

BUILDING A DREAM

Rich Granoff Celebrates 25 Years of Style & Design

GREENWICH

APRIL 2015 | \$5.95

STATE OF REAL ESTATE

What's
affecting your
investment
right now

PLUS

SUMMER KICKOFF!

Behind the scenes of the
Greenwich Town Party

GREENWICHMAG.COM



BACKYARD BATTLE

What you *must* know about Lyme Disease

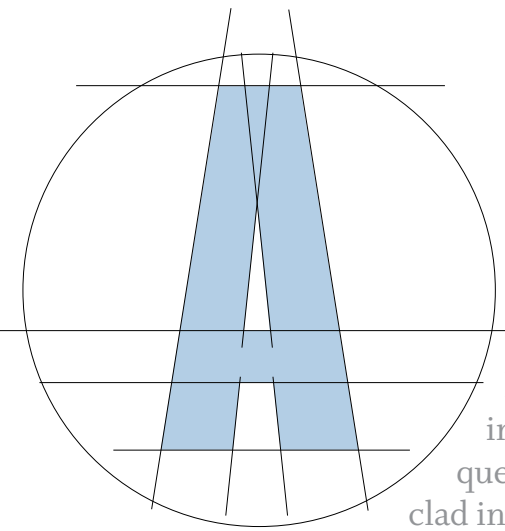


BLUEPRINT BY STOCKPHOTO.COM/© BELTZ

MAN WITH THE PLANS

For twenty-five years Rich Granoff has been making his mark on Greenwich, transforming major public spaces, donating his services to local nonprofits and creating dream homes for grateful clients. But make no mistake, he is most certainly not all work and no play

BY MARY KATE HOGAN
PORTRAIT BY WILLIAM TAUFIC



man's home may be his castle, but for architect Rich Granoff, it's a family retreat, entertaining zone and also a professional testing ground, an incubator for his ideas. "This is my laboratory," he says of the home in which he and his wife, Jill, have raised their two sons, the youngest now a senior in high school. "This is a twenty-year project and it's ongoing." The home in question, originally a tiny carriage house before an addition, is a shingle-style clad in natural red cedar and set on a sloped, rocky property on a quiet cul-de-sac just five minutes from town. When visitors amble up the stone steps and ring the bell, they may be greeted by Ingrid, the family's nanny/housekeeper of seventeen years ("She's part of our family," Rich says), who welcomes them into an entry hall filled with museum-quality modern art.

Sitting on an upholstered swivel chair in his double-height living room, Rich says, "I'm always doing a project here. This room just got refurnished completely." He gestures to the new gray leather couches, glass coffee table and a side table made of petrified wood. He grabs an iPad and taps it. "Here's why we have these chairs," he explains as a large screen emerges from the ceiling, moving down like a garage door until it completely covers a built-in bookshelf. At the same time, a projector slowly swings down from the ceiling across the room and, *voila*, the room has morphed from gathering place into a home theater. "You can turn this way and watch a movie," he says, twisting his seat around. Rich and his wife, Jill, are film buffs who've been to Sundance and they'd rather watch here than in some separate, dedicated basement room. The iPad he's holding also controls the lighting, and the whole house is wired with speakers indoors and out, providing a constant soundtrack.

This light-filled living room with a colorful Hunt Slonem painting hung above the stone fireplace suits the family's social side too. "We entertain a lot, lots of parties here," Rich says. For his birthday, they cleared out the furniture to make room for a band and a dance floor. On Thanksgiving, sixteen family members gather for dinner in the adjacent dining room, the whole meal cooked by Rich



and Noah, his younger son and "sous chef." Being a LEED architect who's wired to build with efficiency, Rich finds ways to help people maximize their square footage, designing creative, multitasking rooms just as he's done at his own home. He has also installed solar panels on the roof of his south-facing porch, put in a pool, cabana and a waterfall

feature, and landscaped the property with specimen trees illuminated at night. Though he's created plans for hundreds of buildings and houses, these personal projects give him insight that he can relay to clients. Even as he continues to update and evolve at home—a gut kitchen renovation is next—the work is completed carefully over time.

THE HOLISTIC APPROACH

This year Granoff Architects is celebrating twenty-five years of business in town. Like his home, he has grown the business organically, adding just one or two employees at a time to keep up with demand. Today, his staff of twenty-five serves residential and commercial clients and includes landscape architects and interior designers. "Clients love the fact that they can come to the office for one meeting and work on three different aspects of the same project," he says. Granoff also owns a real estate development firm. And he's expanding

his professional square footage too: He's in the process of buying a new office building in Greenwich for the firm.

