

Connecticut COTTAGES & GARDENS

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Signature Style

BEST DRESSED HOUSES FROM GREENWICH TO LITCHFIELD



Villa with a View

THE LITCHFIELD HOME OF PETER ROGERS IS AS MUCH A TRIBUTE TO HIS EXTRAORDINARY FRIENDSHIPS AS A BACKDROP FOR BREATHTAKING DESIGN.

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Scene Reflection | The serene reflecting pool is deep enough for swimming laps (across). **Global Influences** | East meets West in the living room (across), where an antlered mirror holds court above a pair of Egyptian statues. The Stark carpet was designed to look like cowhide; the standing lamps started out as French carousel poles. See Resources.





What Becomes a Legend Most"
"When Your Own Initials Are Enough"
"If You Don't Look Good,
We Don't Look Good"

Anyone familiar with some of the most memorable tag lines in advertising history won't be surprised to learn that the man who helped pen them has also come up with a witty original house. High on a ridge in the Litchfield Hills, Peter Rogers has created "On the Rocks," a glamorous take on a Palladian villa.

"Lured up here" by his friend Bill Blass, who lived nearby in New Preston, Rogers conceived a house influenced by his love of Italy, one with stone floors and stucco walls inside and out. The structure, which sits at the end of a long, private road, maximizes the hilltop perch with a generous use of open space. He laid out a central section with 16-foot ceilings and 14-foot French doors and windows flanked by two slightly lower side sections for bedrooms and utility spaces. A small adjacent studio provides a place to paint. The outcome is "an unbelievable house to live in," he says. "It's great in every season. I sit in the living room and read for hours looking out at the distant hills."

It's a stunning backdrop, too, for his eclectic furnishings, a sophisticated blend of antiques, modern chic, and Hollywood glamour. Rogers, who spent years mingling with the Hollywood elite as a young ad exec in New York, says he developed his creative eye escaping to the movies as a youngster growing up in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Mementos scattered throughout turn up in quirky vignettes: "thrown together" on side tables and sofas—glass bottles from designer Geoffrey Beene, a gold "craaf" sculpture from *Paul & Limas's* Nancy Novograd, a chunky Santa Claus doll from former Texas governor Ann Richards. Joan Crawford used to send notes the "ink" from bonds all over the world. "I think she



Dark Delight | The house is full of wonderful touches, including these antique columns (left). **Picture Perfect** | Rogers often buys things in the spur of the moment—like the sofa, which he found in a little shop in Torcello, Italy. Among his prized possessions:

the plebeian Billie Haines coffee table (above). **Moment in Time** | The Roman bust is from Jackson, Mississippi; the black-and-white photos are from Richard Avedon's "Legends" series (right). **Portrait Of An Artist** | Having rediscovered his childhood passion for painting, Roger loves to spend time in his studio (see next). See Resources.







Splash Of Color | Rogers found the ringed fruit bowl in Marino and asked the artisan, "Can you make a taller one?" The Elkins dining chairs were originally black. The zebra carpet was made by Stark, the chandelier is from the Connecticut Antiques Center (LJRT). **What A Doll** | Pillows on the daybed in the library carry his iconic slogans. The Santa doll was a gift from Ann Richards; the candlesticks from Claudette Colbert (JACO). **Stylish Still Lives** | Elegant vignettes abound: An obelisk and two urns (KOURI) and a pair of cobalt blue bottles, a housewarming gift from pal Liz Smith (see KOURI). See Resources.



*"It's an unbelievable house
to live in," he says.*



thought I was a starving young man." He says, "She was an unbelievable friend."

Between walls of French doors interspersed with Doric columns, a central fireplace divides the house's principal middle section. In the living room, playful Nubian statues frame the fireplace, standing guard next to floor lamps fashioned from twisted French carousel poles that Rogers found at the Washington (CT) Antiques Show. A dramatic painting of "two Greeks in love" dominates the opposite wall. Rogers discovered it one night after dinner in Torcello, near Venice. "I'd been looking for a picture and I wandered into this little antique shop, saw it, and screamed. I've found it." The Stark carpet was designed to look like black and white cowhide; it coordinates with upholstered chairs in animal prints.

The animal motif repeats in the dining room where a stark zebra carpet lies beneath a polished limestone circular table and Frances Elkins circle-backed chairs. A chandelier from a Stamford antique store, centers on the table, and the lamps on either side of the fireplace are classic white palms characteristic of the nightclub El Morocco. A studied but impulsive shopper, Rogers says he just buys things that appeal to him. "I don't buy anything for intrinsic value. When you see something you like, don't you covet it?" he says. "Somehow ultimately it all works together." The landscapes hanging over the country French day bed in the library, for example, came from a street vendor outside San Marco in Venice. Rogers took them to a local Italian family for framing.

Another zebra carpet in the master bedroom plays off a pair of black and white laceted plexiglass lamps supported by camels on either side of the bed. They are copies of the ones Coco Chanel had in her Paris apartment. Rogers found his at RT Facts and then had them fashioned into bedside tables. As for the handsome twin beds in the guestroom—he used to sleep in them when he visited his friend Claudette Colbert in Barbados for his birthday. "I saw they were going to be auctioned, and I said 'I want them' and I shipped them up from the island."

Of course the house wouldn't be complete without a nod to the legendary ladies in his life. On many walls, upstairs and down, Richard Avedon's iconic photos from the *Blackglama Legends* series—Audrey Hepburn, Judy Garland, Elizabeth Taylor, Barbra Streisand, Catherine Deneuve, Carol Burnett, Maria Callas, and Mary Martin, all swathed in mink—embody the elegance and whimsy encompassed in this extraordinary man and the home he's created. ♦



Bedside Manner | The twin beds in the guestroom remind Rogers of his birthday visits to Claudette Colbert's home (left). **Wall Power** | In the master bedroom (above), the animal motif plays out in the Stark rug and the camel bedside tables. Steve Kuzma's painting of window washers balances two nude studies, which Rogers says he got for a song because they embarrassed fellow auction goers. **Window Seat** | A built purchased in Locust Valley flanks the French desk and chair (below left). **Night Light** | The pinless lamp is "a silly thing that looks like the statue of Liberty." (below center). **Southern Comfort** | The "Belle Watley" powder room (below right) is inspired by *Gone with the Wind*. See Resources.

