They were able to achieve the final look of what the design was, and save money while value engineering it."

This was important for a project of this magnitude. By working with these expert builders, the clients were able to get the same results with a few adjustments and compromises. For the homeowners, it was essential to focus on the finishes, such as high-gloss paint, and specialty plumbing fixtures.

Of course, these were just pieces of the puzzle. This was not new construction—there was an already existing structure—but almost all features were stripped away for a full-scale reconstruction. "Basically, it was a full gut renovation to the house," Chris explains. "We took all the interiors out and ended up taking off most of the exterior finishes as well, changing the entire architectural vernacular and language of the house, both interior and exterior."

The next step was rebuilding. With only the skeleton of the house remaining, it was time to create new mechanical systems, electrical systems, plumbing, cabinetry, flooring, doors and windows. The team sourced marble, wood and stone materials.

One of the unique features of this property is its location. The house is tucked away on a site that used to be an old quarry that has historical significance: it was the source of all the stone found at the base of the George Washington Bridge. This secluded waterfront property on the Long Island Sound would be a challenge to build on today with current building codes, thus a full renovation was much more advantageous to the homeowners. To maintain some of the original feel of the home, the team was able to use materials that fit the unique language of the structure, especially the exterior stone veneer of the house.

"When you are walking around the property, you feel you are in something that has been around for awhile and not a brand-new construction," says Chris. "We never want to make it feel like a museum. We build homes and these homes get lived in, and we wanted it to feel comfortable for the clients."

The Hotel Book
MARY MCDONALD INTERIORS

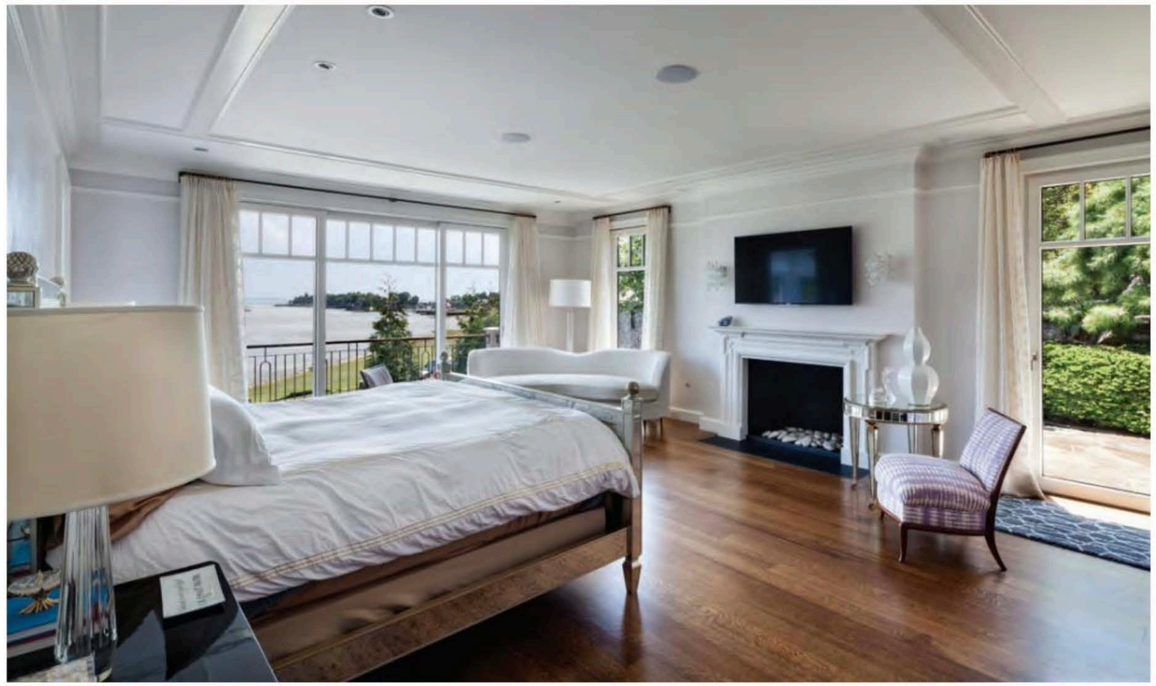
Transformation

With a custom design in place and a plan for executing it, it was time to get to work. Over a period of 16 months, the home would experience a complete revamp and emerge with a face that nods to the original, but has a life all its own.

