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## AN ARTISTIC PLACE AWAITS ITS NEXT AESTHETIC CHAPTER IN BRONXVILLE

Written by

JANE DOVE, 3 WEEKS AGO, 0 COMMENTS

**Photographs courtesy of Julia B. Fee Sotheby's International Realty.**

Bronxville's lovely and historic Lawrence Park, a 20-acre enclave of vintage homes of the finest quality, is one of Westchester's architectural treasures.

Lawrence Park's developer, William Van Duzer Lawrence, who loved the hilltop site, hired architect William Bates, fresh from successfully completing a group of "cottages" for millionaires at Tuxedo Park, to design the first homes.

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Lawrence, a wealthy businessman, philanthropist and founder of neighboring Sarah Lawrence College, personally oversaw design and construction of the first homes, which were ready for occupancy in 1891.

The house on Prescott Avenue, designed by Bates a bit later, reflects many of the architectural details he incorporated into his original, innovative and sometimes whimsical designs.

Bates was known for building in a variety of styles, including Victorian, Gothic and English Tudor. The exterior includes features popular in the Victorian age — bay windows, bracketed eaves, 17<sup>th</sup> century-style balusters, detailed shingle and wood trim and a three-story stone and stucco tower with a cone-shaped roof.

The windows feature many different designs, from Grand Palladian edged in stained glass to round “portholes.”

The home is currently occupied by two artists who have decorated the 5,994-square-foot interior in a distinctive style, using a mix of vibrant colors punctuated by eclectic art and artifacts collected from around the world — many of which have an animal theme.

### **An artistic place**

Just 15 miles from New York City, Lawrence Park contains 98 homes built on a wooded hill along winding roads. From the first, the enclave attracted many prominent artists, writers and arts lovers, including children’s author Kate Douglas Wiggin, animal painter William Henry Howe, painter Mary Fairchild MacMonnies and Elizabeth Custer, widow of Gen. George Armstrong Custer. (Longtime New Yorker critic Brendan Gill was a later resident.) Lawrence Park is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, assuring the structural integrity of the homes within its boundaries.

With a large concentration of individuals in the arts as original homeowners, it was not long before Lawrence Park acquired the reputation of being an exclusive literary and artistic development. It was that reputation that attracted the current owners — artist Elena Agostinis and her husband, Martin Patterson, a financier, caricaturist, art collector and race-car driver. The two are both natives of South Africa.

“We were living in another house in Bronxville with our two growing boys and needed more space,” Agostinis says. “When we first saw the house, we loved the unusual entrance, the turret and the large window in the stairwell. It had lots of wonderfully quirky features with a very playful attitude.”

The couple decided the home, built in 1898, had plenty of room for both the family and their extensive collection of different types of art from around the world.

“We saw that we could go in a lot of different directions and have fun doing it,” Agostinis says. “We also liked the many levels, designed to fit the lay of the hillside site. The floor plan is not a traditional one. The home kind of floats down the hill, with natural light flowing into every room.”

### **Out of (South) Africa**

Agostinis says her style of decorating is a reflection of her artwork. “Being born and raised in South Africa, I was used to hot and fearless colors — red, orange, yellow, turquoise. These are used extensively throughout the house, but balanced by some cooler colors like greens, soft beiges and creamy yellows in other rooms.”

The artwork throughout the interior is equally vibrant and includes many unique features like a rug made from yellow police tape in the living room, with its fireplace and 13-foot ceiling, to the stylish boots that line the rails of one of the staircases.

The artist’s brightly colored wall and ceiling paintings, sculpture and vivid hues add visual interest to every room. Patterson has tastefully filled spaces with pieces from a notable bronze animal collection. International elements collected during the owners’ travels to India, Mexico, Ethiopia, Mali, Burkina Faso and Morocco, as well as their own native South Africa, are all included in the décor.

Since buying the property in 1993, the owners have added new structural components to the historic home, including a kitchen extension, a two-story turret, a new cedar shingle roof, new chimneys, four new baths and a two-car garage.

Located on a quarter acre, the property has seven bedrooms and four full and two half-baths, including a master bedroom in the tower with the domed ceiling, fireplace and large walk-in closet. Other spaces include an entry hall with a fireplace, a dining room with French doors leading onto a balcony, two family rooms, an exercise room, a laundry and a



basement used for an art studio/workshop and storage.

Over the years, Agostinis says she and her husband have added significant landscaping, a major aspect of the appeal of the home, which they are selling for \$4.25 million.

“We have felt very comfortable living in this beautiful house for more than 20 years,” Agostinis says. “The previous owners lived here for 27 years. I like the fact that this is a place where people have stayed and had a good history. It’s a family house, a happy house, not just another piece of real estate to be turned over for a quick profit. We hope the new owners get as much pleasure from it as we have.”

**For information, contact William Dowling, Julia B. Fee Sotheby’s International Realty, at 914-620-8978 or William.Dowling@juliabfee.com.**

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