

ESTATE ESCAPE IN BACKCOUNTRY ROD LURIE GETTING POLITICAL

# GREENWICH

NOVEMBER 2016 | \$5.95



  
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## Faces

# of CHANGE

*Most Devoted Couple*  
  
**JANE & SCOTT PELLEY**

*Most Dedicated Committee Member*  
  
**REBECCA WILSON**

*Best Friend to Families*  
  
**GINA FILIPPELLI**

*Best Friend to Children*  
  
**DONNA CHAMMOFF**




*Lifetime Achievement*  
  
**KATHY GIUSTI**

*Outstanding Patron of the Arts*  
  
**LISA PETNO**

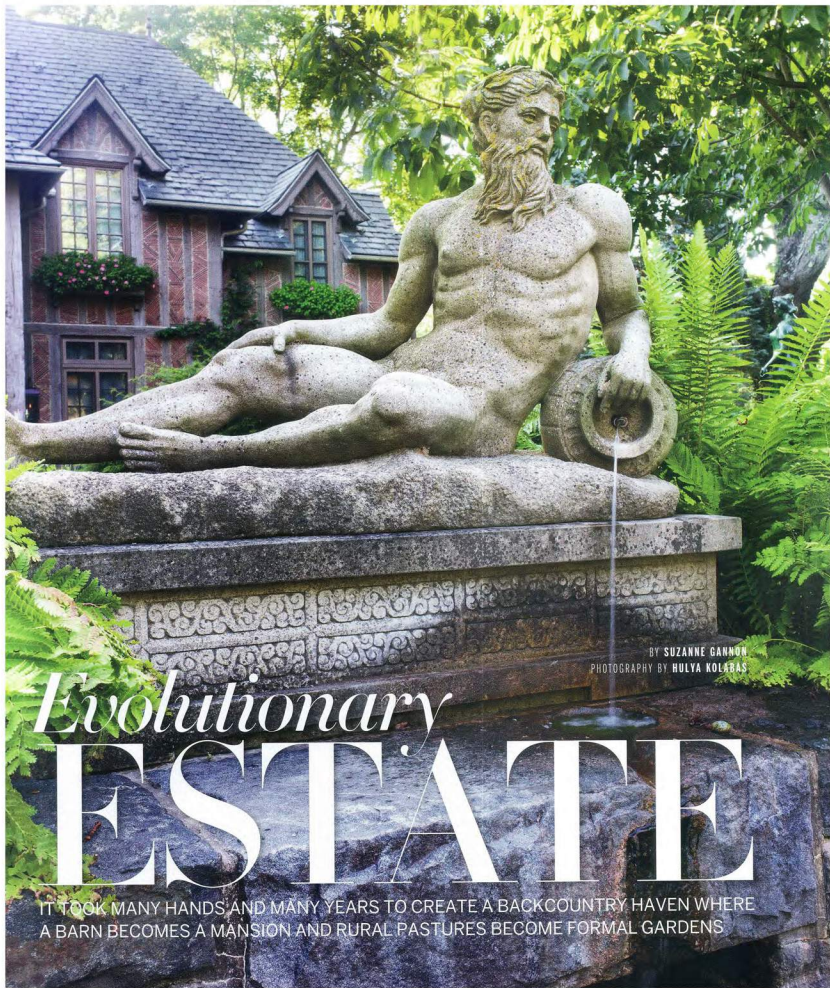
*Corporate Good Neighbor*  
**CINDI BIGELOW**

*Outstanding Teen*  
  
**OLIVIA JONES**

*Outstanding Health Advocate*  
  
**DR. ARNOLD PEARLSTONE**

*Outstanding Education Advocate*  
  
**JENNIFER LAPINE**

*Best Friends to Women*  
  
**JILL & RICHARD FITZBURGH**



BY SUZANNE GANNON  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY HULYA KOLERAS

# *Evolutionary* ESTATE

IT TOOK MANY HANDS AND MANY YEARS TO CREATE A BACKCOUNTRY HAVEN WHERE  
A BARN BECOMES A MANSION AND RURAL PASTURES BECOME FORMAL GARDENS

The entry hall showcases some of the owner's extensive collection of art. The chickens are part of the poultry series by Jean Pagliuso, whose work the owner first spotted in a Paris friend's apartment. The bench is 19th Century with a rush seat. Opposite page: A river god that Landman acquired at auction lounges above the reflecting pool.



