

PHILADELPHIA STYLE

A woman with long, wavy brown hair is posing in a black and silver sequined dress. She is looking over her shoulder at the camera. The dress has a deep backless design and a long, flowing skirt. The background is a solid grey color.

JOSIE MARAN

THE MODEL-TURNED-MAKEUP-MOGUL
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The Semerjians' home is a marriage of modern and European styles.

opposites attract

A MAIN LINE COUPLE'S DREAM HOME IS A FINE CONTRAST OF CONTEMPORARY ACCENTS AND EUROPEAN DRAMA. BY KATHLEEN NICHOLSON WEBBER

When Ani and Mark Semerjian look back on the two years it took to design and build their Main Line dream home, it reminds them a bit of a prize fight—one between two creative types with different opinions. Sometimes she'd win a round; sometimes he would. In the end, the couple—Ani, an interior designer with a flourishing business, and Mark, a high-end custom builder and renovator—created a luxe, spacious Tudor with nods to the modern (for her) and European (for him). The mashup is a manse with an old-world charm that makes the home look like it's been in Devon for hundreds of years.

When the Semerjians sketched out their 9,000-square-foot home with the help of Mark's father, George—a builder and architect who helped train

Mark and the owner of Semerjian Builders in Wayne—they each had to plead their cases room by room. “Mark is into heavy, detailed moldings,” says Ani, a native of San Francisco who has a master's degree in interior design from Drexel. “My roots are modern. I like more streamlined design. The whole house is a compromise of tastes.”

When she wanted dark floors and he wanted light, she won. When he wanted thick moldings, they ended up in all the living spaces. Mark started with the exterior, a Norman-style stone Tudor with a flare roof that looks European. They then fused the outside of the house with the inside. Their opposing styles now coexist: They used traditional materials like

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The horse painting is a prized, local find.



Ani and Mark Semerjian.

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—ANI SEMERJIAN

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Italian marble and Jerusalem limestone in an updated way.

Mark’s mission in this house was to have lots of wows wherever one went. “People should say, ‘Oh my God, look at that.’ That’s what makes a great house. We spent a lot of time creating those wow factors,” he says, noting elements like lighting and architectural details. They chose each room’s ceilings, an oft-forgotten area, to create some of these



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moments. “I think it is important to have something for your eye to look at in a room when it comes to a ceiling,” says Ani, owner of the design business Semerjian Interiors, now 10 years running, who appears regularly on NBC as a design expert.

Mark designed a central gallery running through the first floor with a bow ceiling, flanked on either side by intersecting arches. The two-story, 25-foot foyer was modeled after a cathedral in France. “When you enter the house and look up, you see arches and intersections,” says Mark, who has traveled to Europe extensively for inspiration and incorporates truly old-world building techniques into all of his homes. The foyer also features a dramatic wrought-iron staircase and limestone floors. The living room’s ceiling got special treatment. Made of real plaster with a diamond pattern, it is almost Gothic-looking. In the breakfast area, one looks up to find antique oak beams and corbels.

Mark readily compliments Ani’s ability to soften the Tudor home, which could have come off as too masculine. In the nearby kitchen, the designer chose one object, as she did with all the rooms, to become the piece that the room is designed around. In the kitchen, it was oversize lanterns. Gas lanterns, that is—the same kind as the ones the couple used outdoors. Ani called the township and got permission, and they had them installed. “They bring the outdoors in,” says Ani.

In the dining room, the focal piece was the Persian rug her grandparents gave the couple. The colors of the rug set the tone for the wall color—a deep, grayish navy that gives the space an English tone. For the master bath, the room was built around a tub that the couple designed, which was cut from an eight-ton chunk of stone and hand-shaped by stone carvers in Italy.

Ani, a California native, has embraced the beauty of this collaboration with her husband. And the last symbol of their negotiations is also a nod to her adopted hometown. “Because we live in Devon and the Devon Horse Show is in our area, I decided to add a local ‘touch’ to our family room, which is where we spend most of our time.” She saw a painting of a horse’s head at a local shop and brought it home. “Mark thought I was nuts because it is rather large [over four-feet wide], and he almost refused to hang it up. Now he loves it. It has become a focal point and a conversation piece.” **PS**

HIGH HOPES

Kurfiss Sotheby’s Kevin Steiger notes buyers’ top requests.

Buyers continue to rank “move-in condition” at the top of their wish lists. “A home with a good location, with modern amenities, and a neutral or mainstream color palette is on top of most buyers’ lists in most price ranges,” says Kevin Steiger of Kurfiss Sotheby’s International Realty. “As you move up the price range, each buyer has [his or her] must-haves. Granite countertops have become an almost standard request for many buyers. Up the price point and folks may be looking for a pool, upscale flooring, and high-end appliances. The higher you go, the more that is expected. Media rooms, workout spaces, or a multicar garage are typically associated with more expensive housing.” 6038 Lower York Road, New Hope, 215-794-3227; kurfiss.com