Builders removed the entire roof, replaced it with a Vermont gray slate and framed new dormers. They replaced the stucco siding with new cedar siding and new trim, and installed new custom wood windows and doors. They removed and replaced an existing tower with a larger conservatory featuring floor-to-ceiling windows and copper roofing. Keeping with the original landscape, Ben and his team refurbished the pool area to reflect the color and texture of the sandstone patio. The homeowners can enjoy the expansive views of the sound from the custom-designed balconies and decks.

The team redesigned the front entrance to create a more inviting atmosphere with gas lanterns and a covered porch that ties in with the rest of the home. "Because the house is so large, the architects didn't want you to feel that when you pulled up the driveway,

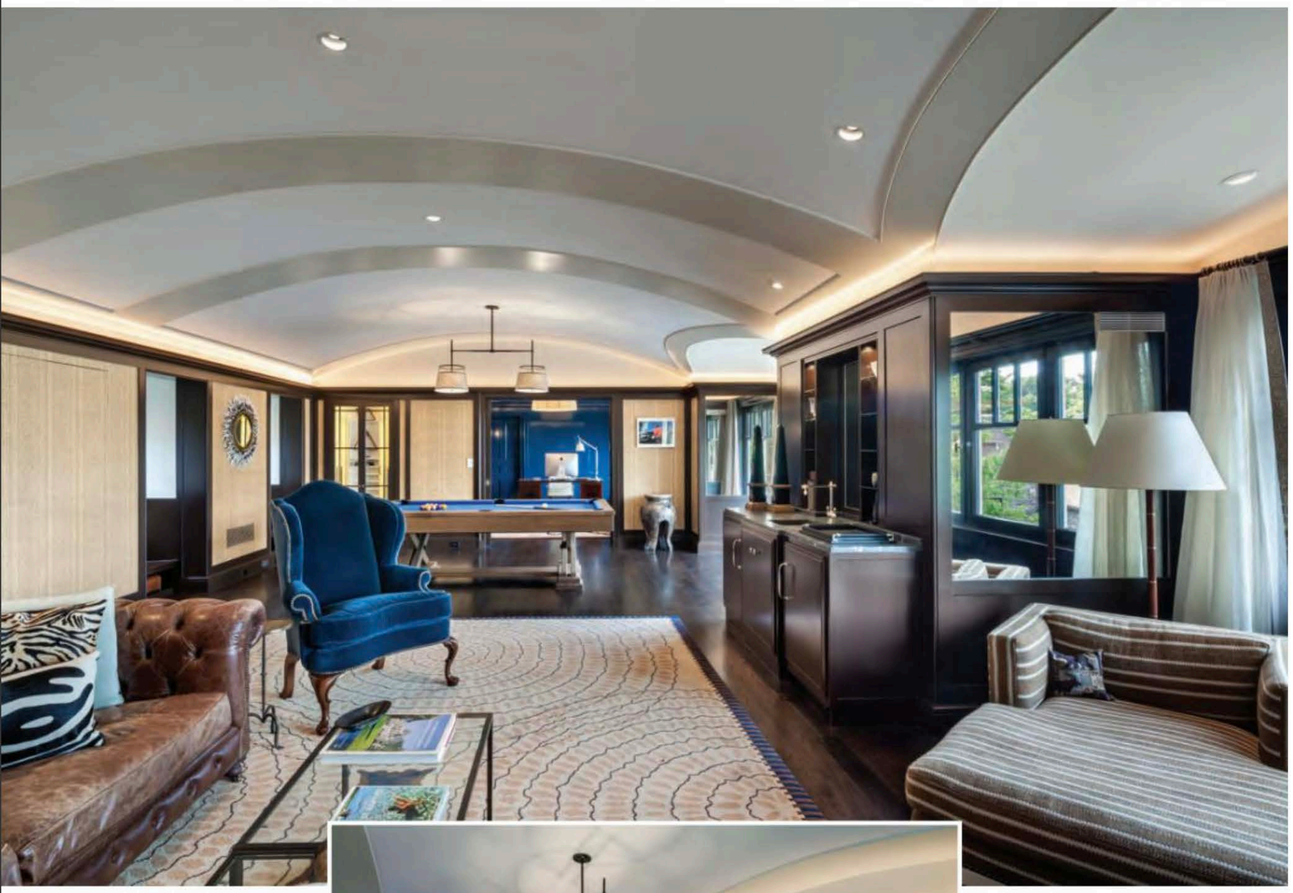
The master bathroom was fitted with new marble flooring, showers and countertops, creating an airy space with clean lines and amazing views.

