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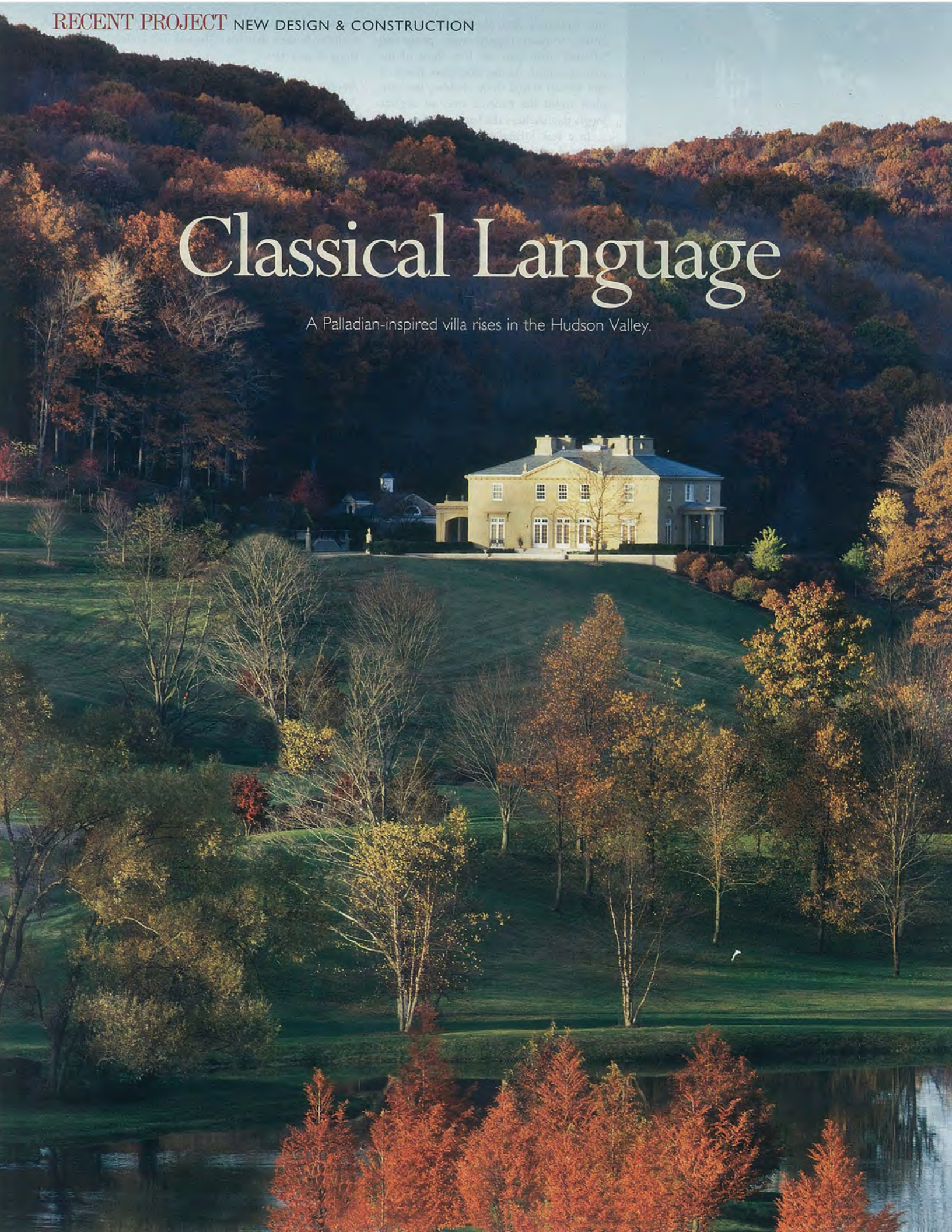
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RECENT PROJECT NEW DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

# Classical Language

A Palladian-inspired villa rises in the Hudson Valley.







Left: On the north façade, the half-round form of the breakfast room joins the two sides of the house like a hyphen. The chimneys from the east and west have been merged to create a sculptural effect. All photos: © 2010 Jonathan Wallen, [www.jonathanwallen.com](http://www.jonathanwallen.com)

Previous page: Designed by Peter Pennoyer Architects, Drumlin Hall in Pine Plains, NY, is a 7,500-sq.-ft. square Palladian villa.

