



East Fishkill *Living*

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Photo by Louisa Vliardi

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*At Home with the
Torizzos*

At Home with the Iorizzos

By Jeanne Cotroneo Darrow

Photos by Louisa Vilardi

Tucked away at the end of a cul-de-sac in a quiet Hopewell Junction neighborhood is an architectural surprise. The home, unlike any other, is more like a castle with its stately stone walls, elegant tower reminiscent of the Amalfi Cathedral, and soaring living room ceiling adorned with intricate frescos akin to the drawing room of the Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome.

The Iorizzos have resided for 24 years in this house, which sits on nearly seven acres and is now significantly larger than it was when they purchased it—and distinctly different in appearance.

“Everyone asks what we do with this whole house,” says Arlene, who lives here with Greg, her husband of 31 years, daughter Gina and dogs Vito and Lucy. “But we use every inch of it, making memories along the way.”

Arlene’s favorite space—a departure from the predominately Italianate architecture found throughout—is their African-themed dining room. When sunlight comes through the oculus in the ceiling three stories above the round table for 10 and hits the mirrors, “the room lights up in a kaleidoscope of different colors.” Greg elaborates on the “enormous amount of supporting steel in these walls.”

He should know. Room by room, Greg painstakingly designed and reconstructed their home every day for 23 years, managing a team of carpenters and masons and sourcing materials. He can explain every detail, from the tens of thousands of pounds of slate on the roof to the intricate coffered ceilings and curvy archways, Venetian plaster walls and structural dental crown molding that was custom-made onsite.

For Arlene, Greg, and Gina Iorizzo, their unique home has been the backdrop for lasting memories with friends and family.



“Looking at it as a whole is insurmountable, so I chipped away at it day by day and eventually got there,” says Greg, standing in the gold living room near the Rumford fireplace, surrounded by the complex and ornate artwork adorning the walls and ceiling. Infusing his interpretation of what he saw in Italy, this room alone took seven years to complete.

Greg is of Italian heritage. During trips to his family homeland, he marveled at the unparalleled architectural beauty and was inspired to replicate the elaborate structures and exquisitely decorated rooms he had marveled at. “The marble palaces built thousands of years ago are just incredible feats,” he says. “I’m amazed at the work of mankind.”

GRAND YET COZY

The Iorizzos spend most of their time in the cozy family room, which connects to the kitchen and a billiard room and overlooks a stunning backyard complete with an inground pool, outdoor kitchen and a greenhouse. A spiral staircase leads to the bedrooms upstairs and an entertainment space with a bar and seating area, where Arlene hosts friends for craft nights and family gatherings. From there, another spiral staircase leads to a second tower and their orangery, where Arlene likes to read.

“My wife has done all the decorating,” Greg proudly shares. Indeed, Arlene has spent countless hours locating furniture and housewares worldwide.

A hidden passage on the second level takes you to the garage. An incline in the property allows cars to park inside, both upstairs and downstairs. The collection includes several Ferraris and a 1973 Alpha Romeo Greg restored that had been his mother’s. Hanging on the wall is a framed copy of *The Wall Street Journal* featuring Gina, Greg and his Ferrari at the New York Stock Exchange for the 2015 Ferrari IPO.

ITALIAN HERITAGE

Greg developed a passion for cars as a boy. Born in the Bronx, he moved with his Italian immigrant parents and four siblings to Kent, at age 5. Growing up in “the country,” he describes “leaving in the morning and being told to get home before dark” after days spent bicycling, dirt-bike riding and fishing with friends. He competed in motocross at a young age, which helped fuel his interest in mechanics.

With too much energy to be pinned to a seat in a classroom, Greg chose work over college. He transitioned from two after-school jobs to a full-time role after high school at a repair shop and eventually an Alfa Romeo dealership. Disappointed in the behavior of the employers he worked for, it wasn’t long before he founded his own auto repair shop. “Cars are the best of both art and engineering,” says Greg, who deeply appreciates both.



This formal living room of the Iorizzo home took seven years to complete.



The home's grand entry

THE PENNYSAVER BRIDE

Arlene, the youngest of 14 siblings, grew up in Massapequa on Long Island. “We made the newspaper the day I was born for becoming the largest family on Long Island!” Upon her graduation from high school, her parents sold their house and moved to their retirement cabin in Poughquag. Arlene found a job working with disabled people and loved it but was forced to find new work when the residential facility shut down in 1984. She soon responded to a *Pennysaver* help-wanted ad, and “that’s how I met Greg,” says Arlene, who was hired for the secretarial job at his auto repair center and stayed for 40 years, working alongside Greg and now Gina.

Greg and Arlene married in 1994 and moved to Stormville. When Gina was born, Arlene dreamed of a home on a cul-de-sac, where Gina could freely ride her bike and play with friends. They found their then 4,000-square-foot home in 2001. “It was very plain, so we added some paint,” says Arlene.

It wasn’t long before Greg started bringing his vision for the house to life, starting with the stonework around the yard. “The hardest part was living through the inside construction—the dust flying and workers always in your home,” says Arlene, who’d determinedly find whatever was needed next for the project, from chandeliers to marble to each art replica for the living-room ceiling. “Gold paint,” laughs Arlene. “We always needed more gold paint!”

MASTER OF ALL TRADES

Arlene enjoyed watching her husband become “a master of so many different trades,” noting that “he is one of the most disciplined, creative, humble people I’ve ever met. He never stops and just wants to provide for his family.”

Gina remembers her father studying YouTube videos late at night to learn about different materials and applications. “He has no degree or background in architecture or engineering,” she says. “This is pure talent and raw ambition.”

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Together as partners in life and in work, Arlene and Greg are proud of all they have built.

Despite the “chaos” of living through years of construction as a child, Gina fondly remembers the glorious parties her parents would throw, including year-end celebrations with friends and even teachers in attendance. Her house was where friends, almost like her fill-in siblings, wanted to be, “hanging out at the castle,” she reflects.

Other favorite memories are of her grandmother, who well into her nineties made runs in her minivan to lumber yards to grab materials for son Greg. “She never wanted to stop working,” admires Gina, a John Jay High School graduate who went to Manhattan College for business before joining the family enterprise. She’s grateful to have learned so much from her father, the number-one lesson being the meaning of hard work and high quality. “If you put your mind to something and work at it relentlessly, the results can be grand—even magnificent.” She’ll “never settle for mediocrity.”

BEAUTY FOR OTHERS TO ENJOY

The Iorizzos work hard as a family, support one another and are grateful they can come home each night and enjoy the fruits of their labor. Now, they’re thinking about ways for others to enjoy the home too. Beyond welcoming local high-school kids who make their way to the property for prom photos, Gina is marketing the home for use through listings on various online platforms. A famous wedding dress designer recently held a photo shoot that landed their living room on the cover of *Vogue*.

Thinking about the duomos and other precedent Italian buildings, Greg references how some took 125 years to build. “That’s four generations of sacrifice,” he says. “Those buildings still stand and are appreciated for hundreds of years.” That legacy gave him the incentive “to do something as crazy as this—and take a third of my life to do it.”

Glancing around his creation, every space echoing the care he poured into it, Greg appears satisfied with what he’s built for future generations. It undoubtedly will stand the test of time. Yet his relentless spirit, the child who could never sit still, seems ready for the next challenge. With a determined glint in his eye, he shares: “It’s time to move on to other ideas...” ♦

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