

# DESIGN + DECOR

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# ESTATE SIDE

Lake life in Syracuse calls for a Georgian manor

Story by Heather Shoning | Photography by Durston Saylor





Mimicking historic Georgian properties, the home exudes a feeling of history, as though it were added onto over time, with the central main area being stone, while other sections have siding. The observatory features the carved limestone panels over the windows as a nod to the family that lives here.



There's something both stately and understated about Georgian architecture. Its essence harkens back to early colonization in the early 1700s, when settlers used British architectural building manuals—pattern books. The construction of these buildings reflected colonial growth and prosperity. The imposing stone or brick façade and stature give this style its grandness, while the calming symmetry gives it an inviting air. The same is true of the Georgian manor that sits on the shoreline of Skanateles Lake outside Syracuse, NY, which was designed by Wadia Associates, based in New Canaan, CT.

The homeowner knew exactly what she wanted, and Dinyar Wadia, principal of Wadia Associates, was able to translate the client's words and hundreds of inspiration photos into the language of this opulent home. "She was very focused and knew exactly what she wanted," says Dinyar. "She wanted a Georgian house, which is a very formal style without it being staunch." A variety of design elements





The grand staircase, window and ceiling ornamentation takes its cues from British neoclassical architect Robert Adams.



While the doors and windows remain the same throughout the home, the living room takes a departure with additional vertical casings on the fireplace wall and in the corners of the room. The egg-and-dart pattern graces the cornice in this room.



come together to achieve the formal design that still feels like a warm family home. According to Dinyar, the color and texture of the siding, the proportion of the doors and windows, and the dormers and the lookout on the top give the exterior of the home the relaxed Georgian feel.

### Growing Up with Architecture

Designing a project of this magnitude requires a sophistication of talent—a deep understanding of the language of the period architecture, as well as a love for the craft. Dinyar came by both organically. While he was growing up in Mumbai, his mother was a builder specializing in condominiums. He jokes that while the structures she built made her wealthy, they were not particularly beautiful. “She had an architect, Mr. Thucker, who didn’t have any taste except the taste in his mouth, and his designs were awful,” Dinyar says. “So I always said to her that one day I’d show her she can do better than Mr. Thucker.”

Joking aside, Mumbai is home to some of the most beautiful architecture in the world, and Dinyar’s mother was sure to expose him to it. “I lived two minutes’ walking distance from some of the more beautiful build-



ings in the world,” he says, “and even though she was intent on making money, she was also intent on pointing out to me the beauty of these buildings.”

Dinyar attended the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, which at the time offered a faculty in architecture undergraduate degree. He

learned all about proportion in classical architecture there by doing numerous measured drawings. “Every year you’d have to do two or three existing buildings that you measured, and then you drew them up to scale,” he says. “That’s the best way to learn good proportion in classical design.” By the time he finished school, he had designed three apartment buildings that his mother had built.

Dinyar went on to get his master’s degree from Columbia University, and then to work for one of his professors as an apprentice of sorts before striking out on his own.

### Employing His Talent

In 2020, the Institute of Traditional Architecture named Wadia Associ-









Very much a mix of styles, the dining room displays an overt chinoiserie style in the wallcovering and furnishings, while the millwork remains Georgian in nature.

ates Number 9 on its list of top traditional architects in the world. It's easy to see why Wadia was the top choice to design this sprawling Georgian home. Leading a team of three architects from his firm, Dinyar spent nearly two years overseeing the project down to the very last detail.

The hallmarks of the style on the exterior of this home include the symmetrical form and placement of multi-pane windows, a hipped roofline, stone walls, the elaborate entry portico and door surround, ornamental cornice and the belt course running horizontal through the middle of the structure.

"Every home is such an intimate place for a family, and it has to carry the distinct signature of the owners when you're building a house like this," says Joel Pidel, senior design associate. "There's nothing prefabricated about this. Every grout line, every molding, every floorboard is thought about and detailed so nothing is overlooked."

To that end, to meet this homeowner's desires and needs for her legacy property, says Joel, the interior details sometimes take leave of a strict Georgian style. "It's not specifically Georgian throughout, though it draws on the work of architects David Adler and Charles Platt," he says. "Certain rooms have a different flavor than you might have found in a period Georgian house—for instance, the finishes, colors and other ornamental features."

A recognizable example of this blended styling is the dining room, with its Georgian modillion blocks, chinoiserie wallpaper, lattice-style fretwork in the chairs and over-





The look in this family kitchen is very much a departure from the rules of Georgian design, and is instead designed for casual living. The room provides ample seating areas as well as space for making everyday meals.

doors, and classically traditional fireplace design. “The inspiration for this room was taken from a dining room the owner had seen in a book about David Adler’s architecture,” says Joel.

To ensure that no space feels out of place or takes too deep a departure from the Georgian style, certain design elements repeat throughout the home, with only slight changes. The doors and windows are the same throughout. The cornice carries through most rooms of the home with slight variations—for example, some rooms have an egg-and-dart pattern, while others have a lamb’s-tongue detail. The baseboard and casing profiles might repeat through a suite of rooms, but the next suite might exhibit a variation on the previous motifs as a way to provide variety within familial unity. The methodology behind this design mimics the one settlers followed in building these homes—there is a hierarchy. “The more important rooms get the more elaborate or larger molding profiles, and the lesser important rooms tend to get smaller and less elaborate profiles,” says Joel. “That serves both a hierarchical function and as a function of cost. The more expensive rooms are going to be the public rooms and the primary suite.”

He adds that a certain amount of negotiation happens during the design. “You’re trying to give the client what they want, but when you’ve been doing this for 15, 20 or in some cases 40 years, you might know a little bit more

than the client doing it for the first time,” he says. “And there’s a give-and-take in the process of educating the clients while trying to give them what they want, by translating what they are asking for from another context into this specific context.”

Dinyar says the client came into this project very clear on what she wanted because she had done her homework and had many inspiration images. “Her reference library is probably better than most architect offices’ reference libraries,” he says. And because she was so well-educated on the period style, she questioned Dinyar at every turn. “She is a fantastic client—very focused and very challenging,” he says. “I had to prove to her each time I did something that it was just the right thing to do.” By way of example, the homeowner challenged Dinyar on the design of the Dutch door. “The proportion needs to be a little bit different—because of multiple locking mechanisms—than a regular Dutch door with a spectrum lock,” he says. “And she would not just accept that. She had to research why the door looked different.”

#### Making It Personal

Because this home is intended to be a legacy for the family, which includes four children, the homeowner wanted to personalize it in a subtle way. Dinyar came up with the idea of carved limestone panels to represent each child.





While the service pantry doesn't exude a Georgian feel, it carries a very classic feel with a highly polished look, adding an almost dark, moody speakeasy feel.













The home backs up to the Skaneateles Lake, offering multimillion-dollar views and plenty of land to house the pool, pool house, boathouse and more.







The client shared with him the specific interests of each child, and he created four unique designs that are carved in limestone blocks and embedded in the walls of the conservatory.

The estate caters to the way the family lives. Outdoors is a pool with a pool house, tennis courts and a boathouse. Inside, the home features three kitchens, one of which is a large catering kitchen for the extensive entertaining the homeowners do. In the end, the entire estate—especially the main house—is exactly what the homeowner wanted, whether it stuck strictly to Georgian style or not. “The moral of the story is, just because you haven’t done it previously, that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t try something different,” says Dinyar. “She pushed me, and it was very successful.”

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