



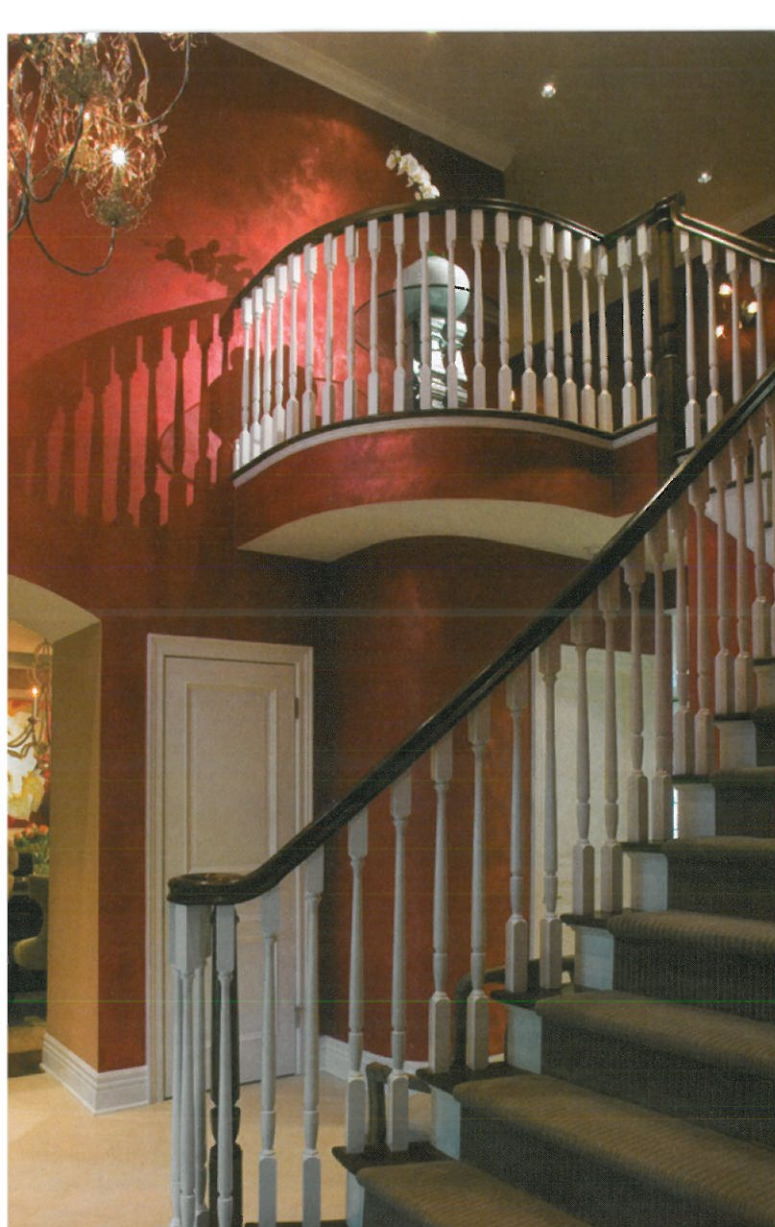
The Beauty Of Private Clubs

# Members Only

BY SIMON MURRAY

A gentleman reclines on a plush sofa, a newspaper opened like veranda doors obscuring everything but his legs, with one adorning the other in an L shape. To his immediate right, three ladies sit comfortably and talk, their conversation uninterrupted as a waiter sets down on a table their mid-afternoon cocktails. Across the room, a couple sit in intimate, carefree silence, lounging in the welcoming glow of the sunlight streaming through the windows.

While this scene could take place anywhere, it is a moment that few share. What these people are enjoying is their exclusive admission into a private club in the New York City metropolitan area; though what exactly the interior looks like depends on which side it falls on the Hudson River.



**HOUSE BEAUTIFUL**  
*(clockwise from top)*

**FOYER:** The raspberry-hued Venetian plaster walls in the foyer hint at the colors found in a botanical painting hanging in the adjacent dining room.

