

Fine Living in Litchfield County, the Berkshires, Dutchess County and Beyond

Passport

SUMMER 2016



Arts • Dining • Events • Gardens • Style • Properties



Photos by Steven Kalur

Top and above, still under construction, several additions to one of the oldest farmhouses houses in Washington Depot.

Photo by Mike Yamin

Claudia and Steven Kalur.

Forces to be Reckoned With

Working Together in the World of Interior Design, Architecture

Story by
JOSEPH MONTEBELLO

Photos contributed

She studied to be an Egyptologist but eventually wanted something more. He studied English

literature and majored in economics but loved playing with building blocks. Today Claudia and Steven Kalur are forces to be reckoned with in the world of interior design and architecture. But the road to their present careers was a circuitous one and along the way they learned a lot.

"I was born in Lisbon and spent

the first six years of my life in the south of Portugal," said Claudia. "From the age of 13 I was fascinated with ancient history and archaeology. So I decided that Egyptology was the area I would study."

Not surprisingly, this was not part of the curriculum, so she majored in art history with a minor in ancient



Photos by Lily & Camelia Photography
Renovation and full interior design of
this 1700s farmhouse in Washington.

art. After graduation she moved to London, where — as luck would have it — she would be able to study Egyptology.

“My goal was to work in a museum,” she said. “I got a job at the British Museum but I had my sights set on working at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where there was a big emphasis on Egyptian art.” Her dream came true in 2001 when she contacted the museum and was offered a paid internship. She got her wish — but was that enough?

Steven, meanwhile, grew up in Shaker Heights, Ohio, and was fascinated with building things.

“I made a model of the Titanic out of two-by-fours when I was in second grade,” he said. “I made a four-room fort out of a pile of bricks. I was obsessed with building.”

Summers spent in Maine gave Steven an opportunity to work for local carpenters, learning firsthand how to frame houses, hang doors and the intricacies of building real structures.

“My father was a malpractice attorney and he thought I should follow him into that arena or become a doctor,” said Steven. “Neither appealed to me, so I went to Wheaton College and after graduation I traveled for six months and then moved to Chicago, where I worked for a company that hired college kids to paint houses. I traveled all over for them, training their full-time staff.”

Customize



Concept Interiors

Window Treatments • Roman Shades
Upholstery • Slipcovers • Pillows
Cushions • Bed Ensembles
Carpet • Wall Coverings
Professional Design Service

151 Park Lane Rd. (Rte. 202),
New Milford, Ct
(860) 354-3708
mail2conceptinteriors@gmail.com



Photos by Lily & Camelia Photography
New construction in Bozeman combining traditional Montana farmhouse and barn structures.



He then accepted a job with a corporate aircraft brokerage company in New Jersey, which played into another one of his passions.

"I love flying. I got my pilot's license when I was 21. And so I loved being around planes," he said. "I traveled all the time in the United States and Europe."

Then in 1999 he met Claudia.

"We bumped into each other in the early days of the Internet," said Steven. "It was a site for the Norwegian band a-ha. It told you where the band was playing, what they were up to and you could send in questions and post comments. I saw this note from a girl who was Portuguese, living in London and who liked all the same songs I did. So I decided to write her a note and say that I was passing through London and could I take her to dinner. I was quite intrigued."

The rest, as they say, is history. Back in the States, Claudia eventually moved



into Steven's apartment and they began renovating and selling apartments. Steven realized how much he missed dealing with building and construction and left the aircraft business and enrolled at New Jersey Institute of Technology in a four-year architecture program. Since much of the first year was devoted to theory and art history classes, Claudia became interested in what Steven was doing.

"I decided that I wanted to do something creative as well," she said. "I didn't want to be an architect, but interior design was always in the back of my mind. I considered going to New York to study but then found the KLC School of Design in London where I could do a correspondence course. So I would make boards, send them off and they would be returned with comments and a grade."

Steven, meanwhile, was offered a job by one of his college professors,

who had an architectural firm in New York. It was a great educational process for him, since he was working on city apartments as well as commercial properties. On one such project, one of his clients, an architect from Litchfield County, asked if Steven would check on a house project for him in Connecticut. And so the Kalurs entered another phase of their lives.