Set amid the rustic woods of the Hudson River Valley, Drumlin Hall looks as though it were painted into the landscape, stone by stone, by a 19th-century artist. That's no accident. The square Palladian villa was designed to house an exquisite collection of Federal furniture and Hudson River School paintings.

"Our client said that she wanted something that looked like an imaginary collaboration between Robert Adam and Duncan Phyfe," says architect Peter Pennoyer of New York, NY-based Peter Pennoyer Architects. "Nobody had ever asked us for this."

When Pennoyer, design director Gregory Gilmartin and partner-in-charge Thomas P.R. Nugent entered the picture, the collector had been clearing the 150 acres of Pine Plains, NY, property in Dutchess County for nearly two years. "She is an astute collector of 19th-century American paintings, especially landscapes, and she saw this landscape through their artists' eyes," says Pennoyer. "She so deeply felt the architecture and landscape."

**PROJECT:** DRUMLIN HALL, PINE PLAINS, NY

**ARCHITECT:** PETER PENNOYER ARCHITECTS, NEW YORK, NY; PETER PENNOYER, PRINCIPAL; THOMAS P.R. NUGENT, PARTNER IN CHARGE; GREGORY GILMARTIN, DESIGN DIRECTOR

Drumlin Hall, which gets its poetic name from the surrounding drumlins (diminutive hills formed by glacial deposits) was carefully sited in the saddle between open meadows and an enclosed valley. "We walked the property on three occasions and staked it out," says Pennoyer, adding

that the landscape is one of rolling hills, pastures and horse paddocks. "People often want to build on the highest point, but in this case the lower elevation has much more impact. The meadows are on the arrival side, and it's screened from behind."

Siting the house was one of the bigger challenges of the project, according to Pennoyer. "It would have been easier if there had been 150 flat acres," he says, adding that the landscape was fully mature, thanks to the groundwork the homeowner had done. "But we didn't jump the gun; this was a critical early decision. The house is right where it belongs."

Each façade of the 7,500-sq.-ft. buff sandstone house was designed to be a beautiful Classical complement to the views. The south opens to open pastures; the north is enclosed by a hidden valley; the east features a sharp bank to a gurgling stream; and the west melds with a woodland garden. "The design had to work from every angle," Pennoyer says. "All is tightly organized around a central east-to-west axis. The idea was to keep everything taut and sober and to exploit the potential beauties of geometries."

The two-level house, which has a granite base and a natural slate roof, is reached via a stone bridge that traverses the stream. A portecochere centers the entrance, which is on the west. Bas-relief cornucopias, requested by the collector because they are a dominant theme in 19th-century American paintings, decorate the lunettes above the trio of French doors on the pedimented south façade.



The sweeping central staircase plays against the classic lines of the vaulted ceiling. The wrought-iron banister, which features eagles, pinecones and swags, was inspired by that of Cheekwood, an historic house in Nashville, TN. The classic rosettes at the top of the arch are counterpoints to the capitals' stars, which reference the owner's Texas background.





The door to the drawing room is quintessentially Classical: Its pediment, which features standing anthemia, is framed by Texas stars. The Federal furniture's red and gold upholstery is an historic reproduction and is the same fabric that the Met is using in an exhibit on Duncan Phyfe.

On the east side, a semicircular porch radiates out from a plinth. "It looks down over the stream; you can look at the rushing water," says Pennoyer. "And when you open the mahogany-framed windows, you can hear it. That's my idea of heaven."

The north elevation, which Pennoyer describes as being more "romantic in character and heroic in scale," is his favorite. "Its severe wings contrast with the columned bay of the breakfast room, and a massive chimney rises up through the roofs," he says. "The center of the house pulls back, and the chimney joins into a great sculptural form."

Inside, the public rooms are arranged around a groin-vaulted hall that frames a cylindrical stair. The 12- to 14-ft.-high walls serve as a gallery for the homeowner's art collection. "The idea was to build a house to provide places for the pictures she most treasures," says Pennoyer. "The ceilings are high enough for the art, but not too high, so the scale remains modest. We played with the placement of the paintings on our architectural drawings until we got it right. That's not something that many people do."