Rich is a poster boy for multitasking: He keeps his firm buzzing with activity while also serving on the boards of Kids in Crisis, ONS Foundation, Chabad of Greenwich, the Arch Street Teen Center, Greenwich Chamber of Commerce and Steve's Camp. On the one hand, he's juggling commercial and residential projects, transforming historic sites in town such as the post office and doing pro bono work for organizations like

company Vince—to the train station every morning to catch the 6:45. "We don't sleep much," he says with a laugh.

At work he takes a team approach and gives major credit to his talented staff, including his number two, Andreas Stresemann, vice president and head of the commercial architecture studio; Ken Andersen and Irene Ioffe, principals; Sarah Snow Vitek, head of commercial interiors; and Robert Brehm, who oversees the landscape group. "We have an amazing team. Some have been with us for twenty years." Rich's zest for life and people skills seem to fuel his business success.

As in many fields, listening is key. "People say they want a certain thing, but once I really grill them on it, they may want something else. It's my job to pull my clients' vision out of their heads," says Rich. When it comes to working on houses, he adds, "You definitely act as psychologist and marriage counselor. It's very interesting because many times there's a disconnect between what Mr. and Mrs. want in terms of scope, budget and aesthetic. More often than not, there's one spouse driving the project. I always insist on meeting both spouses." Rather than sticking to any one aesthetic, he designs to suit the client's tastes—whether it's a modern house on the water or a classic backcountry Georgian. This versatility has helped the firm gain repeat customers (about half of the



Opposite: Rich outside of the Granoff home

This page: The Granoff's bright living room that actually encourages guests to live.

the Red Cross and Neighbor to Neighbor. On the other, he's skiing, golfing, biking, leading wine clubs, checking out art galleries and restaurants with Jill, going to hear Phil Lesh at the Capitol or planning trips to Scotland and South Africa. He's a Tesla-driving, Grateful Dead-listening art collector who brings his wife—the CEO of apparel

THE IPAD HE'S HOLDING ALSO CONTROLS THE LIGHTING, AND THE WHOLE HOUSE IS WIRED WITH SPEAKERS INDOORS AND OUT, PROVIDING A CONSTANT SOUNDTRACK.

firm’s work is for existing clients) and what he calls “clients for life,” even designing for the grown children of some past clients.

THE GREENWICH TOUCH

Of course, the ability to translate what people have in mind serves him well on commercial jobs too. Based on his reputation for high-end design, Rich was called in by Orthopaedic & Neurosurgery Specialists (ONS) to work on several buildings. Later the ONS Foundation was interested in

going to charge you for our time.” The result is an award-winning lab that has been recognized internationally.

Rich was so enthusiastic about the project, Paul invited him to join the board. He’s now the cochairman of the organization’s golf tournament and reaches out to his many contacts to support the event. “I don’t know how he has time to be involved with so many different things,” says Paul. “With some people you can feel their busy-ness. But he gives you the time. You don’t feel that busy-ness.”

The connections Rich enjoys now are ones

of three sons and the first to attend college.

“I was always interested in making things, building things as a kid, including Legos and Lincoln Logs and all that classic kind of stuff,” he says. When Rich was nine or ten, there were some houses being built in his neighborhood, and he was fascinated by the process. “I started hanging out on the construction sites with the laborers,” he recalls.

Rich set his career and personal ambitions in motion as a teenager, when he and Jill were high school sweethearts who went to the prom together. He only applied to



Rich with the Granoff team and principals Ken Andersen (seated on the left), Irene Ioffe (standing right of Rich) and Andreas Stresemann (seated on the right)

developing a lab for high-level research on surgical techniques—not your average construction job. Though the surgeons had ideas for the space, they needed someone to turn those thoughts into a functional place. “Rich came over and talked to me and asked lots of careful, thoughtful questions. I could see his wheels turning as he was looking at the space,” says Dr. Paul Sethi, president of ONS Foundation, who also hired Rich for a home renovation. “Then he said, ‘I can definitely do this and because this is for research, improving medical care for families, I’m not

he developed from scratch and nurtured over the years. “I really, really am thankful for being in a town like Greenwich. When I started here twenty-five years ago, I didn’t know anybody,” he says. The couple moved here from Manhattan in 1989 because Jill was working for a consulting firm in town. Rich decided to start his own firm. “I literally hung out a shingle at my condo off of Steamboat Road, just me in my basement.” It’s a moment he had been prepping for from a young age. Growing up on Long Island in a middle class family, Rich was the youngest

