

COUNTRY CULTURE

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REVERENCE FOR NATURE PERMEATES THE RURAL CONNECTICUT
GETAWAY DESIGNER MARK CUNNINGHAM CREATED FOR
EDIE PARKER FOUNDER BRETT HEYMAN AND HER YOUNG FAMILY



Parenting, entrepreneur Brett Heyman says, is not unlike creating a business and then nurturing the right culture for growth and success. Quality family time is key. So on weekends the founder-designer of the handbag-and-accessories brand Edie Parker joins her investor husband, Gregory, six-year-old daughter, Edie, and four-year-old son, Oscar, and heads from their Manhattan apartment to a getaway in northwestern Connecticut. The trip, Heyman says, is as important as the destination. “We’re in the car talking for two hours. How rare is that in city life these days?” she asks. “We connect with each other, sharing and noticing things. Oscar and Edie even know a bevy of classic rock songs that we sing along to.”

The landscape firm Sea Green devised the outdoor spaces, including a garden at the rear of the house.

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A striped carpet ties together the entrance hall's white walls and dark-wood elements.



Before launching Edie Parker in 2010, Heyman worked as the director of public relations for Gucci. Design was always on her mind, though, especially the 1950s and '60s acrylic clutches she collected as a high-school student in Los Angeles. Those now inspire her own funky line of handbags—splashed with colorful marbled swirls, emblazoned with the Middle Eastern *hamsa* motif, or scrawled with cursive exhortations like DREAM—which are carried by Hollywood stars such as Drew Barrymore and Lupita Nyong'o. This fall the company is making the leap into home goods with snappy acrylic trays for Bergdorf Goodman, and eyeglasses are in development.

The pressure of running her own business makes Heyman even more appreciative of her family's country refuge—a place she never expected to have. A couple of years after she and Gregory married in 2007, they drove to Connecticut on a lark to look at properties for sale. Though

The living room, coated in a green hue by Ralph Lauren Paint, showcases a large Richard Serra etching; Rogers & Goffigon linens were used for the curtains and the upholstery on the custom-made sofas, the cocktail table at left is vintage Frank Gehry, and the jute carpet is by Merida.

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they were confirmed beach people and had rented houses in the Hamptons, they loved the area at first sight. On impulse they bought a home in the town of Washington and moved in with their infant daughter. But it quickly became apparent that the floor plan wasn't right for raising children.

"Edie's room was so far from the master bedroom that we ended up putting her crib in our closet," Heyman recalls. Eventually, with another child on the way, the couple found what they considered to be a much more suitable alternative—a six-bedroom clapboard dwelling set amid 15 picture-postcard acres of meadows and apple orchards. Another plus: It had a pond.

Since their Upper East Side apartment is as exuberant as any Edie Parker handbag—with a deep-purple-lacquered library and a foyer lined with Andy Warhol flower screen prints—the Heymans wanted something entirely different for their Connecticut retreat. "The goal was to make the

Mounted in a corner of the family room is a Christian Marclay cyanotype; the armchair is by Pierre Legrain, the stools in the foreground are from Thomas Gallery (at left) and Tucker Robbins, and the carpet is by Merida.

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house much more laid-back,” says Manhattan decorator Mark Cunningham, a Ralph Lauren alumnus whom the couple tapped to oversee the interiors. “I fell in love with a muted Rogers & Goffigon linen,” he adds, “and the living room was built around that fabric.” Otherwise, Cunningham says, “it was all about pulling together interesting pieces,” among them a number of sofas, chairs, and tables he custom designed for the project.

To enhance the outdoor spaces and create sweeping vistas, meanwhile, the homeowners turned to horticulturist Suvi Asch, who heads the landscape firm Sea Green. Under Asch’s watch, brush was cleared and trees were felled, with the wood recycled into an extraordinary tree house; the existing non-kid-friendly pool was removed and a new one installed, infused with ideas from Kelly Klein’s classic book *Pools*; and a vegetable garden was planted. When bees swarmed to the flowering calamints Asch had put in, the Heymans started to notice all the different pollinators. “That got us all thinking about the educational benefits of the vegetable garden and the orchard,” says the horticulturist. “So we purchased more bees, and to protect the hives from bears, we built an enclosure up in a tree using honeycomb-shaped panels.” The property, Asch adds, is meant for “adventure and expanding the family’s horizons into country life.”

Hiking and kayaking in summer; apple picking and taking foliage walks in the fall; skiing and ice-skating in winter;



Edgy photographs of Kate Moss add punch to the leanly furnished dining room.



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pizza-making in an outdoor fireplace and viewing afternoon movies year-round—these are just a few of the clan’s favored rural diversions. “And I like to cook,” Heyman says, before adding, with a self-deprecating smile, “Well, that may be an exaggeration. I’m good with breakfasts and lunches, salads from the garden, and egg wraps—the secret is to cook the egg on the tortilla in the pan.”

Future plans for the residence are still unfolding, including the possibility of an owl sanctuary and bat houses to entice nocturnal insect eaters. “The home evolves the more we define who we want to be as parents and how we want to grow as a family,” she explains. “Right now we want the children to know how nature works. Not in an extreme live-off-the-land way, but in a more matter-of-fact way. If we were in the city on weekends, we would go to museums. Here, nature is our museum.” □

The terrace is outfitted with Barlow Tyrie furniture accented with ALT for Living pillows. [VIEW SOURCES](#)



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