"We fell in love with the area, and two weeks later we had found a house and moved," said Steven.

He began working for a local architectural firm and also for some local builders, adding to the extensive knowledge he already had. The next step was to start his own business. In 2010 he was ready to do just that and F+H Architectural Design & Consulting was born.

Meanwhile Claudia was looking for her own niche. After taking a position with a local interior designer and



Photo by Claudia Kalur

New Construction in New Preston, reflecting traditional New England colonial style.

deciding she didn't want to "decorate," she discovered Privet House, which at the time was located in Warren.

"I started out working a few days and then began working full time. It is probably one of the best things that have ever happened to me," she said. "Owners Suzanne Cassano and Richard Lambertson were the ideal people to work for and I learned so much. It has enabled me to move on into my own design business."

Both Kalurs are now doing what they have always dreamed of doing — he is an architect designing houses and seeing them become a reality; she designs interiors and helps clients create their dream houses. In May, they just opened their new studio on Titus Road in Washington Depot.

"We didn't start out planning to work together," said Claudia,

who has her own design firm, CFK Interiors. "We have had some formal collaboration, but in most cases we just source each other. We discuss things all the time."

One of the biggest challenges for both Kalurs is educating the client. With so much information readily available in shelter magazine and on websites, there is a wealth of choices to confuse even the most discerning customer.

"I try to streamline their thoughts," explained Claudia. "They are overwhelmed with information and they want to try it all. They can't always visualize the finished product. One of the first things I do is have a potential client fill out a questionnaire. The first part deals with lifestyle: Do they entertain? Are there children and pets? How big a dining room is needed? Kitchen? The second part deals with

the aesthetic side: Metals? Appliances? Favorite colors? Style of furniture? It gives me a sense of what they are about and then I create a mood board — simply as a starting place."

Steven, by the same token, loves to create elegant, yet practical and innovative spaces that maintain the integrity of New England living. He produces the architectural design and then oversees the entire project himself or hires a builder. In either case he is passionate about detail and quality. His hands-on approach makes him a great asset to those who hire him.

Since opening their respective businesses, they have created many award-worthy houses and interiors. Is there a dream project they haven't done yet?

"Our own house!" both Kalurs shout in unison. "We are always working for someone else and while we have a lot of ideas, they change every time we discuss them," said Claudia. "Steven has this wonderful phrase: 'For our next house...'"

Consequently their basement and garage are becoming a warehouse for all the things they will use in "their next house."

The Kalurs rented a house when they first moved to Connecticut, and later bought a place that they leveled and built a new structure. Then they bought the house in which they presently live.

"This will be our home for the next seven years," Steven said. "Then we will build our dream house."

And incorporate all the things they are stockpiling.

ADVERTISER INDEX

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| Abrash Galleries..... | 13 | Five Points Gallery | 15 | The Nutmeg Ballet Conservatory | 39 |
| Amber Construction and Design..... | 28 | Green River Gallery | 15 | Robertson Jewelers | 3 |
| Bain Real Estate | 32 | Iron Horse Builders..... | 32 | The Rustic Country Barn | 19 |
| Best & Cavallaro Real Estate..... | 33 | Joe's Salon and Spa..... | 18 | Saltwater Grille | 21 |
| The Clark | 14 | Kent Greenhouse & Gardens | 27 | Samaha Oriental Rugs..... | 30 |
| Colebrook Book Barn | 9 | Kitchen & Bath Design Showcase..... | 2 | Scott Pools | 10 |
| Concept Interiors..... | 35 | Liberty Custom Tailoring..... | 11 | The Warner Theatre..... | 40 |
| Decker & Beebe Inc..... | 8 | New Morning Market | 23 | The White Horse | 24 |
| Early New England Homes..... | 28 | Northville Market..... | 17 | Wood's Pit BBQ..... | 22 |
| Elyse Harney Real Estate..... | 29 | Northwest CT Arts Council..... | 9 | Yoko Hama..... | 22 |