

The Fashionable ELLE

GREEN

*Philanthropist and founder of Hope
Audrey Gruss opens up her
By Lauren McCarthy*

Garden party. Gown, Carolina Herrera. Hat, Eric Javits.
Fashion editor:

LIVING

*for Depression Research Foundation
Southampton, New York, home
Photographs by Douglas Friedman*

Jewelry (worn throughout), Gruss's own.
Ann Caruso

WHEN AUDREY GRUSS was planning her dream house in Southampton, New York, a decade ago, she had one goal in mind: to create a home that looked like it had been around for centuries. "Our biggest compliment was when someone came in and asked us, 'How long did it take you to renovate?'" recalls Gruss. "We were thrilled."

A philanthropist and the founder and chairman of the Hope for Depression Research Foundation, which funds scientific research on depression and other emotional disorders, Gruss relocated from nearby East Hampton with her investment-banker husband, Martin. As the house hunting proved challenging, the couple settled on building their own construction on a desirable six-acre lot. The result was a spacious, Shingle-style manse that she describes as "very classical, traditional, with a twist of modern and contemporary on the inside."

The sprawling estate, with its lush gardens and ample, tree-filled outdoor space, serves as a getaway from Gruss's day-to-day life in Manhattan, where, for the past 20 years she has also been president of the Audrey and Martin Gruss Foundation, a private organization that focuses on supporting charities related to arts, education, and medical research. Gruss and her husband retreat to the Hamptons for "holidays and leisure time," particularly in the warmer months and early fall. For this reason, she wanted a home that felt inviting and, most important, calm. "We all live hectic lives, and we all want a place to unwind and just do whatever we want to," she says. "The Hamptons house gives you an instant feeling of relaxation. It is the ultimate rest from reality."

For the construction, Gruss enlisted the architectural firm Hart Howerton, which worked on the couple's former home in Greenwich, Connecticut. (Besides Southampton and Manhattan, they have homes in London and Palm Beach.) "We were looking for the classicism of Stanford White for both the exterior and the interior with some contemporary elements," says Gruss. "And we



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have a very Zen-like feel when you walk in the house."

To achieve an indoor oasis, interior designer José Carlino established a neutral palette, with each room taking on different tones: beige and caramel for the living room, taupe and gray for the library, ivory for the bedroom. For the furniture, Gruss and Carlino relied heavily on antiques mixed with midcentury-modern pieces, such as Italian-made mirrors, a collection of tea caddies done in a tortoiseshell motif, and objects of white Chinese porcelain that Gruss found at the Olympia Art & Antiques Fair in London. "They are beautiful glazed ivory with a tremendous depth and simplicity," she says of the latter. "I put those in our entry hall and on either side on the fireplace mantel, and they set the tone."

Aside from the occasional chic accoutrements, Gruss says that the mandate for the decor is largely "no clutter." Instead the avid gardener decorates her home with fresh flowers that she's grown, as well as baby's tears and selaginella sourced from a local nursery. "They're feathery-looking green plants, very hard to grow," she explains. "I put those around the house, so it's not cluttered, just enhanced by the greens."

Not that there is a lack of foliage on the property. The bucolic surroundings include an apple orchard, a birch tree grove, and several gardens. "One of the prerequisites for wherever we moved was to have gardens," says Gruss. "I had to have a place to grow the plants and flowers that I could cut and arrange."

The labor of love is done in what Gruss refers to as her "flower room," which is dedicated to arranging blooms from her gardens, and comes complete with a flower refrigerator and all the ingredients needed to make the perfect centerpiece or hostess gift: moss, assorted vases, ribbons, et al. "When I have beautiful flowers, I want my friends to enjoy them. My lilies of the valley only grow for one week, so now people wait for them and ask each year," she says. "I spend most of my time in the flower room." ■

In bloom. This page: Dress, Calvin Klein Collection. Shoes, Manolo Blahnik. Opposite page: Pajama top and pants, Dolce & Gabbana. Shoes, her own.



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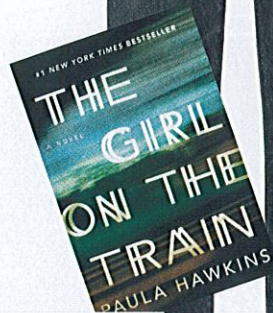
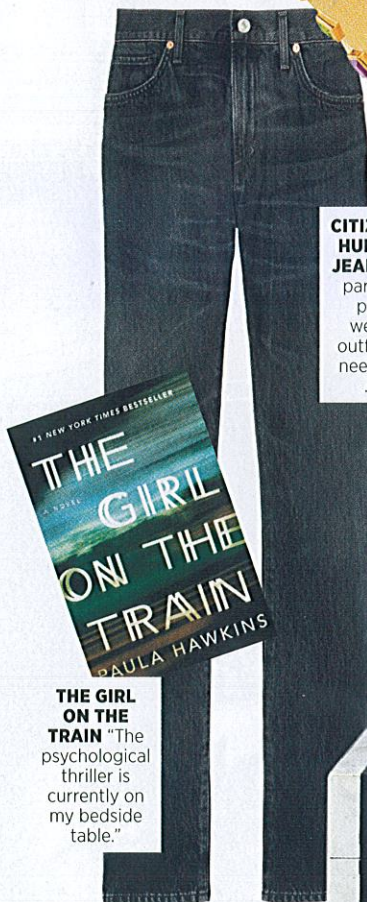
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