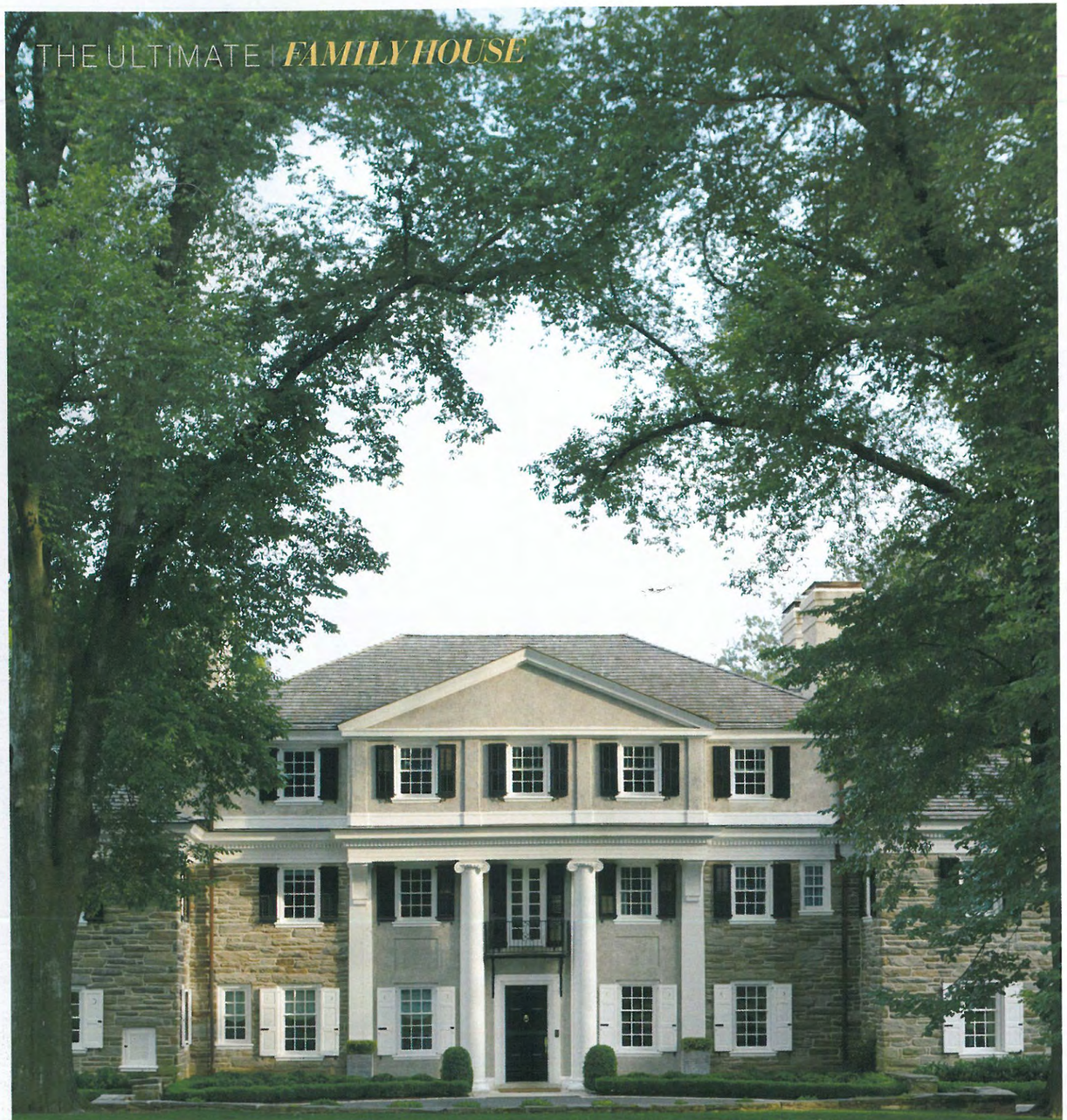
JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2013

