

# EAST COAST HOME+DESIGN

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# ARCHITECTURAL INSPIRATIONS

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# DOUBLE HAPPINESS

*Cormac Byrne and his team at Jones Byrne Margeotes Partners work to create a joyful space that celebrates a blending of cultures.*

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It was the opportunity to build their dream home that first led the couple to the architectural team of Jones Byrne Margeotes Partners.

“The clients were initially referred to us by a local builder in Greenwich,” explained Cormac Byrne, JBMP principal. “They were a young, energetic couple with a dog that they adored.”

The homeowners were looking for a firm willing to design a unique house, one that combined their love of French-influenced design on the exteriors with the couple’s distinct cultural backgrounds (Chinese and Austrian) once inside. “Their desire was really for a French Country home aesthetic, but with a more formal floor plan,” stated Byrne. “Having worked on several homes of this genre over the years, we set about designing a stately residence that was balanced with a largely symmetrical front façade.”

### **Petit à Petit, l’oiseau fait son nid**

*—French proverb meaning “little by little, the bird builds its nest”*

Because the wife was well versed in the nuances of French architecture, she became intimately involved with all aspects of production. She chose the masonry for the exterior façade, being sure to add steeply pitched cedar roofs and curved sweeps at the eaves. She also selected the stone material as well as the site and orientation of the stones.

Byrne and his team installed large French casement windows on the second floor. The uniquely arched structures were elevated past the roof line, creating some interestingly shaped window openings in the process. Finally, they used cast stone surrounding the front door. Doing so adds a touch of formality to the home’s masonry work while hinting at the more formal blueprint just beyond the front door.

Upon entering the house, Byrne’s team continued the use of archways in the millwork and interior doors. Every entry has large double-arched glass to give the three-story home a truly open flow.

The design for the kitchen and breakfast rooms is purposely made to be intimate in size, with large windows opening to the rear yard. The area has access to the large stone terrace, which spans the rear of the house and overlooks the gardens. Byrne also installed a raised fireplace in the kitchen, adding warmth and coziness to the space.

The spacious family room is designed with large glass doors and windows to welcome in light, along with custom trim and exquisite hand-carved mantles to bring a









The vibrant Schumacher Chiang Mai Dragon wallpaper livens up the living room-offering a perfect contrast to the muted furnishings.





One of the most prominent nods to the family's cultural heritage is the Nepalese hand-knotted wool and silk carpet adorned with "double happiness" symbols. In Chinese culture, the symbol is equated with prosperity and family.

sense of elegance to the room. For added effect, the JBMP team also included detailed wood coffering in the ceiling, and a custom-made wood mantle.

As the home was being planned out, the team also made sure to update the space with cutting-edge smart home technologies. From electronic shades to Lutron lighting, the house is fully automated to provide simple convenience with a touch of a button.

### One generation plants the trees, and another gets the shade

—Chinese proverb

During the construction, one of the biggest challenges was to limit damage to the environment. Looking to be proactive, the homeowners brought in Dave Kramer with Rutherford Associates, landscape architects, to help maintain the spectacular wetlands area that surrounded the estate.





“One of the things we love most about our home is the several acres of beautiful nature preserve where it is located,” the wife said with a smile. “It is very tree dense, very cozy and welcoming. So we took extreme measures to preserve it, even going as far as planting indigenous vegetation in the surrounding areas.”

The couple’s careful attention to detail also extends to the elegant serenity patio just steps below the residence. The space’s rounded design harkens back to the symbolism of the perfect circle in Chinese culture, representing unity, while the manicured shrubbery assures all who enjoy the enclosure a closer connection to nature.



The team also added a gravel driveway as well as a small parking court in front of the house, which is lower than the approaching street. This adds to the architecture and blends the house in well with the property, rather than having it loom over the street.

### Der Teufel steckt im Detail

—German saying meaning “the devil is in the details”

Once the home was completed, the family took on the daunting task of decorating it. Because they wanted the interior to feel more organic as opposed to carefully staged, they decided not to hire an interior designer. Instead, they took their time to build out a space that represented all that matters most to them as a family. “We really wanted to have fun with the design process, so our approach was honestly a blend of both classic and slightly eccentric,” the wife reflected. “It helped that we saw the home as something that would evolve with us.”