Fred Landman and his wife, Seen Lippert, on the barn steps • The beams, which were assembled in North Carolina, taken apart, transported, and reassembled in Greenwich, lend the 10,000-square-foot barn interior a warm and rustic ambiance. Here, sixteen can sit comfortably at a the walnut table custom-made in Artisan Renaissance style from L'Antiquaire. The dining room chairs are custom Louis the XIII 'Os de Mouton' with a lavender Lee Jofa fabric.



In many ways, Fred Landman is an architect's dream client: unreserved, appreciative and loyal. Inversely, Charles Hilton, who goes by Chuck, is his client's ideal architect: meticulous, respectful and adventurous. The relationship between the Greenwich resident—who has over time amassed thirteen undulating acres in backcountry that he calls Sleepy Cat Farm—and the architect whose aspirations are outsized only by the grand residences he designs, spans some twenty years and numerous projects. Each of them is elaborate and ambitious in scale.

At the beginning of the collaboration, in about 1995, Landman had purchased a brick Georgian manse with a circular drive. But it needed an update. "There was pink Formica and a green banquette in the kitchen," Landman says. He hired designer Isabelle Vanneck of Davenport North in Greenwich to decorate, and she suggested that for the renovation Landman look at Hilton's work. Then a relatively recent graduate of Pennsylvania State University who'd traveled all over Europe and the mid-Atlantic U.S. studying classical forms, Hilton had just begun to practice in Greenwich a few years earlier. Although young, Hilton impressed Landman with his extensive knowledge of grand Georgian houses.

And so the journey began. The renovation, and subsequent addition, were executed within the rigorous context of the Georgian motif. Hilton rounded out a gracious drive, improved upon a pristine white portico supported by fluted columns, and added a wing that made the house symmetrical. The interior millwork was restored and enhanced, and the original single pane windows were replaced with custom insulated windows, all made true to the period and style of the house.

The pool and pool house were next, and for these endeavors Landman augmented the team of Chuck and Isabelle (and local contractor Bob Levine) with Charles J. Stick, a renowned landscape architect from Charlottesville, Virginia, whose boxwood terrace for a client on Taconic Road had captivated Landman.



Landman and Hilton at work.

Isabelle gave the pool house the unmistakable air of happiness—Palm Beach but with the informality of lollipop and ice cream cone décor elements, a cool spot where family and friends could retreat during a day of sunshine and swimming. Bright blues and electric aquas, graphic patterns and breezy furniture were the key components in a space that is dotted with fringed pillows and cut blue glassware. The spotlight is given to a backsplash of watery blue tile, hyperrealistic art of palm



Centered over the imposing limestone mantel is a piece by Robert Kushnier for whom the owner once modeled in a performance piece in SoHo in the early 1970s.





Opposite page and left: Under a graceful arch, the barn's kitchen reflects the culinary prowess of Landman's wife, Sten Lippert, who once worked beside Alice Waters. • Below: This breathtaking greenhouse, which Landman and his wife use for their Community Supported Agriculture project, is one of the many structures Hilton has designed for the couple and relates in style and scale to the cottage where Landman keeps his garden office.



trees and other seaside-oriented subjects, and a photograph over the mantel of a surfer negotiating a giant curl of big water.

With his ongoing acquisition of land parcels, Landman, already retired from his position as an early investor in satellite communications, had time—and room—to play. As he worked his way from west to east, the outbuildings located on the eastern perimeter of the property came into view. Next on the chopping block would be the existing ramshackle cottage adjacent to the road, and the construction of a sizable greenhouse for his extensive plantings.