**MASTER BEDROOM:** A Hollywood glam feeling is evoked in the master bedroom with custom furnishings and headboard, a Venetian chandelier, a wraparound draperies.

**UPSTAIRS LANDING:** The twisting lines of the contemporary sconces echo the braids in the portrait gracing the upper stair landing.

**DINING ROOM:** Chairs covered in two textured fabrics surround a mahogany table in the dining room.



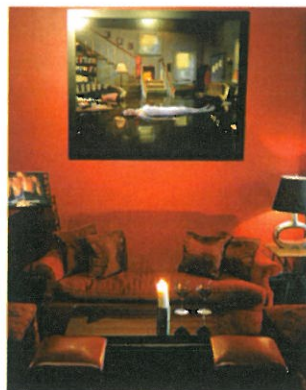
**THE WANTED** Soho House New York (left) and Norwood Club (this page) boast exclusive and well-designed digs.

Here, in the shadow of the greatest city in the world, this feeling of aristocracy is heightened in immeasurable ways. While you can clink champagne glasses in the parlor of a Northern New Jersey country club, you can also toast with the same enjoyment in the stylings of a posh Manhattan private club later that evening. The act is the same, but the mood is entirely different—each invokes an expression of the adjacent areas to which it is incalculably tied.

Evolving in their own ways, the private clubs of this area offer a unique dichotomy for those lucky enough to have the coveted memberships. While the country clubs of New Jersey have changed over generations from their more humble beginnings, catering only to gentlemen golfers, some of

the more private clubs in Manhattan are relatively new and devoted to entertaining city-dwellers. Yet, what they both share is something more appealing; something F. Scott Fitzgerald alluded to when he wrote, “The world, as a rule, does not live on beaches and in country clubs.”

Belonging to these clubs means having an added amenity more prized than an 18-hole golf course or a bar filled with celebrity socialites. It means having the privilege of stealing a moment of serenity by keeping the rest of the world out.

