

# Serene Sanctuary

DESIGNER JESSICA GERSTEN CRAFTS A SOOTHING REFUGE FOR A BUSY FAMILY WITH AN EMPHASIS ON COMFORT.

BY JEAN NAYAR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY COSTAS PICADAS

The home's refresh is meant to make the space feel like an escape from the craziness of everyday lives.

From the moment he purchased his home in Wainscott almost 20 years ago, Chris Schlank has seen it as a soothing escape from his hectic life in Manhattan. "It's a refuge," says Schlank, a founder and managing partner of Savanna ([savannafund.com](http://savannafund.com)), a New York City-based real estate company that repositions and develops new residential and commercial buildings in Manhattan. But much has changed in the real estate magnate's life

since he first moved into the home almost two decades ago. So he recently enlisted designer Jessica Gersten ([jessicagersteninteriors.com](http://jessicagersteninteriors.com)) to work with him to give it her touch.

"The home is part of a 30-acre preserve that my mother bought in 1982," says Schlank. "When I bought this property from her in 2000, I originally wanted to keep its farmhouse quality and tried to raise it 16 feet in the air in order to dig out a basement for use of my kids and create

more space," he explains. But when he realized the effort was not destined to succeed, he started over and rebuilt the five-bedroom home in a traditional Shingle style with a modern layout and influences inside.

"I always wanted the home to be very calm and bright," says Schlank, who was married to his first wife when he bought it and raised his children there in summers. His new wife, Amy Zhen, a commercial

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## space ABODE & BEYOND

...CONTINUED real estate broker with JLL ([us.jll.com](http://us.jll.com)), shares Schlank's taste for serenity. "But the bedrooms were designed for young children and babies, so it was time to rethink some of the spaces, especially upstairs," he says.

Riffing off the clean, calm spirit of the existing open-plan living spaces, Gersten started by reupholstering the sofa and chairs and introducing new accents in the living and dining areas. Next she turned her attention to the bedrooms. With occasional regular visits from Schlank's mother, he "wanted the downstairs guest room to be a place where she would feel comfortable," says Gersten. So departing a bit from the other bedrooms, this one was designed with a slight traditional bent and includes a queen-size bed with a bouclé headboard, blackened bronze side tables and cast bronze table lamps.

Upstairs, the bedrooms for his children—two sons, now 21 and 16, and a daughter, who's 20—got complete do-overs and lean more modern. "I love organic textures and earthy colors," says Chris, as do his kids. So earthy influences—homey custom beds (one made of cowhide and walnut), tree stump tables and lamps made of suede and brass—prevail in the rooms they occupy.



Clockwise from top: The first step of the redesign was reupholstering the sofa and chairs in the living room; Schlank rebuilt the home to be a Shingle-style home with modern interiors; all of the children's rooms were repurposed from their original style, now featuring neutral tones and unique decor.



"I wanted them to feel more masculine and rugged and added window shades with a bold printed pattern to make the room of his high-school-age son more boyish and playful," says Gersten. For Schlank's daughter, on the other hand, Gersten says she wanted to create a "special jewel of a room," and covered it with a wallpaper that simulates pale wood and created a custom upholstered headboard that wraps around one corner of the space to create a soft sense of substance. She also covered the floor with a bleached goat-hide rug and topped the bed with a fuzzy round pillow as a playful finishing touch.

With all the other rooms complete, Gersten is now working with Schlank and Zhen to recraft the master bedroom. "The idea," says Schlank, "is to create a space that is very peaceful, with warm colors and layers that give it a calm, loving feeling and reflect the way we live." Like the rest of the house, it will also no doubt serve as a relaxing antidote to the real estate power couple's high-energy workdays in the city. ■