architecture schools and attended Syracuse, spending a semester studying in Florence. “The whole city is one architectural masterpiece,” he says. After graduating, Rich cut his teeth working for David Rockwell in New York, where he got to assist on the design for Vong and Nobu, among other hot restaurants. Today, he counts local restaurants in his portfolio (he designed Blackstones Steakhouse among others), along with numerous financial services firms, PepsiCo and national accounts such as BNY Mellon, JPMorgan Chase and Starwood Capital. »

DAVID C. BARNUM PHOTOGRAPHY

This grand stone manor in backcountry features an elegant arched entry that’s echoed by windows along the side of the house.



Though rooted in Greenwich, Granoff has also built a number of homes in the Hamptons, including this light-filled manse in Bridgewater.



This mid-country estate designed for indoor-outdoor living takes advantage of the firm’s expertise in landscape architecture and green energy too.

DAVID C. BARNUM, AERIAL: STEVEN TURNER PHOTOGRAPHY



Granoff's commercial projects range from restorations of historic buildings, including the Post Office that's now Restoration Hardware and the River House Adult Day Center to new landmarks like the gleaming, glass-fronted Chase Bank across from Greenwich Library.

HE'S A TESLA-DRIVING, GRATEFUL DEAD-LISTENING ART COLLECTOR WHO BRINGS HIS WIFE TO THE TRAIN STATION EVERY MORNING TO CATCH THE 6:45.

After earning his LEED AP, Rich works some level of sustainability into all of his projects. Some clients don't even know that the firm is specifying green materials that will save them money. Among his renovation projects is the River House Adult Day Center, a reuse of an old railroad pump station that was converted into a space offering a range of programs for seniors. He received an award from the Greenwich Historical Society for this pro-bono work.

One of his most rewarding commercial projects was also a historic one: the three-year transformation of the 1917 neoclassical Greenwich Post Office into a Restoration Hardware gallery with a park, terraces and gardens. Preserving a building that's

considered historic at the federal and state level poses plenty of challenges. The players were many: Granoff was the architect of record collaborating with Backen, Gillam & Kroeger and Beyer Blinder Belle. The plans were aggressive, Rich says, including a second floor and new wing, and the approvals process lengthy, involving almost every agency at Town Hall. Couple that with the fact that construction involved the challenge of leaving three walls intact and building a new steel structure inside them—and add in design changes throughout—and the project could have been unmanageable. But the firm persevered. “I smile every time I pass by the building on Greenwich Avenue,” Rich says.

“We have to push ahead every step of the way. Sometimes there are challenges. We resolve them quickly and move on,” he says. “Part of our DNA is getting things done. It's key in a town like this. We get things done on time, on budget, with a smooth process for our clients.”

This has been the case for Debra and Michael McLaughlin, who are currently building their dream home. The couple first met Rich ten years ago when they were moving from London to Greenwich and

contemplated building new. He checked out properties for the McLaughlins while they were house-hunting and brought the couple to his own home to get ideas. At the time they wound up buying something in move-in condition and didn't need his services. But they remembered him a decade later when they were ready to build. They signed on for a full suite of services with interior design and landscape.

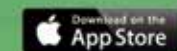
“Rich spent three hours walking around our current home, asking us what we like and what we don't want,” says Deb of the pre-design process. Using sophisticated 3-D modeling programs, Granoff's team is able to share powerful visuals. “They do a great job of showing you what you'll be getting—here's what it would look like with a blue door or with white trim,” she says. Currently a month ahead of schedule, the team has fulfilled the family's nontraditional wish list, eliminating a formal dining room and living room from the plans, turning the third floor into a sunset room, (“a space with loads of windows where we can go and read or have a glass of wine while watching the view,” says Deb), and planning for a high-ceilinged basement to accommodate a golf simulator. »