To marry both cultures, the clients selected rich blues and subtle creams to be prominent in the mudroom/coat room, mud/powder/bath, back hall, family room and kitchen. Ceylon greens and peaches are dominant in the front hall, foyer, formal powder bath, living room and dining room.

Patterns also played a major role in the project, as the homeowners sought to foster a sense of playfulness in the otherwise formal layout. In the study, a playful zebra-patterned rug is featured prominently. Meanwhile, the living room boasts a lively Schumacher wall covering featuring dragons.

The most unique use of patterns, however, can be found in the family great room. There, amid the boldly colored blue walls and window treatments, sits a lovely Nepalese hand-knotted carpet with the Chinese symbol for double happiness repeated throughout. “In Chinese culture, the double happiness symbol is often equated with prosperity, success and family,” said the wife. “As family is a constant narrative throughout the home, we thought the carpet was a perfect addition.”

The most surprising addition to the dining room?

That would be the Schoenbeck chandelier that serves as a special centerpiece overhead. “We were really worried about whether or not it would be a great fit,” explained the homeowners. “But now, we love it!”











The couple's love of patterns is showcased in the study where a Stark hand-knotted silk rug greets visitors with its bold zebra print.

*For the homeowners, the chance to display their family heirlooms was one of the things that they savored most about completing the project.*

**To forget one's ancestors is to be a brook without a source, a tree without root**

*—Chinese proverb*

The concept of family was also a major factor when it came time to add finishing touches such as art and furnishings. In fact, much of the painting and artwork displayed were created by the wife's grandmother, while many of the furnishings demonstrate the legendary craftsmanship of her esteemed father-in-law. "A major influence in our love of the traditional classic Chinese, Hollywood Regency and French Chinoiserie periods was definitely inspired by the upholstery workrooms of my father-in-law, of the well-known Regency Shop, and his older brother," she said. "They were truly master upholsterers, using Old World hand-sewn techniques. The expert hours put into each piece were definitely unmatched."

The elegant pair of ebony chairs upholstered with Holland & Sherry Chinese fret fabric and the antique Biedermeier chairs in the study were upholstered by her father-in-law himself. He also created the luxurious Scalamandré covered side chair located in the dining room,







along with the lush headboard draped in classic Schumacher fabric in the guest bedroom. Meanwhile, the father-in-laws' handiwork can largely be seen in the French Provençal walnut sofa in the living room.

For the homeowners, the chance to display their family heirlooms was one of the things that they savored most about completing the project. "We treasure very much the few pieces we are so fortunate to have," said the wife, "as they serve as centerpieces in our home, in addition to my grandmother's Chinese paintings. It is a true marriage of the family's Chinese and European history and culture."

### La Maison de Rufus

The family was very pleased with the finished project—a space that truly honors some of the people and places they hold most dear. The couple knows that the chance to custom build a home is truly a privilege, and have nothing but praise for Byrne's team and their dedication to the project's completion. "JBMP was very fastidious and artistic about the million design details that come into play for a custom French aesthetic," said the wife. "These include the exacting pitch





of the cedar mansard roof, leaded copper leaders and gutters, stone quoining, stone coping, arched dormers, arched doorways, coffers, paneled millwork, rift sawn and herringbone flooring, French beveled glass doors and cabinetry, to name just a few. It's crucial for the architect to have a command of these essential basics."

Sadly, their beloved dog Rufus was not able to enjoy the home due to his passing not long after construction concluded. To honor him, the family decided to celebrate his life by adding a custom, hand-

tooled, quarter-board sign officially renaming the home "La Maison de Rufus."

"Even though he is no longer with us, we wanted to honor him as well, as we knew the home would have given him joy. He was very much a part of our family," the wife concluded. "And family, after all, is what this place is really about."









The homeowners worked closely to carefully preserve the plants and vegetation to give the outside a feel of the French countryside.





The clients wish to thank the following companies that had a hand in completing the project. Along with the work of JBMP, their craftsmanship and talent were unparalleled throughout the building process.

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