Of the building that would become his client's office and a place to receive the slew of garden club tours that today come through the property, Hilton says, "It was clapboard [or shingle] in skin but not in form. Something was wrong. The forms were awkward." Indeed, the original building had been designed by William Dominick who is most well known for French country architecture. Shortly thereafter, Hilton traveled to France and visited the home Marie Antoinette had built on the grounds of Versailles in order to escape the palace. "It was French agrarian architecture, a beautiful, restored petite hamlet that was a perfect model," he says. "I realized [the Landman building] wanted to be French." »

A master bedroom with a spiral staircase on the left, a four-poster bed with a white and floral patterned coverlet on the right, a large crystal chandelier hanging from the ceiling, and two oval skylights. A window with a view of greenery is in the center. A desk with a TV and a framed picture are also visible.

Shaped by sophisticated architectural forms, the barn's master bedroom has the feel of a sunlit garret. The bed was custom-made by Disegno Kismet Gentiletta in New Orleans.

A TIGHTLY SPIRALING STAIRCASE LEADS TO A JEWEL OF A GARRET, COMPLETE WITH A WRITING DESK WHERE A LORD COULD MOST CERTAINLY MANAGE THE ACCOUNTS OF HIS FIEFDOM.





The spiral staircase leads to an airy room in a tower that features a mural.

No opportunity for detail is ignored, and the garden is never far away. Outside the window is one of the topiaries in the garden designed by landscape architect Charles Stick.



Once the cottage was returned to the form its original architect intended (and considerably enhanced), Hilton and Landman were ready for something new. An existing house, up on a hill, to which the ramshackle cottage had been a guest house, was next. It would turn out to be perhaps the best and most elaborate project the pair would undertake.

Taking his cues from the smaller outbuilding, Hilton designed a towering peaked “barn” with a slate roof that appears transported from the French countryside. The building seems to stand on a pedestal in a scale and proportion that are easy on the eye, a house drawn from a fairy tale.

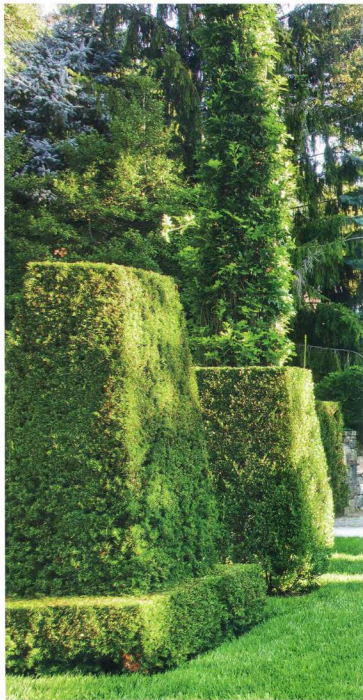
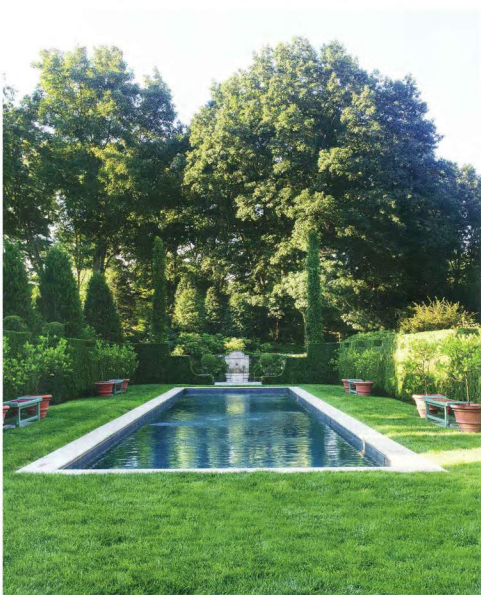
The structure, consisting of stucco, limestone and antique half timbers, constitutes a Chuck Hilton signature piece and belies its formidable steel skeleton, the only option the architect says would support the materials. On the exterior, diagonal timbers delineate voids into which masons mortared cut bricks, arranged in a classic herringbone pattern.

A governing principle in the construction of the barn—Hilton maintains that hillside building sites are more interesting than flat sites—was that it relate in a formal way to the gardens. A bay window looks out in perfect alignment, for example, to a sculpture of a man, reclining on a slab above a stream. The vignette is idyllic as are all of the numerous vistas and garden rooms designed by Stick.