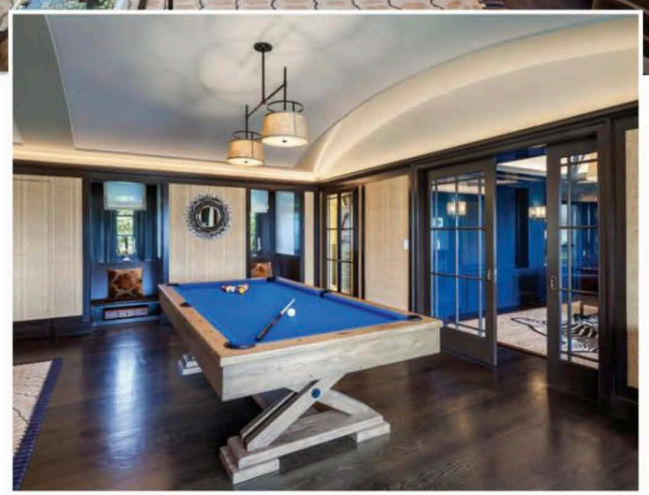


it was imposing on you and you felt dwarfed," Chris says. "We wanted it to feel like people were invited to the front door as opposed to an overpowering massive house when you stood in front."

In the interior of the home, the builders removed and replaced all existing trim, sheetrock and insulation. They accommodated the client's request for a new floor plan on the third floor, adding new steel columns for support after some structural inefficiencies were revealed. Barrel-vaulted ceilings were added along with new oak flooring throughout, with the exception of the living room, where antique original flooring was refinished to resurrect existing luster.

Ben's team added decorative Venetian plaster to the formal living room and stair tower, installed marble flooring and new showers in the master bathrooms, and updated kitchenware and countertops in the kitchen. They updated and refinished almost all areas, including the butler's pantry, kitchen and kitchen office, family room, mudroom, master bath, kids' homework room, library and





library office. To say this was an extensive project would be an understatement.