RESTORATION HARDWARE CONTRIBUTED; CHASE AND RIVER HOUSE ADULT DAY CENTER: DAVID BARNUM PHOTOGRAPHY

Take Care of Your Home with HomeSquare Essentials

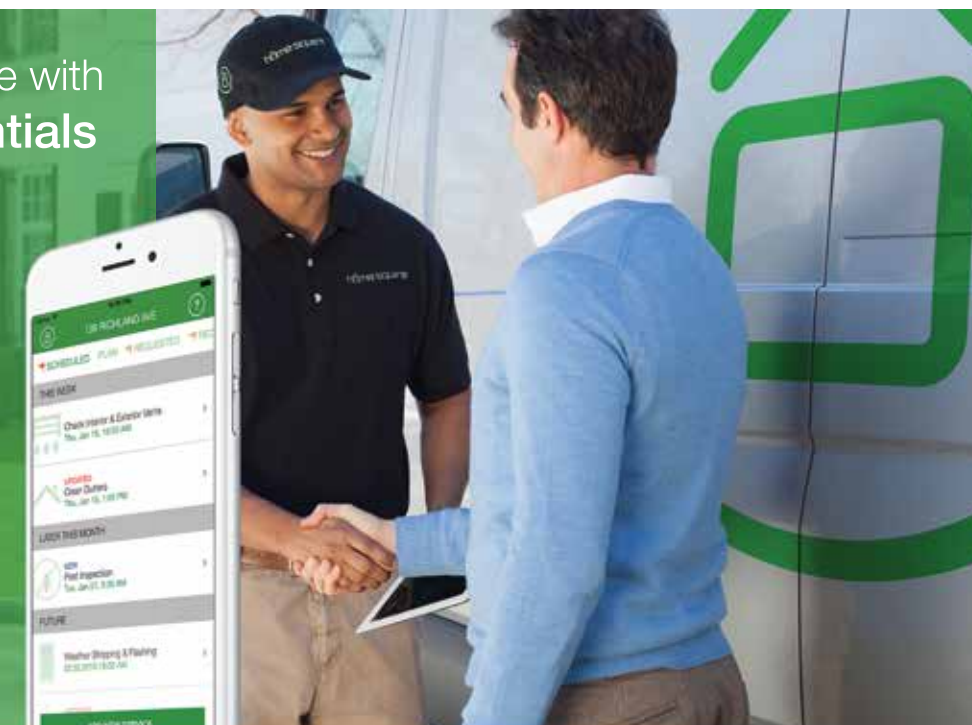
- From \$200/month for year round home maintenance
- 50+ crucial routine services
- Priority emergency coverage
- Call us for handyman services too!

HomeJotter app



Get in touch to learn more

www.homsqr.com | 203.883.8188



home square
A Whole New Experience in Home Maintenance

Alphorn A306

\$1,395,000

2 bedrooms | 2 baths

Views to Vail Mountain



Selling Luxury in Vail for 50 Years

Your Vail Valley experts for rentals, commercial and residential real estate.



Paul Gotthelf & Chelsea Winters

Cell: 970.376.1775 | Office: 970.477.5715
pgotthelf@slifer.net | cwinters@slifer.net
Vail, CO | gottmountainhomes.com

LUXURY
PORTFOLIO
INTERNATIONAL

Slifer Smith
& Frampton
Real Estate

LIVE
LOCAL.



SUSAN COHEN
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Fellow, American Society of Landscape Architects

GREENWICH 203-637-4225

angela mortimer

PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL STAFFING

EXCEPTIONAL STAFF ENHANCING YOUR [UNIQUE] LIFESTYLE



Call 1-866-282-7729
or visit us at
AngelaMortimer-US.com

Receive your complimentary copy
of "What you should be paying
for private staff" online at
AngelaMortimer-US.com/Salary



EXECUTIVE/PERSONAL ASSISTANT ESTATE MANAGER
CHEF HOUSEKEEPER BUTLER & MORE...

NEW YORK GREENWICH HAMPTONS
LONDON PALM BEACH

"PEOPLE SAY THEY WANT A CERTAIN
THING, BUT ONCE I REALLY GRILL THEM
ON IT, THEY MAY WANT SOMETHING ELSE.
IT'S MY JOB TO PULL MY CLIENTS' VISION
OUT OF THEIR HEADS."

FAMILY GUY

Rich can relate to his client's golf obsession, as a member at Tamarack Country Club who spends time golfing with his younger son, Noah. He also plays tennis with Jill and Jake, his older son who's now in college studying architecture. He is a carpe diem kind of guy. When the weather's nice, he cycles several times a week, covering a thirty-mile route around Bedford and back. In the winter months, the Granoff family spends many weekends up at Stratton, where they own a ski house. "It's a mini vacation for your head when you're on the slopes," Rich says. "You're out there for four hours, in nature and with friends."