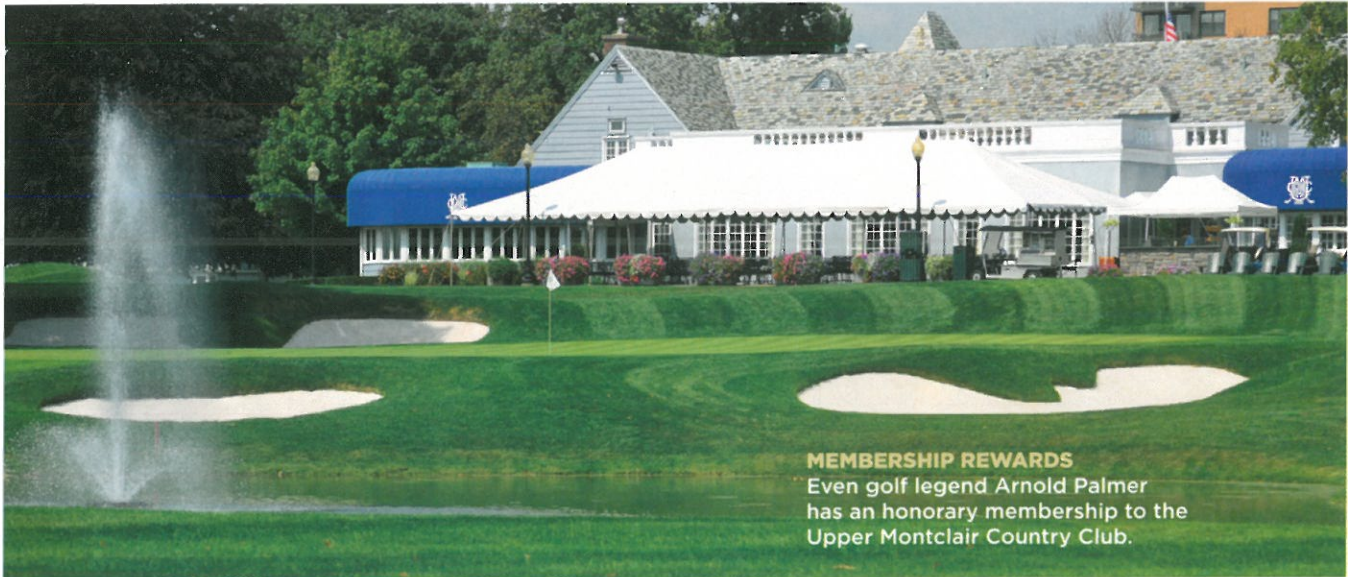


There is something about these places—characterized by a short list, a private space and a locked door—that drives our species wild.

There’s a desire to be included on *that* guest list, to be invited to *that* special club.

Now more than ever, private clubs fill an important space lacking in most people’s lives—the meeting place. This space, constantly evolving since ancient times from tavern to

house to the modern day clubhouse, functions in much the same way as it did millennia before. In bringing together like-minded people with



**MEMBERSHIP REWARDS**  
 Even golf legend Arnold Palmer has an honorary membership to the Upper Montclair Country Club.

similar interests, the private club occupies our need to socialize, in person, with individuals who are very much present. Whether on the links of a country club or enveloped in the sumptuous sofas of your favorite metropolitan club's lounge, these places drive interaction between members. A rare commodity. Though wealth may be a common denominator when it comes to privilege, there will always be some things even money can't buy. As it should be.

### Norwood Club

On the major crosstown strip that is 14th Street in lower Manhattan lies a private club that is as irregular as the area it calls home. Stepping into the building, one can almost feel the electricity of a bohemian artist society bursting forth from every painting and beneath every stairwell. The figurative sparks of the space are intentional, or so says its British founder and chief proprietor, Alan Linn. His private society, the Norwood Club, is relatively new to a space that has a history all its own.

Founded in 2007, the Norwood is named after Andrew S. Norwood, the original wealthy merchant who built the fledgling property in the middle of the 19th century, when Manhattan was mostly expansive farmland. Since that time, the townhouse has changed hands but has stayed intact. Now it is considered a landmark—listed by the National Register of Historic Places and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The owners, Linn and his partner Steve Ruggi, purchased the property with every intention to keep the interior more or less the same. A work of early Victorian architecture, the five floors boast Cuban mahogany doors, stained glass and a fusion of Greek revival and Italianate architecture. But, what really impresses is the interior design that has been added to enliven the space—it just pops.

Enlisting the help of the designer Simon

Costin, they set to work procuring original furniture made exclusively for the club—such as Swaim based in North Carolina—as well as taking it upon themselves to customize pieces, creating unusual, striking focal points among the high ceiling rooms. Take the inverted tree branch chandelier hanging over the Lounge Bar, or the large red wrap-around sofas of the Club Room Bar.

Boasting an exclusive membership of creatives carefully vetted so as to spur interaction, you can almost see the organized chaos of the space around them come to life. “The furniture is designed for spontaneous

encounters between two or more people,” says Linn. “It enhances the dialogue.” That it certainly does.

### Soho House New York

The celebrities who populate its roster arguably the coolest



PHOTO: LARRY LAMBRECHT (HILTON FARM GOLF CLUB)

private members club in Manhattan. A sister club to the original Soho House, founded in London in 1995, the club is exclusive to those working in creative industries such as film, media and music. The extensive facilities—encompassing more than 45,000 square feet and six floors—reside in a converted warehouse on Ninth Avenue, and feature a 44-seat cinema, the Cowshed spa and—most dramatically—a rooftop pool.

Vicky Charles, the in-house designer, refers to the space as “casual glamour,” and it’s easy to give yourself entirely to the cool charm when you’re surrounded by elegant aesthetics and fab vintage décor. Charles started working for Soho House as a waitress in London, and rising through the company, she has a strong sense of what makes an interior of a Soho House club so unique. For instance,

many of the items that reside in the club are either originally made for the New York City space or have been discovered by Charles.

