



"I love how they weren't afraid to throw away space for the sake of drama," says designer Marni Leis of the Pinns' double-height great room. In search of an accent color, the couple found the orange chairs at Williams-Sonoma Home.

# FAMILY GLAM

WHEN A BUILDER SET OUT TO BUILD HIS DREAM HOUSE, THE POSSIBILITIES SEEMED INFINITE. DESIGNER MARNI LEIS HELPED GREG PINN NARROW DOWN HIS OPTIONS FOR THE ULTIMATE FAMILY HOME.  
BY SARAH LYNCH PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID DUNCAN LIVINGSTON

Jodi Pinn stood her ground when it came to choosing the color of the kitchen. "I knew I wanted an all-white kitchen," she says. The Pinns went with a La Cornue range and hood in black for maximum contrast.



*"We deliberated over every detail."*



LEFT: Greg Pinn hand-selected each slab of Calacutta marble for the kitchen. BELOW: Kylie, Mackenzie and Ella (pictured from left to right) help themselves to art supplies and Legos in the downstairs craft room.



**W**e call our house 'Trois Fleurs' (Three Flowers), after our three daughters, since so much of the design has to do with the kids," says Greg Pinn of the Saratoga home that he and his wife Jodi recently completed. "The guys who were building our house said that all great houses have names, so we had to come up with something fast." The house is anything but flowery, with a stone facade, glossy gray walls and giant slabs of Calacutta marble, but with evidence of three dancing, drawing, playing girls (ages 8, 6, and 3) everywhere, the name still fits. Despite moments of Hollywood glam, this is undoubtedly a family home.

Having outgrown the three-bedroom ranch house they built 10 years ago, the Pinns knew it was time to find a bigger place after the birth of their third daughter, Ella. "We'd converted the office into a nursery, then the guest room became the girls' room, but it was the idea of three teenage girls sharing one bathroom that motivated us to move," says Greg.

The first to buy a lot on a newly developed cul-de-sac near the center of Saratoga, the couple worked with Newport Beach architects Knitter & Associates to design a traditional home with enough rooms to accommodate the family of five, while offering each member privacy. To that end, the first floor was designed with a central great room and separate kitchen, formal dining room and study; the wing leading from the great room is devoted to the girls, with three bedroom suites of equal size and a second study. Upstairs is the master bedroom and bath. The basement level includes the guest suite, a multipurpose craft room and a media room, outfitted with a small-scale stage and a full-size bar.



“Originally, the basement was just going to be the guest room and one big bonus room, but we decided to make the most of it,” says Greg, who talks about building the 7,000-square-foot house with a casual command of the project.

As the son of Alan Pinn, who cofounded Pinn Brothers Fine Homes, Greg was born into the custom-home development business, so it’s no surprise that he’s an enthusiastic expert on the subject. At Pinn Brothers, where Greg is a vice president, the construction of 200 spec homes per year is not uncommon. Producing that number of homes could certainly make it seem like designing one’s dream home would be as simple as checking the boxes for the luxury options. But even for a Pinn, building one’s own house is never easy, and the seemingly infinite options in materials and finishes—not to mention furnishings—only make the design process that much harder.

“We deliberated over every detail, knowing that there are so many different styles and directions you can take,” says Greg, for whom floor plans are second nature but interiors were a bit more daunting. The Pinns’ initial concept was straightforward French Country.

Each room features striking lighting, like the Cellula chandelier over the bar in the great room. “We had to stop after this one—restraint is key,” says Leis.

Greg asked the staging company he works with at Pinn Brothers to help him envision the interiors. Although the rustic beams and parchment yellow walls the company presented were exactly what he and Jodi had imagined, it felt a little too expected.

Fortunately, Greg had worked with hospitality designer Marni Leis on two hotel projects in the South Bay. Leis, along with fellow designer Oren Bronstein, were brought in by operating partner Joie de Vivre Hospitality to design the gentleman’s club–like Moorpark Hotel and the Mediterranean-style Hotel Los Gatos. “I learned a lot about design during that collaboration because Marni was always challenging me to think of unexpected elements,” says Greg. “Initially, the Moorpark was supposed to be an economy motel, but they came up with the concept of a business club with cherry cabinets, leather chairs and a two-story copper fireplace.”

Scrapping the French Country plan, Greg tore out a Ralph Lauren ad of a man in a white T-shirt and charcoal gray pants and gave it to Leis, with the directive, “I want our house to look like this.” Leis began in the dining room: With walls painted a deep gray, the room is anchored by a silvery oval table surrounded by 12 alternating circular- and square-backed chairs. Across the foyer—which features

Leis’ first suggestion was to expand the dining room to accommodate a long oval table. Enlisting her hospitality contacts, she commissioned a custom-finished pedestal table and two styles of chairs.



Upstairs in the master bath, a crystal pendant light, more Calacutta marble and basketweave floor tiles set an elegant stage for the graceful soaking tub from Kohler.



*“There’s not a lot of pretension, but there is a lot of style.”*



LEFT: The leather bed by Ralph Lauren is one of the few pieces in the master bedroom that isn’t a Barbara Barry design. BELOW: Leis loves the unexpectedness of the velvet settee she placed between the master bedroom and bathroom.



a marble floor laid in a purposely skewed checkerboard pattern—is a glamorous study furnished with a streamlined writing desk and a pair of quilted black leather chairs. “From the outside, the house looks very traditional, then you walk through the door and think, ‘Wait a minute, there’s something else going on here,’” says Leis.

Beyond the foyer is the great room, with 20-foot ceilings and a whimsically grand staircase leading to the master bed and bath. For the soaring, light-filled great room, Leis helped select clean-lined furnishings in a neutral palette to set off surprising elements, including a French limestone fireplace and a glittering chandelier hung over a glossy white bar in the corner. “I wanted it to look like they didn’t take themselves too seriously, so there’s not a lot of pretension, but there is a lot of style,” she says.

The level of high style extends into the kids’ wing, where a swirling Murano glass chandelier hangs in each of the girls’ bedrooms, decorated in their three respective favorite colors. Deftly handling the need for kid-friendly fabrics and materials, Leis upholstered the chairs around the great room’s dinner table in faux-snakeskin that, despite looking ultra-luxe, can easily be wiped down. Though the walls throughout were finished in Venetian plaster, the wainscoting

in high-traffic zones was painted in a high-gloss white because, as Greg attests, “when the kids walk around with brownie on their hands, we can just wipe it off.” Even the espresso-stained distressed wood of the floors, laid in a herringbone pattern, was chosen to avoid the heartbreak of that first scratch caused by the kids.

The kitchen is the true showstopper, however, with three-inch countertops of Calacutta marble and another slab serving as the backsplash behind a 65-inch black La Cornue range and hood. Jodi pushed for white over Greg’s vote for more gray. And in the end, the contrast of the kitchen’s black stove and white cabinets—tempered by gray veins in the marble and polished-nickel hardware—proved to be the winning combination. A beaded chandelier is an unexpected touch over the kitchen’s island, where three contemporary Bertioia bar stools offer lunchtime seating for the three girls.

“We’re gonna live in this house for a long time,” says Greg, sitting down with Jodi and Leis to look at potential artwork for their dining-room walls. “I had to keep reminding myself that we’re building our dream home, so it might take a few extra months. The good news is that I think it all paid off, since our kids get to grow up here and enjoy every decision we agonized over.” ■