Rich also finds ways to tie his personal interests to good causes, for instance, competing as a cyclist in the Kids in Crisis triathlon (he's a member of the board). "He's extremely dedicated, so helpful in getting the word out about Kids in Crisis," says Shari Shapiro, the organization's executive director. "It's above and beyond when you get up at 5 a.m., strap on your helmet and ride your bike for twenty-six miles." Shari adds that Jill has supported Kids in Crisis through her professional connections and their sons donated to the cause as part of their bar mitzvahs. "When you get Rich, you get the Granoff family," she says. This year Rich is upping his physical challenge by competing in all three legs of the Mossman sprint triathlon. "I'm not a swimmer," he admits, though he plans to train at home in his pool, where he has calculated that the distance he needs to swim equals seventy-two laps. "It won't be pretty, but I'll get through it," he says grinning.

Rich and Jill share a love of good food and wine, with a home cellar that's stocked with 1,000 or so bottles; a bottle of 1955 Henekeys port is his oldest and he's partial to Brunellos. Since Rich often gets people together for dinners, his friend and business associate Tom Torelli of Allied Properties didn't think anything of it when Rich invited him to join a group of twelve at Blackstones one night for a charitable dinner. He said that he would provide the wines and the group would be donating money to a cause, Tom recalls. "As the night went on, I asked, 'So who are we writing the check to?' He said, 'We'll figure it out.'" The cause turned out to be Tom's family, with friends writing checks to help with medical expenses from a very serious skiing accident that had left his son paralyzed the year before. "He's a great guy," says Tom, "passionate about his business, family and friends."

To recharge and get inspired, the Granoffs travel more than most. "We always have three or four trips lined up. Every August we do a family trip," Rich says. Recent destinations have included Vietnam,

BLUEPRINT BY ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/©BELTZ

Uncompromising Perfection
STARTS HERE



2015 McLaren 650s Spider

McLaren Greenwich a division of
MILLER MOTORCARS

Greenwich, CT 06830 | 866.405.2025 | www.millermotorcars.com



Sales and Service of Distinctive Motorcars Since 1976





grand Entrance

wrought iron gates and railings, wood gates and fencing, automated gate systems,
security entry systems, handcrafted stone walls, pillars, stairs and patios.



487 East Main Street
Mt. Kisco, NY
800-486-7553 914-666-5802 FAX
LN# WC17260-HO5 CT HIC.0560846

See our gallery of pictures at grandentrance.com

greenwichmag.com

the best of living in greenwich



TOWN FOCUSED


- > party pics
- > town talk
- > on the agenda
- > exclusive articles
- + more!



Rich and Jill with their sons
Jake (left) and Noah in Vietnam

Portugal, Thailand, Japan, Bali, with Utah, Scotland, South Africa and Washington State on tap for this year. He and Jill like to vacation on their own in the islands. “It’s never a good time to vacation, so you book the trip and before you know it, it’s here and you go. I’m a big planner.” As he talks travel, he grabs a silver-framed photo of his family on safari in Africa, gathered around a baby rhino when the boys were about ages ten and thirteen. “That was one of our first big trips. We’ll be empty nesters by August. It’s bittersweet.”

At home, there’s still plenty to inspire Rich. A table in the living room is covered with framed family photos, memories of the trips, and a large bookshelf houses even more of them. The walls of every room are enlivened by art that the couple has collected over the years, a shared interest. Jill’s father is a photographer, so she grew up around art.

Walking around the house while giving a quick tour of the eclectic collection, Rich notes the names of the artists quite casually, as if he’s reading off a grocery list rather than reciting icons of modern and contemporary art: Frank Stella, Andy Warhol, Picasso, de Kooning, Wolf Kahn and a Joseph McDonnell sculpture in the garden. He stops by one piece and pauses, “This is my most recent,” he says of the Antony Gormley stainless-steel kinetic sculpture that riffs on the human form. “It’s a fun piece, self-portrait,” he says with a laugh. The figure is bolted into the floor and Rich gives it a playful push, as a child might when experimenting with a toy. The stainless-steel man vibrates for a minute, then settles and becomes still. Like his newly acquired art, Rich vibrates with energy, a man constantly in motion, but with family and friends who keep him grounded. 

Like What You Read? BE SURE TO CHECK
OUT THIS STORY

Light a Fire 2012
greenwichmag.com/lightfire2012

AND REMEMBER YOU CAN ALWAYS SEARCH OUR ARCHIVES FOR ANY PAST ARTICLE.