Aside from the club, the space also houses a hotel with 26 signature bedrooms completely refurbished with Cherub beds from At La Maison. There’s a reason everyone’s talking about Soho House.

### Upper Montclair Country Club

It’s hard to miss the resplendent 27-hole championship golf course that is the Upper Montclair Country Club. A green oasis right off the bustle of Route 3, the property was once just a rudimentary five-hole golf course on a meadow. Over time, the property and club developed into the organization

it is today. One of the greatest transformations was directed by Robert Trent Jones Sr. who in the 1950s renovated the course, elevating it from A. W. Tillinghast’s 18-hole course to the worldwide acclaim it enjoys today. But the legacy of a newly minted clubhouse in the 1920s remains, evident in the elegant 20th century design of the interior.



**TOP PRIZE** Hamilton Farm Golf Club features a mahogany-paneled library and trophy room.

One of the only country clubs to have hosted tournaments for all three professional golf associations, the legendary pedigree is in the very rafters. The traditional old-stone, Tudor style mansion of the clubhouse has been graced by the presence of hall of famers including Gene Littler, Arnold Palmer, Nancy López, Pat Bradley, Lee Trevino and Ray Floyd, who have all won titles at the UMCC. Indeed, Palmer has an honorary locker—and membership—to UMCC.

Though renovations have been necessary to furnish the interior, the club’s appeal is found in the timeless, stately atmosphere of the rooms exclusive to membership. Inside, rooms such as the Traver’s Room are available to members for discreet


meetings or fine dining. Named after one of the leading amateur golfers ever, the room is multi-functional yet retains a charming traditional allure no matter the setup, says design director Gina Behrle of the local GB Design Consultants. While the Members Bar—classic dark wood and accented with a Scottish motif—is ranked one of the top 50 best “19th holes” in the country. Bottoms up, New Jersey.

### Hamilton Farm Golf Club

In Somerset County, the Hamilton Farm Golf Club estate is on close to 750 rolling acres. As large as it is prestigious, the club received awards last year, such as the “PGA New Jersey Club of the Year” and a Links Premier award for “Best Private Golf Club.” While the history of the property stretches for more than a century—

outlasting two fires, with one partially destroying the mansion itself—the beautiful estate lives on.

The traditional golf clubhouse features a mahogany-paneled library and trophy room, and the mansion houses ten guest suites, a library and two dining rooms. In the mansion’s drawing room sits a stately Chippendale cabinet, the only other of its kind residing across the Atlantic in Buckingham Palace. The five-star private club membership has hosted both the HSBC Women’s World Match Play Championship and the Sybase Match Play Championship, for a total of five LPGA tour events. Membership at the opulent estate is only open to those lucky enough to be invited by a current member. 



**JERSEY LINKS** "We're currently working on quite a few renovation projects in New Jersey, including the Montclair Golf Club."

LARRY LAMBRECHT

Did You Know That One Of The World's Best  
Golf Course Architects Hails From New Jersey?

# Rees Jones, Superstar

BY JOSHUA FINE

Like his father before him, Rees Jones has earned the title of "The Open Doctor." His specialty? Taking a golf course—and with a surgical eye—transforming it into the next US Open, PGA Championship and Ryder, Walker or Presidents Cup venue. A rare ability indeed.

Jones grew up playing on courses he now carefully reconstructs. A native of Montclair, he received a degree from Yale University, went on to graduate study at Harvard and, perhaps most significantly, was the recipient of

tutelage from his father, Robert Trent Jones, a master craftsman of greens known the world over.

After beginning his own eponymous golf architect company in 1974, Jones has remodeled or designed more than 170 golf courses in his career. These include both international and domestic courses, seven PGA Championships, seven US Opens—and for those adventurous enough to install a golf course in their backyard—his firm also builds links at private (extraordinary) residences.