The lower level includes a drawing room, dining room, breakfast room, library and gun/hunting/riding room. Throughout, the owner worked closely with interior designer Thomas Jayne, known for his historically-based interiors, to create rooms that reinforce the Classical nature of the house.

Although the house is grounded in history, Pennoyer notes that it was not designed to be a museum piece. "The delicate details give a



The second-floor stair hall is illuminated by a handkerchief dome that provides natural light for the homeowner's collection of 19th-century paintings. A statue of George Washington is in the niche above the doorway.

feminine sensibility to the interior," he says. "Its moldings and forms have a lighter hand, and the house has a pared-down look with a more open layout. We made no attempt to distress any of the interior finishes, but we did use traditional graining and faux-painting techniques."

The traditional-style wood-paneled library, for example, puts its books inside small, domed recesses on each side of a central fireplace. Their forms hint at a rich history. The dome's robust lines are highlighted by the slim shimmer of gilded moldings — a Thomas Jayne touch. A more modern amenity — a wet bar with flip-down panels for serving drinks — is concealed behind the chimney breast. "It's an intimate space, and light floods into the room from every direction," says Pennoyer. "The gilded moldings on the domes really define them."

The drawing room, the most heavily ornamented space in the house, is the most prominent example of the new-old look. Like all the public rooms, it has Greek Revival door casings and pediments carved with standing anthemia. The Federal furniture, upholstered in red and gold, has light, simple lines. The feel is crisp and clean, not overly ostentatious.

"Perhaps the most surprising thing to the homeowner and to me was that as the details went in, they enhanced the proportions of the rooms, transforming them into comfortable living spaces," says Pennoyer.

A sweeping spiral staircase leads to the second floor, which houses the four bedrooms under its vaulted ceiling. Its undulating wrought-iron railing, decorated with pinecones, swags and American eagles





In the library, books are housed in cases behind the fireplace. The double domes are defined by delicate gilded moldings; the wet bar is located in the back of the chimney breast.

majestically standing at attention with unfurled wings, was inspired by that of Cheekwood, an 18th-century-style historic mansion that was built in Nashville in the 1930s. "The homeowner is from Texas, so we used a star motif throughout the house in honor of her heritage," says Pennoyer. "It makes the house singular to the client."

The upper level's handkerchief dome provides dramatic interest — and natural, even illumination for the homeowner's paintings. "She loves this part of the house even though it doesn't have any function," says Pennoyer. "The dome, which looks as light as a handkerchief, gives an airy yet classic look. She uses traditional picture lights, so there are no holes in the ceiling for lights."

The materials, too, distinguish Drumlin Hall. The sandstone was imported from and carved in China, and the upholstery on the drawing room furniture is an historic reproduction that the Metropolitan Museum of Art selected for an exhibit on Duncan Phyfe. Stone for the project was supplied by Rhodes Architecture Stone of Seattle, WA. Other suppliers included: Architectural Iron of Milford, PA; Artistic Doors & Windows of Avenel, NJ; Ketonah Architectural Hardware of Cornwall Bridge, CT; and New York, NY-based E.R. Butler & Co.

Pennoyer credits the successful design of the house to the "sophisticated vision" of the homeowner, who longed to create a residence that would stand the test of time. "Our team has been working together for 20 years," he says. "We've been training our entire careers to do this house."

"It's unusual to find this very happy juncture of furniture and art and the building itself. It feels utterly harmonious." All in all, Pennoyer says the Hudson River Valley house is picture-perfect: "It's a representation of someone sitting back and looking back at the landscape with a scientific and an artistic eye."

Now, all the owner has to do is commission an artist to paint it for posterity. — *Nancy A. Ruhling*

*Nancy A. Ruhling is a New York City-based freelance writer and Huffington Post blogger.*

On the south façade, bas-relief cornucopias were carved on the blind arches above the French doors. The owner has a collection of 19th-century Hudson River School paintings, which commonly use them as motifs.







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