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Greenwich Time

HOME

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SPECTacular homes

The art of building without a buyer

By Beth Cooney

The word McMansion makes luxury home builder Nick Barile cringe.

"I'm not even sure what that word means," says Barile, standing in the foyer of Mackenzie Glen, an 8,000-square-foot home he built last year in mid-country Greenwich.

When a visitor to his latest creation explains it's a term that refers to over-

sized houses poured into undersized lots, Barile grins.

"Well, that's why I don't get it," he says. "I don't build McMansions. I just build mansions."

For the second consecutive year, Barile's development firm, York & Company, has received a HOBI award from the Home Builders Association of Connecticut for his firm's upscale projects.

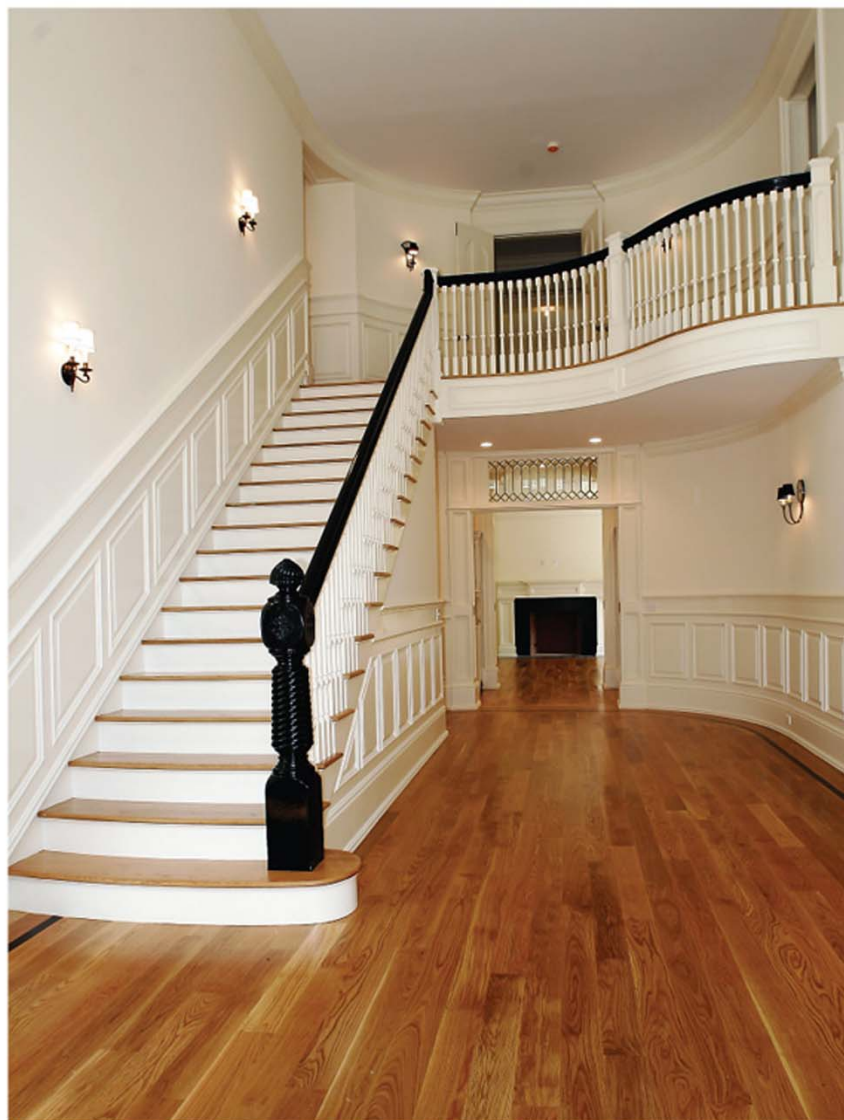


Photo by Chris Prevolos

Dream builder "I don't build McMansions," says Nick Barile, standing in the hallway of Mackenzie Glen, a home he built last year in Greenwich.



View from above The lines and curves of the entrance hall, as seen from the second-floor hall balcony.



In 2006, the award went to Mackenzie Glen for homes in the \$5 million to \$6 million range. In 2005, York & Company was recognized for its spec house on Hendrie Avenue in Riverside, which also sold for several million dollars.

Barile and partner Brian Connors are one of several builders from lower Fairfield County recognized with HOBIs for their talents on projects ranging from barns, swimming pools and decks, to custom renovations and new construction.

Since his specialty is spec houses, HOME asked Barile for a tour of Mackenzie Glen shortly before it was sold late last year.

The home is on a 1.2-acre lot where an outdated ranch home once sat. In place of the tear-down, York & Company erected a three-story center hall colonial influenced by the architectural style of Sir Edwin Lutgens. The interior includes six bedrooms, each with an attached bath; two laundry rooms; a state-of-the-art kitchen; expansive living and family rooms; and a few smaller rooms that could function as exercise areas or perhaps a spa area. Outdoors is a stone patio adjoining a flat patch of landscaping that is pool ready.