Stick’s work across the property breaks down into four phases that have unfurled as the estate has expanded. Among the many highlights are the statue of Atlas centered at the terminus of a garden room walled by sinuous hornbeam hedgerows; a Chinese pavilion with gilded ceiling ringed by a pond of koi; a reflecting pool that radiates stillness; a grotto; and a laughing Buddha that greets those who venture into an enchanted woodland. And, in a winking nod to the toiling trio that has brought the grounds to life, there is a garden that encloses three chiseled busts on totems—Landman, Stick and Levine.

“I’m sure a sledgehammer will be taken to it eventually,” says Stick,

Around every corner there is something to discover courtesy of Charles Stick. A reflecting pool and a *parterre* with a canopied bench are just two of the stunning surprises that greet visitors.



who marvels at the friendship he has developed with his client. “The most salient thing I’ve learned is that it’s not enough to have the resources [for a project of this kind]. The key is the interest, the curiosity and passion, and the knowledge that a garden can expand your life, make it bigger, richer and fuller.”

Big, rich and full are among the attributes evident inside the barn. The space reverberates with a holiness that brings Gregorian chants to mind. Girded and braced by aged beams, it evokes the atmosphere of a highly stylized barn in which a family in Normandy would have slept in a loft above its livestock. (The interior architectural ribbing was made by hand in North Carolina, where it was assembled and then disassembled before being shipped to Connecticut where it was

put together again, at a pinnacle height of thirty-five feet.)

Landman’s longtime interior designer Isabelle Vanneck divided the 10,000 square feet into diverse and polished areas. The capacious communal space includes a luxurious sitting area with a Chinese opium table centered on a massive two-story fireplace fitted with a facing of French limestone. Inside, a stainless-steel smoke chamber is equipped with coils that are heated prior to the fire being set, in order to warm the air so that guests do not get a chill when the flue opens and a rush of air enters the room.

“The barn project was the most exciting by far,” says Isabelle. “The style of the structure is fabulous and choosing the stains for the wood and ordering the limestone from France—Fred loved doing it.”



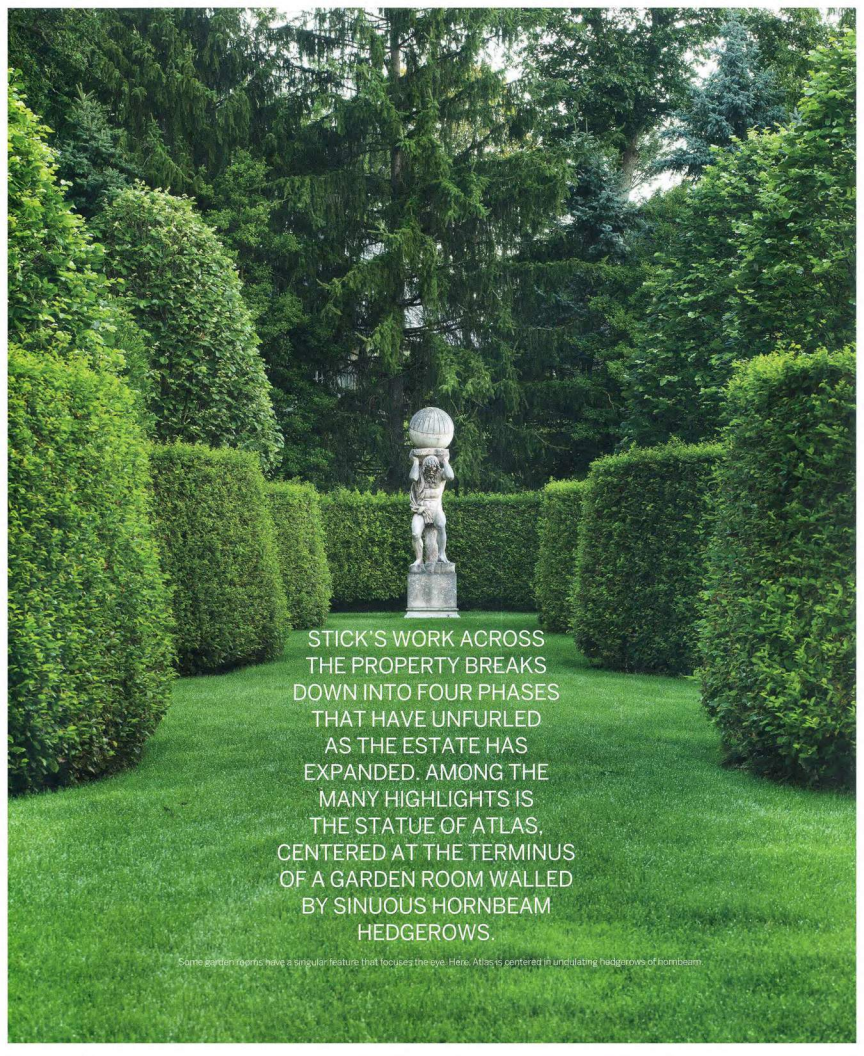
Across the way from the sitting area, a regal walnut table—made in the Artisan Renaissance style—is where Louis XIII would have felt right at home with guests on chairs inspired by his style and covered in a dusted-lavender fabric by Lee Jofa.

