

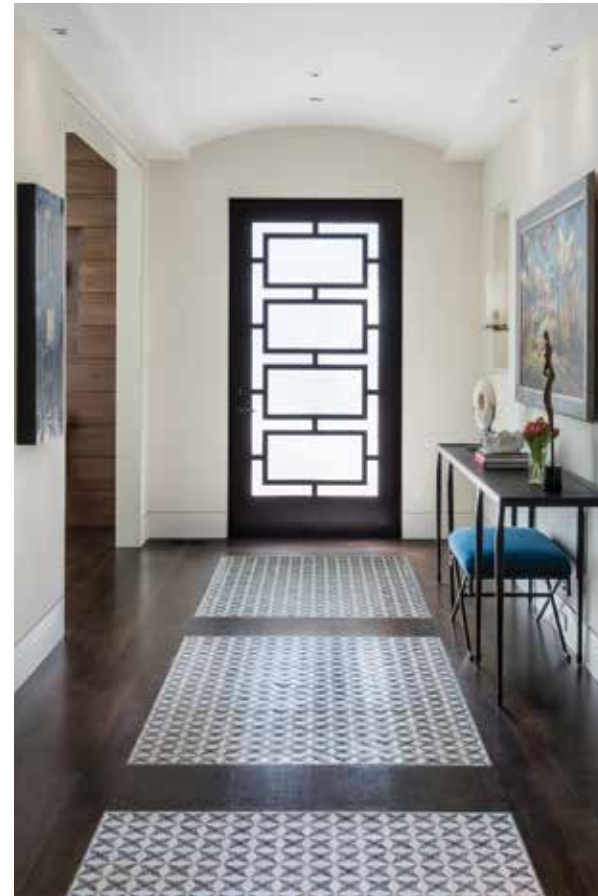


Chaises await sunbathers on the pool deck, paved in cool-to-the-touch porcelain tile. A decorative water feature with a trio of fountains creates a resort feel.

Departure Point

Designer Lauren Sachs realizes her vision for a new home that celebrates the laid-back, outdoor lifestyle of her favorite travel destinations

Text by SHARON JAFFE DAN
Photography by MAXINE SCHNITZER



Lauren Sachs greets guests with carefully considered details, from the wooden front door to the metal canopy above it (above). She designed colorful inlaid mosaics that mimic rugs in the entry hall (top, right). A step-banded walnut panel warms the dining room (opposite), where an Oly Studio screen affords privacy from the street. The hall leads back to the family room (top, left), furnished with custom pieces from Sachs' previous home. Large-scale Windsor windows bathe the interiors in light.

After 22 happy years spent raising two daughters in Potomac, interior designer Lauren Sachs and her husband were ready for a change. “We wanted to create a more urban lifestyle,” she explains of their decision to build a home near downtown Bethesda so they could walk or bike to shops, restaurants, movies and the Metro.

Sachs had already assembled an arsenal of ideas when they found the perfect lot near all the action. Inspired by years of travel—and holidays in memorable vacation homes—she and her husband channeled a vision for their future perch that was more Malibu than Maryland. “Aesthetically, we wanted a Mediterranean contemporary, something that would fuse in fairly well but not look like everything else in Bethesda,” says the designer. “We wanted a European feel with a California twist.”

Building a home from scratch, even for a designer, is not for the faint of heart, so Sachs hoped that the end result would be transformative. “Once we stepped in the door, we wanted the feeling of transporting ourselves to another place,” she reflects.

Architecture: **Warren C. Ralston**, AIA, W.C. Ralston Architects, Chantilly, Virginia. Interior Design: **Lauren Sachs**, L.S. Design, Bethesda, Maryland. Kitchen Design: **Meghan Browne**, Jennifer Gilmer Kitchen & Bath, Chevy Chase, Maryland. Builder: **Greg Barger**, superintendent, The Banks Development Co., Bethesda, Maryland. Landscape Architecture: **Mark Finlayson**, Wheat’s Landscape, Vienna, Virginia. Styling: **Charlotte Safavi**.





Centered around a custom steel-and-glass table, the family-room bar area (opposite) is a party magnet. From the family room, guests spill through a stacking Loewen door onto the covered porch (left), where the dining area/bar features a pass-through window to the kitchen. Century sofas and chairs in Sunbrella fabric surround a mantel of Sachs' design (above). The fireplace, along with heaters built into the paneled ceiling, warms the space in cooler weather. The sconces were imported from Turkey.



Designed with Meghan Browne of Jennifer Gilmer Kitchen & Bath, the kitchen (above) features a quartzite-topped island with a waterfall edge; custom pendants hang above. The peripheral countertop, made of weatherproof Caesarstone, seamlessly extends to the alfresco bar via a pass-through window. Glass-and-steel cabinet doors echo the style of the home's windows. A cozy sectional and breakfast area with a banquette (opposite) beckon.



