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## THE ART ISSUE

NEW TALENT, PRIVATE COLLECTIONS,  
AND ARTISTS' STUDIOS





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# ARTFUL ABODE

**IN YORK, A COUPLE CREATES THE ULTIMATE BACKDROP FOR THEIR COLLECTION OF CONTEMPORARY ART**

**BY ALYSSA BIRD // PHOTOGRAPHY BY IRVIN SERRANO  
STYLING BY NADINE COLE**





**F**or five decades Martha and Geoffrey Clark had been holding onto a wooded lot in Martha's hometown of York, but it took quite a few downed trees—the result of a windstorm ten years ago—for them to finally realize what a treasure of a property they were sitting on. "Suddenly we could see that we have a great view of the harbor," says Geoffrey of the five-acre parcel that had been gifted to them by Martha's mother. Eventually, the Portsmouth, New Hampshire-based couple decided they were ready to take the plunge and build their dream weekend house—a new adventure for the retired couple, since they had lived in the same 1805 Federalist residence for half a century and had never built a house before. "After 50 years of looking after a beautiful but creaking antique home, we liked the concept of level floors, perfectly vertical walls, and windows that don't leak," says Geoffrey with a laugh. "The idea of building a house for the first

time was a little intimidating," adds Martha, "but it was also very exciting and inspiring to come up with a design from scratch."

To help them envision said design, the Clarks enlisted New Hampshire-based architect Barbara Freeman, who has experience with both historic properties in New England and contemporary design, thanks to her time in Italy working under famed architect Renzo Piano. Meanwhile, the couple—longtime art collectors who have always admired a more modern aesthetic—were eager to have a fresh canvas on which to showcase their impressive collection of contemporary paintings and sculpture by mostly New Hampshire and Maine artists. On the agenda: expansive vistas of the river and ocean beyond, a dedicated gallery space, accommodations for three grown children and three grandchildren, a first-floor primary suite, a music room, and a layout conducive to entertaining (the couple often host political and philanthropic events).

Architect Barbara Freeman conceived a contemporary vacation house in York for Martha and Geoffrey Clark that's inspired by modern and mid-twentieth-century design as well as a Japanese aesthetic (opening spread).

The residence was designed with the Clarks' contemporary art collection in mind; *Melting from Beneath*, a multimedia work by Elaine Spatz-Rabinowitz, hangs in the living area (opposite). Pendants from Vibia illuminate the kitchen (above), which features a mix of white and fir cabinetry, an island topped with walnut, and Wolf wall ovens.