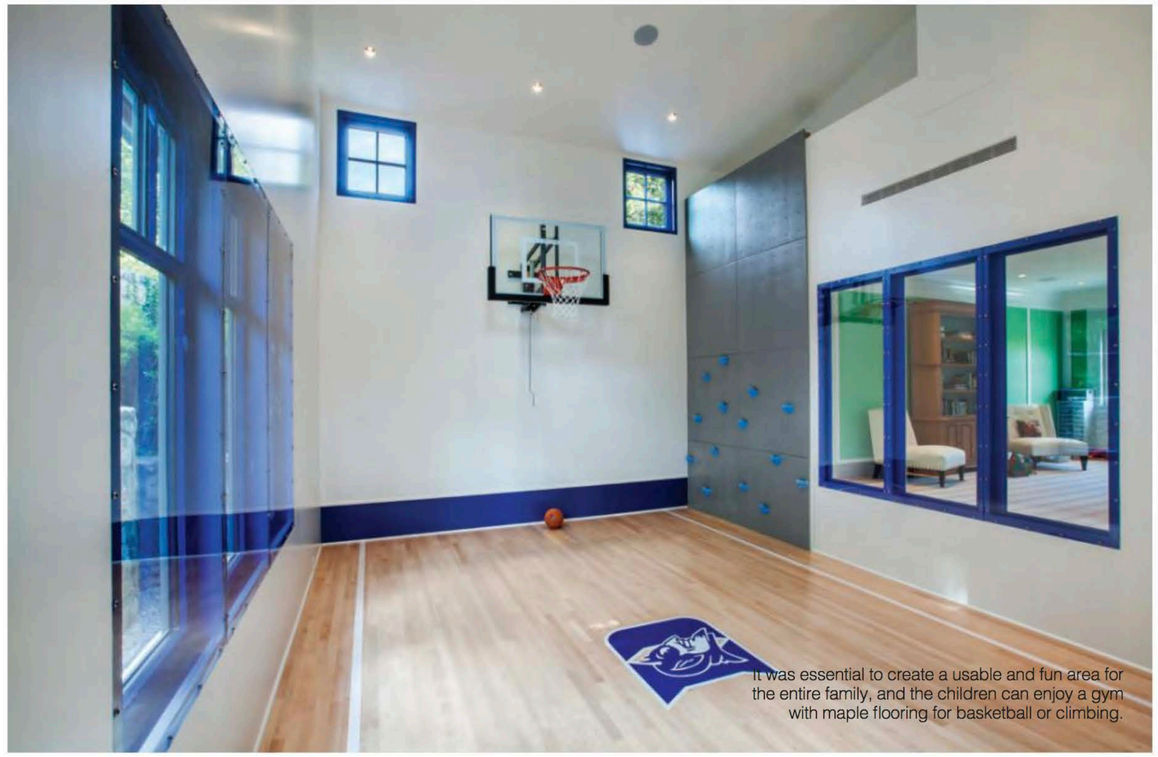
Livable Space

It was important for this family to have ample and usable space for the children. The renovation included a sports court with authentic maple flooring, equipped with a basketball hoop and a climbing wall. Beyond that is the homework room, and adjacent to that hallway are the children's bedrooms. "They wanted to make that feel like the children's wing, so as they grow up and have more friends when they get older, they don't feel like this is the formal living room where they are not allowed to put their feet up," Chris explains.

To enhance the space even further, the team finished the basement with a new gym with rubber flooring, a kid's movie space and a future wine cellar. The goal was to increase comfort levels without sacrificing design style.

Each project taken on by Ben Krupinski Builders is customized and unique to the client, and this property is chock full of one-of-a-kind details that distinguish it from any other home. The winding stairwell with custom metal railings and stonework shines with impressive natural light, and is a highlight to an already breathtaking environment.

The intricate lighting throughout the house was designed by Christian Rae Studio of Norwalk, and the impressive light fixture that seems to float down the stairwell is a commissioned, custom piece of art. The artist came to the house and saw the size of the stairwell, then coordinated with the interior designer



It was essential to create a usable and fun area for the entire family, and the children can enjoy a gym with maple flooring for basketball or climbing.

Built on an old rock quarry, it was important to the homeowners and builders to maintain elements of the original building.

to create this light piece, which illuminates three stories. All lighting fixtures were designed to enable a more energy-efficient space.

A project of this size and scale is successful only when the multiple teams can work together and coordinate. "With a good architect, a talented interior designer and a builder that can hold to realistic time frames and budgets, this made for a smooth execution and a beautiful outcome," says Chris.

This amazing feat was accomplished by expert designers and executed by seasoned builders. Ben Krupinski Builders has stayed in business for 40 years because it approaches each client and project with a hands-on approach. Chris says the firm's reputation and approach ensures the happiness of their clients. "We will jump through whichever hoop and value engineer, and go the extra mile to ensure they are receiving the best possible project," he says. "We would much rather roll up our sleeves and get our hands dirty than push paperwork."

A home of this magnitude can be built only by utilizing the best of the best when it comes to resources and manpower. The homeowners expected to be wowed—and this home certainly does not disappoint.

Resources

Builder
Ben Krupinski Builders
13 Arcadia Road, Suite 12
Old Greenwich, CT 06870
203.990.0633
bkbuilder.com

Architect
Robert Cardello
97 Washington Street
South Norwalk, CT 06854
203.853.2524
cardelloarchitects.com

Interior Design
Brian J. McCarthy
57 West 57th Street, Suite 505
New York, NY 10019
212.308.7600
bjminc.com

Lighting
Christian Rae Studio
8 Knight Street
Norwalk, CT 06851
203.939.1505
christianraestudio.com