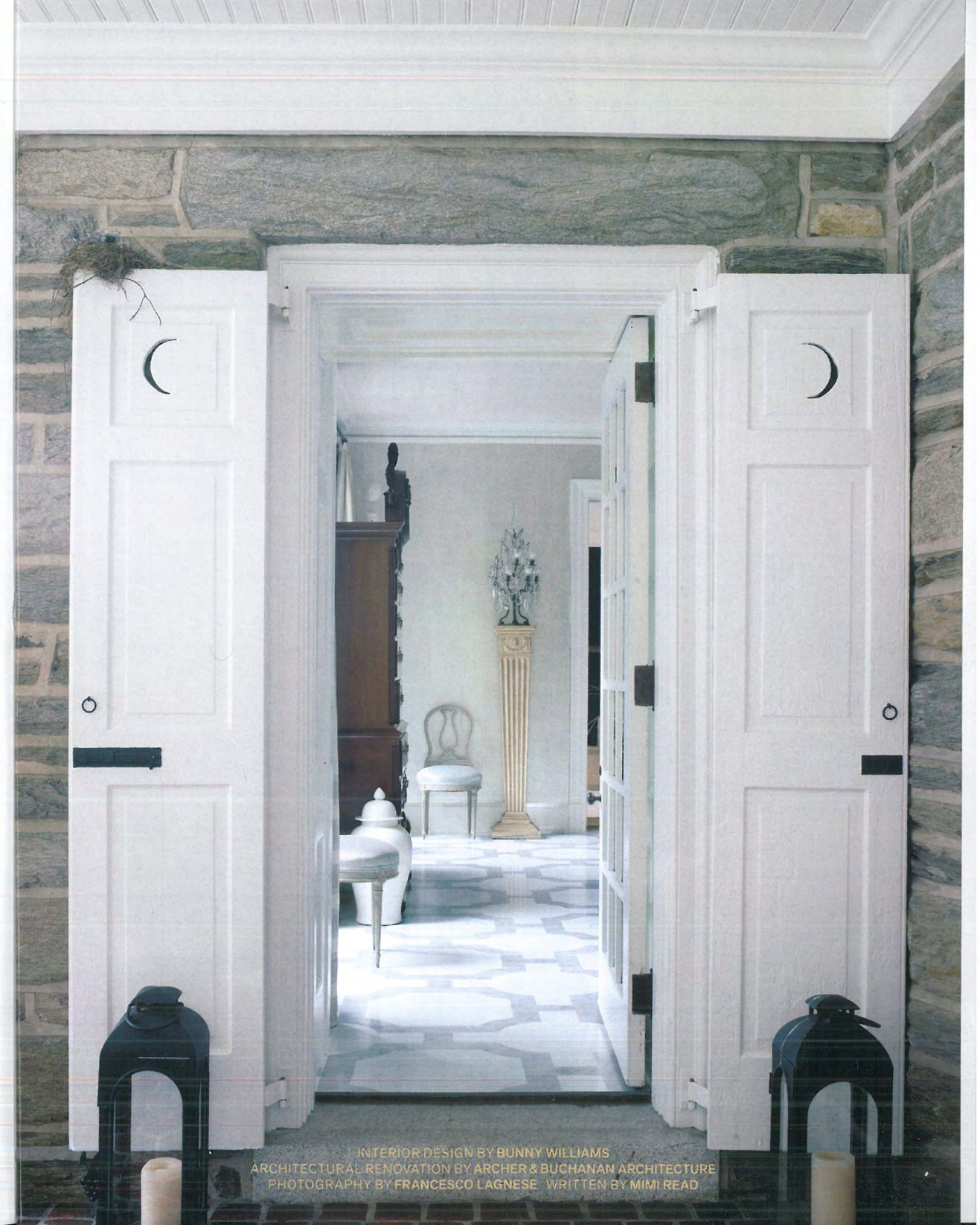
VERANDA

THE BEST *of* THE BEST



HAPPY DAYS

Nothing's more stylish than a home filled with laughter and love.



INTERIOR DESIGN BY **BUNNY WILLIAMS**
ARCHITECTURAL RENOVATION BY **ARCHER & BUCHANAN ARCHITECTURE**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **FRANCESCO LAGNESE** WRITTEN BY **MIMI READ**

Paint and fabric unifies disparate dining chairs. Vintage Louis XV-style chairs in Old World Weavers fabric. Italian 19th-c. chandelier, Evergreen Antiques. Vintage sconces, 1stdibs. French 19th-c. table. Georgian highboy. Curtains in Brunschwig & Fils silk. Wallpaper, Gracie. OPENING PAGES, LEFT: The Georgian Revival facade. OPENING PAGES, RIGHT: Jar and pedetsal, John Rosselli. Antique girandole.