Floor-to-ceiling windows and custom-made chandeliers reminiscent of tangled tree branches dripping with icicles add drama and patina. “I was a nervous wreck bringing these two big black spiders into the space,” says Isabelle about the chandeliers. “But then the crystals lit the whole place up.”

The kitchen shows a chef’s touch, in this case the touch of Landman’s wife, Seen Lippert, who worked beside Alice Waters at Chez Panisse for more than a decade. Professional-grade pots hang

above an island, the stove displays purple Le Creuset cookware below the hood, and a stylish breakfast bar appointed with modified Klismos chairs promises a hearty repast.

Five bedrooms are located under the eaves on a mezzanine level of sorts, where a balustrade permits a view to the activities below. Each possesses a character all its own. The showpiece in the thoughtfully appointed master is a swooping metal bed, custom-made by Karina Gentinetta in New Orleans. A tightly spiraling staircase leads to a jewel of a garret, complete with a writing desk where a lord could most certainly manage the accounts of his fiefdom. Above his head, on canted walls, is a serene mural depicting a snowy landscape. Much of the art throughout the barn, including a quartet of plucky



STICK'S WORK ACROSS  
THE PROPERTY BREAKS  
DOWN INTO FOUR PHASES  
THAT HAVE UNFURLED  
AS THE ESTATE HAS  
EXPANDED. AMONG THE  
MANY HIGHLIGHTS IS  
THE STATUE OF ATLAS,  
CENTERED AT THE TERMINUS  
OF A GARDEN ROOM WALLED  
BY SINUOUS HORNBEAM  
HEDGEROWS.

*Some garden reports have a singular feature that focuses the eye. Here, Atlas is centered in undulating hedgerows of hornbeam.*



Stick captured his client's fascination with Asian gardens in this Chinese Pavilion ringed by a koi pond. With a gilded ceiling, the ornament is a place of contemplation. The gates of the walled garden refer back to the pavilion.

chickens, is from Landman's collection.

The most recent addition to the property is the limonaia. As he did with the other structures, Hilton went to Italy to research the form. The finished product is a low and narrow south-facing building where citrus plants can be sheltered in winter.

The limonaia was a gift to Seen, who now travels the world exploring the culture of food and the history of gardens, her husband in tow. When she, now a teacher and writer, is not touring Sissinghurst with her husband, taking in the lushness of Villa Carlotta, cooking for friends, or tending to the orchard or vegetable gardens, she cares with great affection for their menagerie: six Imperial Shih Tzus and a feline crew consisting of a Maine coon, two Ragdolls,

a Ragamuffin, an American Curl and some short-hairs, most of them rescued. In addition, she is very involved in community-supported agriculture.

Thirteen acres provides a lot of space to roam and tinker. And that's what Landman does, roving over hillocks, checking on his koi, winding through woodland paths, and sharing details from the ironclad memory of a man deeply dedicated to his current pursuit, uprooting weeds as he goes. "When you surround yourself with people who have a lot of talent and a lot of knowledge, it rubs off," he says. "They've enriched my life." He adds, "I like being here and sharing it. I get real joy out of other people's enjoyment."

Fred Landman is no sleepy cat.