Though narrow and long, the flat lot they purchased perfectly suited the couple's desire for one-level, indoor/outdoor entertaining. For help translating her vision into buildable plans, Sachs partnered with architect Warren Ralston. Together, they devised a layout to fit the shape of the lot.

A wide entry hall creates an axis through the public areas in front, with the dining room, staircase and family room to the right and the kitchen on the left. Aligned with the family room is a covered porch featuring seating and dining areas. The porch is embraced by the house on three sides; the fourth side spills onto a pool terrace stretching to the property's rear lawn.

"Normally, exterior living happens behind the home," says Ralston. "But right from the start, this dynamic outdoor-living zone was carved from the center of the house. By allowing it to be built into the architecture, you have more spaces that engage with what's happening outside."

Beyond the family room and porch, the main hall culminates at the ground-level master suite. A spa-like bath is tucked behind the bedroom, which opens to the pool in true resort style.

On the second floor, there is a guest suite, Sachs' light-filled office and chic bedrooms for the couple's two college-age daughters. The lower level contains another guest room and a man cave where Lauren's husband Gene, a real estate executive, and his friends often gather to watch sports and play the world's best courses on a virtual golf simulator.

For design inspiration, Sachs referred to photos she'd collected over the years of homes in far-flung locales, from Anguilla to Italy. Elements from these images came into play as she honed in on exterior forms and materials. The home's simple volumes are clad



Sachs designed back-lit screens that create Moorish-style niches in the limestone-clad stairwell (opposite, right); the same motif forms a decorative panel above (opposite, left). The designer works in a lofty new home office (above), flanked by windows on two sides. The stools are from David Edward and the chandelier by Made Goods is composed of tiny shells.



“I am drawn to Moorish and Moroccan design, but I don’t want it to overpower.”

—LAUREN SACHS



in light-gray porcelain tile and stucco, with a dark metal roof and dark window mullions adding crisp contrast. Wood accents enrich the monochromatic planes. Says Ralston, “These subtle nuances allow the house to fit into the neighborhood and also distinctly set it apart.”

Interior architecture leans in a spare direction as well. “I’m big on details,” says Sachs, pointing out the frameless doors, recessed baseboards and light color palette she selected. “These were the foundation and I built on them.”

Subtle references to faraway destinations abound. “We’ve traveled all over and I am drawn to Moorish and Moroccan design, but I don’t want it to overpower,” she explains. In lieu of carpet in the entry floor, inlaid tile mosaics roll out a welcome. Backlit screens in an Eastern motif are built into the stairwell’s limestone walls. Kitchen cabinet doors mimicking weathered driftwood lend a California vibe. And step-banded panels of walnut wrap the dining room and family room in warmth and texture.

“Lauren’s style is so distinctly hers and she has a keen eye for interior millwork,” Ralston comments.

Architect and designer attribute the project’s success to their collaboration from day one. “The relationship of the builder, designer and architect is so imperative,” says Sachs, who was on site daily throughout construction.

Also important to the Sachses was keeping the project as eco-friendly as possible. They selected a geothermal heating and cooling system, sustainably harvested woods and a metal roof that would last a lifetime.

In the way of furnishings, Sachs focused on clean lines and comfort, with light fixtures making a bold statement. Some furniture was repurposed from her previous home—and she is still on the lookout for some new artwork and the perfect kitchen backsplash.

But with the lion’s share of the work behind her, Sachs began enjoying her home the moment she and her family moved in last year. Whether they’re spending time alone, celebrating a holiday with extended family or hosting a charity function, it makes a perfect setting. “The flow has been fabulous and we’ve had people here till two in the morning,” she marvels. “It has been better than we could have ever asked for.” ■

SOURCES OF NOTE

Windsor Windows & Loewen Doors: thesanderscompany.com. Bar Pendants, Porch Fan & Master Bath Sconces: domionoelectric.com. Master Bath Shower Tile: porcelanosa-usa.com. Master Bath Tub & Powder Room Sink: ferguson.com. Powder Room Tile: marblesystems.com. For a complete list of sources, see homeanddesign.com.



The master suite epitomizes relaxed, indoor/outdoor living. Top, left to right: Behind a floating divider clad in Romo wall covering, the “womb-like” bedroom features a door opening onto the pool terrace. The master bath (above, left and right) balances masculine and feminine elements, with its wooden vanity and delicate mosaics. Also connected to the pool terrace, a powder room (opposite, bottom left and right) boasts custom cabinetry and tile from Marble Systems.