

# Chronogram

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## Play of Lines in Cold Spring

A Family-Friendly Frida Kahlo-Inspired Contemporary

By Jennifer Farley Photographs by Deborah DeGraffenreid

Architect Ulises Liceaga paid \$200,000 for eight pitched, rocky acres near the Cargill Reservoir in Cold Spring in 1999, three years before the Mexico City native married his New Yorker wife, Christina, with whom he today has five young children.

"In Mexico, if you can afford it, that's just what you do," says Christina, a former financial analyst who met her future husband when she was an exchange student in Mexico. "You buy a piece of land, and when you can, you build a family house, and then you keep it forever," she says.

For the next seven years, Ulises focused primarily on his career as a designer at the world famous firms of Cesar Pelli and Robert A. M. Stern and started a family. As time and money allowed, he began to prepare the Cold Spring property, clearing trees and blasting out a level space upon which to build a country getaway on a hill above a dead end road. The Hudson Highlands rubble was hauled away in truckloads to a nearby concrete maker, grateful for the donation.

In 2008, the rapidly expanding family, which lives during the week in a stunning Gramercy townhouse purchased by Christina's financier father in 1968 for \$100,000, decided to build a prefabricated modern home they had found in *Dwell* magazine. Unfortunately, the kit-house maker contracted by the Liceagas went bust one-third of the way through the project. They'd paid in full, and lost most of their money. For seasoned real estate investors, it was a surprising setback. The Liceagas recovered what they could in construction materials from the bankrupt enterprise—a hodgepodge of roof, wall, and lumber pieces.

"It was sort of devastating, but I'm pretty laid-back," says Christina, semi-famous in the annals of modern Manhattan maternity for delivering her third child by herself, in the back of an SUV at 58th Street, with Ulises at the wheel, en route to the hospital. "I said, well, I have some shares I can sell. We found a builder up for the challenge, and Ulises had free rein."

Above:

The 6,000-square-foot Liceaga home in Cold Spring is composed of two buildings connected by an elevated walkway. The main living space of the house is on the left; the meditation studio and garage are on the right.

Opposite:

Above: The indoor heated pool is adjacent to the living/dining area.

Below: Ulises Liceaga in the kitchen/dining area.

The sculptures suspended from the ceiling are by Mexican artist Emilio Garcia.

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Above: Ulises and Christine Liceaga relax on the couch.

Daughter Isabel is fresh in from the pool in her snorkeling gear.

Bottom:

Sebastian and Maddie Liceaga in Sebastian's bedroom overlooking the backyard.



