

25 BEAUTIFUL HOMES

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Decorating
this house
HAS BEEN
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CREATING A FAMILY HOME



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HOME TRUTHS

- ✦ **THE OWNERS** Tracy Garber and her husband Michael, a banker, their son Dylan and twins Paige and Riley, plus Kobe the Labradoodle
- ✦ **THEIR HOME** New England-style clapperboard house, built in 1966
- ✦ **LOCATION** Ilye Brook, a suburb of New York
- ✦ **ROOMS** Hall, sitting room, family room, dining room, kitchen-diner, laundry room, conservatory, five bedrooms (one en suite), four bathrooms
- ✦ **PURCHASED** 2003
- ✦ **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'Before this, we had an apartment in Manhattan,' says Tracy.

CONSERVATORY

The conservatory is dressed in vibrant blue striped material. The fabric is the same as the Norfolk Stripes fabric used in the lounge, £45 per metre, is similar

TERRACE

Rustic furniture complements the natural surroundings. The table is made of wood

'OUR HOUSE HAS A sense of calm'

Despite leading a busy lifestyle with three children, Tracy and Michael Garber's home is the ultimate peaceful retreat

FEATURE MELANIE WHITEHOUSE • PHOTOGRAPHY GAP INTERIORS



EXTERIOR

The house is clad in a synthetic version of traditional wooden boards, as they require less upkeep.



HALL
A mix of dark and white wood balances this space. New England Lifestyle sells a similar white sideboard for \$380.

Like many couples about to start their own family, Tracy and Michael Garber were keen to leave behind the hustle and bustle of city life and move to a more rural area, as Tracy explains...

What attracted you to this suburb of New York?

We were after a decent-sized house in a safe area with great

schools. We also wanted our new home to be fairly close to our families – the suburb of Rye Brook ticked all the boxes, plus it's only a 35-minute commute to Manhattan, where Michael works. The house was built in a New England architectural style that is so popular in this area; we fell in love with its simple look and

we just knew it was the one for us. On a more practical note, it had enough bedrooms to accommodate a large family, plus a generous garden.

What did you do to the house when you moved in?

We began renovating almost immediately. Although there was nothing wrong with the

property as it was, the layout didn't work for us and our plans for a family. One of the first changes we made was to knock down two walls that separated the kitchen from the dining room to form one large space. I wanted a more open feel and liked the idea of cooking in the kitchen while the children played nearby. We also built ▶



FAMILY ROOM

Muted colours have a calming effect. Vanessa Arbuthnott's Flora & Fauna design in Rabbit & Damon. Lat per metro is another floral fabric.

DESIGN ADVICE

"The fabrics we've used have soft tones, such as blues, greys and browns, which are all very soothing"

DINING ROOM

French design features heavily in this formal space.

For a similar oval table, try Nordic Style's Dellen extending design, £1,375. Direct Light's black-and-silver pendant light, £32.80, has the look of this shade

FINAL WORD

'Decorating this house has been a lot of fun. It's the perfect home for our family – for now!'



SITTING ROOM

'This sofa was my mother's and is one of my most treasured possessions,' says Tracy. Sofa reupholstered in Sanderson's *Brianna* velvet fabric, £37.55 per metre. The built-in bookcase has chicken wire in place of traditional glass doors. Black Swan sells a similar painted design for £299.

a covered portico at the front of the house, which looks really smart. Previously, there was a pool in the back garden, which we filled in after deciding that it would be a hazard with our young children around. Plus, after working out the trouble and cost of maintaining it for only three months' use a year, we realised it wasn't worth it. So, instead, the patio was extended to provide space for outdoor seating and an

extra six feet added to the decking, to enlarge the area.

What did you do next?

The first wave of changes began in 2002, and we started the next stage in 2006. We turned what was a dining room next to the kitchen into a sitting room, and then chose to create a new formal dining area from a family room. Finally, in 2008, we fine-tuned the design of the large sitting room, which

features two bookcases, and tweaked the layout of the dining room, too.

Did you carry out the renovation work yourselves?

Due to the size of the overhaul, Michael and I called in Paris Kostopoulos, an interior designer based in New York, to project manage the renovation. I was confident that he could help us create a modern interior that would

complement the traditional style of the property's exterior.

How did you go about deciding on a decorating style?

Overall, I wanted to achieve a classic look with a few traditional touches and statement accessories. Together with interior designer Paris, we settled on mainly dark-wood furniture for an antique feel, which we then countered with pale walls and soft ▶

**KITCHEN DINER**

Classic cabinetry and modern appliances mixes traditional and contemporary design. For comparable units, try the Original range from Harvey Jones. Kitchens start from £17,000



BATHROOM

Personalised stools allow the children to reach the sinks. Bauhaus has a large dark-wood vanity unit, £408, available from Choice Bathroom Shop. Interior design by Paris Kostopoulos (pariskdesign.com)



PAIGE'S BEDROOM

'The vintage Barbie prints in gold frames add a sophisticated touch,' says Tracy. Nursery check fabric from Fabrica & Paper, £32.40 per metre, is a match

furnishings. Paris explained to me that dark furniture set against a lighter background always provides contrast, which in turn can be used to add a touch of drama. I also embraced my love of French country styling by choosing subtle floral, stripey and checked fabrics in the living and dining areas. Finally, we chose some modern

artwork to inject colour into the scheme. Actually, the walls only feature items that are personal to Michael and I, such as friends' artwork and pictures of our children.

Why did you have more colour in the children's bedrooms?
I was very keen for Paige's bedroom to look not just girly

and pretty, but also elegant – it's my favourite area in the house. For the boys' rooms we opted for bold blues and reds – children's rooms should be colourful, after all!

Are you happy with the changes you've made to the house?
Most definitely. Our lives are busy and so is our house, yet I

always seem to get a sense of calm when I walk through the front door. I think we've got the mix of modern and traditional just right – complete with a few country elements for good measure. We've been thinking about adding an extension and enlarging the kitchen one day, but, for now, we're content. ☺



MASTER

Mirrored glass units are a glamorous touch. Our There Interiors sells a wide range of mirrored furniture; its Debbie design costs £160



DYLAN'S BEDROOM

'I love the big red star – it brings colour and flair to the space,' says Tracy. Olde Glory sells a set of three decorative red stars for £33. Try Scaramanga for a selection of vintage wooden chairs