The husband discovered the house. He e-mailed a funny, improvised video tour of it to his wife, who happened to be in France. She watched the video dozens of times, laughing her bell-like laugh, and fell in love. So they bought it: a Georgian Revival pile built in 1915,

set on nine lush acres in a small East Coast city. Then, because he knew she would love it as much as the house, he gave her Bunny Williams to decorate it as a present.

Williams, a grand dame of American design, has created some of this country's most ravishing upper-crust interiors, with rooms as comfortable and unstuffy as they are sophisticated and proper. Here, she made liberal use of classic antiques and fashionable accessories, but everything is layered and natural, as if it gently came together on its own, over years.

She envisioned the couple's three children tricycling through the generous entrance hall.

> "Williams envisioned the children tricycling through the entry hall. (It turns out they use those huge rideable bouncing balls.)"

(It turns out they use those huge rideable bouncing balls.) Accordingly, furniture there is spaced along the walls and is well-scaled, such as an 11-foot-long steel-and-brass Bank of France table the homeowners found in Paris. The elephant on top of it is pure Williams: She loves the movement of animal sculptures and the fact that every culture has them.

Williams broke down the vast living room into warm nooks and seating groups so the whole family could be together, doing different things. The palette is muted, but this is not wan decorating: There's washed gold, bitter orange, and gray-green, though nothing shouts. On the sofa are vintage Turkish pillows and a gorgeous throw that sometimes winds up on the floor for games. "The writing table is lacquered and Directoire-style, but it's for putting your laptop on," says Williams of the easeful, elegant space. "I used a contemporary lamp and coffee table. It looks like somebody has lived here for a while and updated."

Williams also employed numerous family heirlooms and a container's worth of European furnishings previously collected by the homeowners. The dining room's black pedestal

Melon-toned Venetian plaster extends sunshine through the entry hall. Vintage French table. Garden stools, Treillage. Swedish 18th-c. chairs, Steven Sclaroff. Lamps, Daniel Barney. Pendant, Charles Edwards. Rug, Doris Leslie Blau. Art, Sarah Graham. OPPOSITE: Pendant, John Rosselli. Swedish 18th-c. clock. Vintage Khotan rug, Galerie Shabab.

Gentle symmetry, varied heights, and a dappled palette achieve dreamy balance. Custom sofa and armchairs in Nobilis cotton and Lee Jofa chintz. Pillows in Carleton V and vintage fabrics. Lamps (on end tables), Bee Line Home. Lamp (on desk), Parc Monceau. French 19th-c. mirror, Melissa Levinson Antiques.

Forgoing curtains for simple white shutters prevents a fanciful room from feeling too feminine. 19th-c. Zuber wallpaper, Gracie. Custom canopy bed in Raoul Textiles satin. Linens, Matouk. Custom armchair in Decortex cotton. Georgian settee. Matching armchairs, Bee Line Home. Gustavian-style bench, John Rosselli. Rug, Studio Four NYC.

table and highboy were two such pieces, and they led her to paint the floors white. She added a linked octagon pattern that echoes the caning on chair backs. Airy silk curtains banded along the bottom with horizontal stripes sound a graphic, contemporary note. Even with dark antiques, everything's fresh and weightless.

If the children were always considered, so was the husband, who, after looking at one of his wife's Nancy Lancaster books, declared that he loved scenic sepia wallpaper. A search ensued, and antique grisaille scenes of Italy by Zuber were eventually installed in the master bedroom. An ivory-colored bed and lemon-yellow chairs keep the mood buoyant, and a leather settee, soft and broken-in as a baseball glove, keeps things from feeling too precious.

The family lives in the house casually and joyfully. No rooms are off-limits to anyone, not even the dogs. Everyone dances in the entrance hall. They eat in the dining room on special occasions or when someone does well at something. In summer they dine on the terrace and watch the birds grow up—there are nests on tiny ledges created by the shutters.

"Why do I do what I do? I do it because I love home," Williams says. "I'd rather be in my home than anyplace in the world, and that's the way I want my clients to feel. Luckily, in this case, I have accomplished just that." □

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FOR BUNNY WILLIAMS' DECORATING ADVICE, SEE VERANDA.COM

With black-and-white tiled floors and vintage pendants, the renovated kitchen seems pristinely original. Custom island and cabinetry. Range, Wolf. Hood, Viking. OPPOSITE, LEFT: 19th-c. sofa in Osborne & Little cotton with Cowtan & Tout trim. Lamps, Carlos de la Puente Antiques. Rug, Doris Leslie Blau. OPPOSITE, RIGHT: French 19th-c. chandelier, Treillage.