"We did not put one in because we are finding a lot of families don't want them. If they have young children, or they

Grand entrance Barile likes to incorporate "old stuff" into new homes, such as this ebonized wood railing that leads up the staircase, adding rich wood tones to the entrance.



Old house quality Barile placed vintage glass panels above the doorway to add a retro feel to the foyer.

belong to a private club, sometimes they don't want to be involved with the maintenance and safety issues."

Spec building

Whether to add a pool is typical of the decisions of a spec home builder. The challenge in each of York's projects is creating a home that is elegant and upscale, without knowing the personal style of a prospective buyer.

"For a lot of builders of spec houses, myself included, that usually means doing something safe: a lot of white, a lot of beige, because you don't want to dabble too much in color or things that are matters of taste. Building houses is a passion of labor and love for me. But at the end of the day, it is business. If you get away from things that are too simple and clean, then you can get into trouble with buyers. People have their own vision and if you are too bold, you interfere with that. At the same time, you have to anticipate some of their needs."

To set his homes apart from other spec houses — and give them visual interest — Barile incorporates antique and vintage materials.

"We strive to do things that are timeless and elegant. Adding those things gives a home a quality that is refined. It gives you the sense that a home has been there forever. I love it when people tell me my houses don't seem new."

Barile's affection for homes that seem to have a pedigree has made him a bit of a scavenger. "I'm always Turn to **SPEC HOUSE**, page 12



Fantastic facade Mackenzie Glen is on a 1.2-acre lot where a ranch home once sat.



Light this fire Barile incorporated an antique fireplace he found in New York City into the main living area.



Kitchen that works Nothing lacking in this spacious kitchen, with top-of-the-line appliances and loads of counter space. The wood island contrasts with the white cabinets.

SPEC house

Continues from page 11

looking for old stuff for my new houses."

In Mackenzie Glen, he incorporated an antique fireplace he found at Old Good Things in New York City into the main living area. His proudest find: an ebonized wood railing that leads up a staircase in the main foyer. The grand space begs for a party. Added details such as vintage beveled glass panels placed above a doorway at the far end of the entrance add a retro feel. "It's not over the top, not trendy, but it has that old house quality I love."

All the millwork is custom-made at York & Company's mill shop in Stamford. The ability to create custom cabinetry has been a real advantage for the builder.

"It means we can really control quality. And tweak things wherever we want."

All about details

At Mackenzie Glen, the architect's plans called for closets that in Barile's opinion were excessive, even by upscale home standards. "Sometimes, when things are built, you see how you want them changed from plans." He replaced some of those storage spaces with custom, built-in offices in bedrooms adjacent to the master suite. He imagined the needs of his own children when creating contemporary work stations with places for computers, stor-



Homework haven The original plan called for countless closets — too many, according to Barile. He solved that problem by turning some into work stations, complete with computer hookups, bulletin boards and plenty of shelving and storage space.

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"I did see a family in this house, and I try to think of how my own family might want things to work. So it's not unusual for me to deviate from the architect's plans and tweak them a bit if I think something will work better for the potential homeowners."

If there's a challenge for Barile when he's creating a new home, it's to keep his taste out.

Still, he plays with it when he can.

"One of my favorite projects started as a spec house, but changed when we sold it to a couple relocating from England midway through construction." The transatlantic move was delayed several months, and the family gave Barile carte blanche to complete the house.

"They said, 'Nick, do whatever you want,' and I have to say it was about the most fun I've had on a project. I picked the textiles. I added color. I went funkier in a lot of places. I did things like use big subway tiles instead of smaller ones." His favorite touch? "I found these big zinc letters at Anthropologie that I put over the doors of all the kids' rooms. When the family moved in, they loved it because the house was more personal right from the start."

Although he was more restrained at Mackenzie Glen, he took chances when he could. In a bathroom he envisions for guests, he placed oversized subway tiles in a distressed lavender that resembles faux painting. "I decided this was a place to take a chance on something other than white. In the master bedroom, he used millwork to create visual interest in the ceiling, breaking it into raised squares. "I was with my kids at Abercrombie," he says of the clothing retailer. "And I liked the ceiling so much, I took a picture of it with my camera phone."

Barile usually expresses his zest for personal statements when doing custom homes or renovations, like one he did



Luxe and lovely What more could you want in a bathroom: A soaking tub, two sinks and a separate shower. The wall of windows brings the outdoors in, making it the perfect spot for saying goodbye to the cares of the day.

recently at his own home in Riverside. That project kept him from getting too attached to the homes he was building to sell. "Because in the end, I have to be able to part with my spec houses. Even when I really love them."

Source

• York & Company, Greenwich, 698-3406

— Beth Cooney, a staff writer at *The Advocate*, is a regular contributor to *HOME*.

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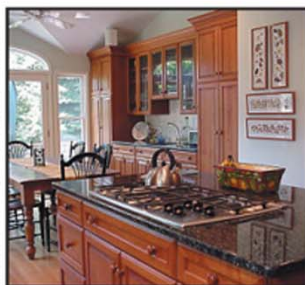


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