



# Two's Company

AN ARTISTIC EAST HAMPTON  
COUPLE FIND THE PERFECT  
MARRIAGE OF FORM AND  
FUNCTION IN A MODERN HOME  
DESIGNED JUST FOR THEM

BY CAROLE NICKSIN | PHOTOGRAPHS BY BÄRBEL MIEBACH



**IF EVER A HOUSE WAS** symbolic of the life that takes place inside of it, then Britta LeVa and Joe Zucker's East Hampton abode—two nearly identical structures joined by a glass room—is such a home.

"The house was built just for the two of us. It reflects the closeness of the relationship," LeVa says. In addition to the twin structures, a visitor will find many pairs in the home's décor—two lounges by the pool and two Egyptian daybeds in the glass house. But what they won't find is a guest room. "Guests are completely out of the question," says LeVa, who seems very satisfied with the arrangement. "It makes it easier. In the beginning, we entertained so much, but after a while you need time for yourself."

LeVa, a photographer, furniture designer and interior decorator, and Zucker, a painter and sculptor, left Manhattan behind 22 years ago in

search of a quieter life with more time to share and more time to devote to their creative pursuits. When they came upon a piece of land in the Northwest Woods of East Hampton, near Sag Harbor, it was love at first sight for LeVa. "When we saw the land, I laid down on the ground," LeVa recalls. "I told Joe, if you're not going to buy this land, I'm not going to look at anything else."

From the beginning the couple had a very clear vision of the house they would build. "We wanted to take from Long Island the barn-like architecture," says the German-born LeVa. "We wanted the exterior to be non-descript, and then have the forest around us so that the house becomes part of the forest. We wanted the whole house to be covered in vines and engulfed by the white pines that Joe planted. The exterior

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**Lofty Ideals** | An Egyptian vase (PREVIOUS SPREAD), bursting with delphinium, sits atop a dining table by Hal McKusick of Sag Harbor. **Sweet Solitude** | Homeowner Britta LeVa calls the library (ABOVE) her sanctuary. Egyptian, Japanese and Chinese writings plus a vast collection of interior design and art books overflow from the cases onto the white-bleached oak floor. **Barely There** | The soft colors of Volcano, a two-panel box painting by Joe Zucker, contrast with bolder pieces in the living room. Ghost chairs from the Conran Shop offer covert seating options. See Resources.





architecture was not important at all."

LeVa, who has some training in architecture, set about designing the house herself. "We had an architect in the beginning who was very exuberant," she says. "We needed to rethink the project, and I decided to do it myself. I worked with a builder who filed the papers and did that sort of thing. Joe and I envisioned it and the builder went off and scaled it." Zucker's art studio occupies one of the 1,600-square-foot structures, while the other contains the couple's living quarters—a living room, dining room, kitchen and one bedroom—along with LeVa's study.

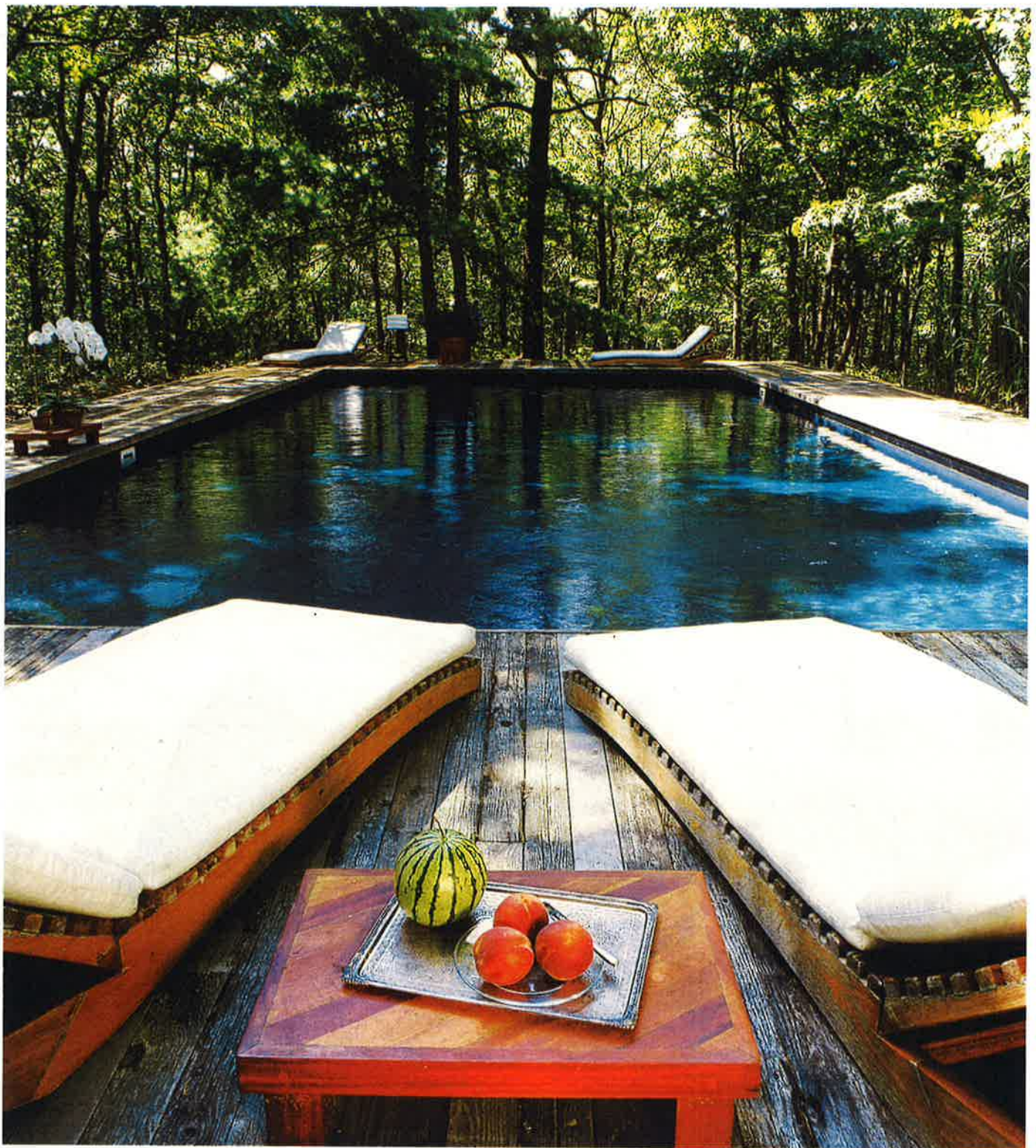
The interior of the house is nearly as simple as the exterior. "It's very open. When I look at it, I think of my loft in New York. The fireplace is a similar setup. We had a big piece of plywood with the television on it. Here the fireplace reminds me of that, because there is a platform around it. It's a little more bourgeois, but I didn't stray too much," says

LeVa, citing the fact that there are doors between some rooms as one of the more conventional flourishes. She incorporated a large expanse of wall space in the living room to use as a rotating gallery for Zucker's work. "I was used to seeing his work develop when we lived in the loft, and I knew I'd miss that," she says.

With the light streaming in, and the foliage enveloping it, the glass room epitomizes the home's communion with the outdoors. LeVa sees it as a "neutral place"—a decompression chamber of sorts. "We have cocktails here, or even dinner sometimes," LeVa says. Much like a greenhouse, the space absorbs heat, making it a particularly cozy spot in the winter.

LeVa's sense of wanderlust finds expression in the décor of the home. "I like things from somewhere else, things that are foreign to me. My father read me *1,001 Arabian Nights* when I was a girl, and that left quite





an impression on me." There are Asian objects, including a Chinese opium pipe and Japanese lanterns and many pieces from Egypt, where LeVa travels several times a year. But as much as she loves reminders of her travels, LeVa cannot tolerate clutter. "I de-clutter continuously. I don't like to have a lot of things lying around. When you're a photographer, whatever you photograph becomes yours. You don't need the physical object," she says.

The kitchen is the heart of many homes, but in this house, it's the

bedroom, where one wall is covered with valentines that Zucker makes for LeVa every year. "They are all different," LeVa explains. "They're about our life together, or his work, or my trips to Egypt or our annual fishing trip to Minnesota." After 26 years of living together—and two years of marriage—LeVa and Zucker are still happiest when it's just the two of them in the home they built for themselves. "I'm completely devoted to him," LeVa says, adding, "and he feels the same way towards me, I presume!" 🌟





**Laying Low** | A pair of chaise lounges, one for him and one for her, are perfect for a poolside nap. The natural colors (OPPOSITE) blend in with the surrounding forest. **Happy Couple** | Day beds (ABOVE), available through Britta LeVa Design, face each other in the glass room that connects the couple's living quarters and Zucker's workspace. See Resources.