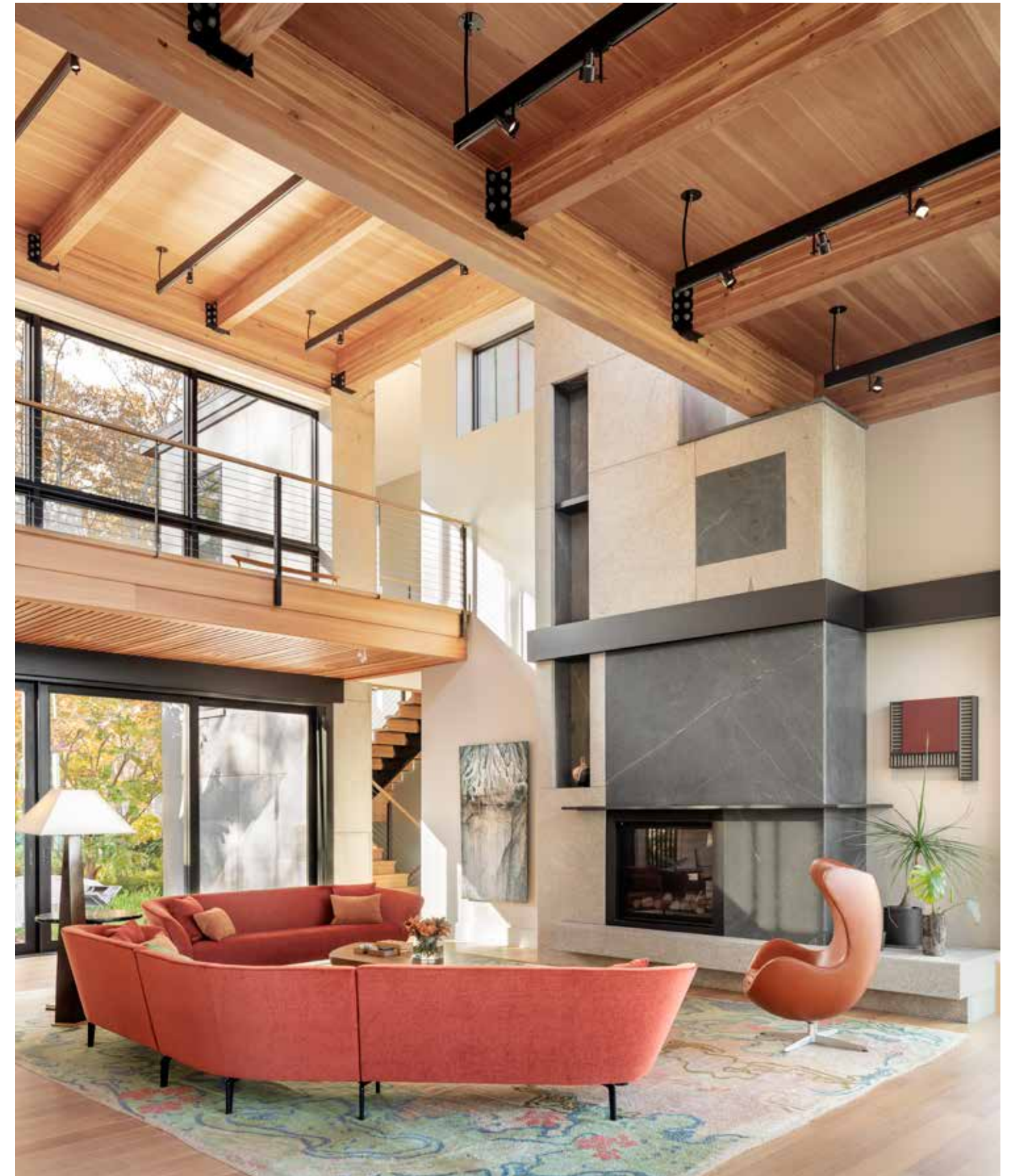




Freeman tapped into her past experience in contemporary architecture, the Clarks' interest in modern and mid-twentieth-century design, and the Japanese aesthetic for which she and her clients share an affinity. "When we started the process, the homeowners had just traveled to Japan, and they liked the way in which the buildings felt close to the earth," recalls Freeman. "There is a sensitivity to the environment, but the rectilinear quality of the architecture is also in contrast with the environment. For this project, we tried to emphasize the vertical and horizontal components of the setting: oak trees that lend a forested feel and the coastline." The resulting 5,000-square-foot structure features an abundance of windows in varying sizes and shapes—some horizontal and some vertical to frame the aforementioned oaks—and a texturally interesting mix of materials that include granite, steel, horizontal cedar siding, and vertically oriented copper sheathing. The latter was actually a point of contention, as Freeman

and the Clarks preferred the "wrong" side of the copper, which has more patina and texture than the verdigris green front side ("It reminds me of tree bark," says Martha). "The supplier couldn't guarantee the quality of the back side, but we insisted on using it because we liked its unpredictability and variation," explains Freeman. The sleek residence is nestled into an incline near the highest point of the site (approximately 44 feet above sea level) and built by Wright-Ryan Homes of Portland. According to Freeman, "You feel like you're right on the water." During the design phase, the architect had scaffolding erected within a staked-out floor plan so the clients could see exactly what the views would be from the proposed upper floor. "We just moved the stakes around until we were satisfied," says Freeman. The project's landscape design firm, Julie Moir Messervy Design Studio, helped fine-tune the placement. A former classmate of Freeman's, Messervy brought to the table her own passion for

A dedicated gallery space on the lower level contains seating from Bensen; Sherwin-Williams's Elephant Ear serves as a backdrop for the painting *Lips* by Jan Frank (above, left), while a painting by Thomas Crotty hangs on another wall that's painted in Sherwin-Williams's Smokey Topaz (above, right). Natural surfaces, including a Douglas fir ceiling and a granite and soapstone fireplace (opposite), lend interest to the living area, which contains a sectional and sofa from Arper, a vintage Egg chair by Arne Jacobsen, and a vintage Viennese rug from Doris Leslie Blau; the multimedia work to the right of the fireplace is by Noriko Sakanishi.







Japanese design, having trained under a Japanese garden master in Kyoto. The goal for the landscape scheme was for it to appear artful yet natural, so Messervy and her associate, landscape architect Jana Bryan, tried to preserve as much of the existing landscape as possible. "It's a beautiful wooded site, so the last thing we wanted to do was install a pristine, super-manicured lawn," says Bryan. "The challenge was blending the new plantings close to the house with the existing vegetation. We chose a combination of native and non-native plants with various textures and shades of green that all feel very natural." In addition to the plantings, Messervy and Bryan dotted the landscape with a few local granite boulders collected by landscaping contractor Tom Dunn—another nod to the Japanese aesthetic. And no detail was overlooked: while laying out the plantings, the designers spent a great deal of time walking around the site to view the plantings from multiple angles, ensuring that water vistas weren't compromised.

They even made sure everything looked perfect from the second floor of the home. "The house has large windows, so you really experience the landscape from inside as well," explains Bryan. In fact, this integration of indoors and outdoors is another tenet of Japanese architecture, according to Freeman.

Inside, this sense of nature is heightened through the use of local granite and various woods. The "public" spaces on the main floor are all connected, creating a nice flow for when the couple is entertaining family or hosting events. And there's plenty of room for the Clarks to display their collection of artwork. "During the design phase, the clients didn't know which works they were going to install, so we just focused on the house itself," explains the architect. "However, we did incorporate a hanging system into the architecture, allowing them to mount pieces anywhere and without nails. As such, the art can be changed out easily." The same hanging system appears on

Julie Moir Messervy and Jana Bryan conceived a landscape scheme that preserves the feeling of the wooded site (opposite); they carefully placed locally sourced granite boulders—a nod to Japanese gardens—among a mix of native and non-native plants.

In the primary bathroom (above), a wall of cedar serves as a backdrop for a custom fir vanity topped with soapstone and grigio sandstone sinks from Stone Forest; the shower walls are sheathed in Gascogne bluestone tile from Walker Zanger, and the flooring is basalt from Stone Partnership.





The front door is flanked by expansive windows fitted with vertical slats that recall Japanese architecture (above). A pair of vintage Bill Stephens armchairs for Knoll, a cocktail table from Design Within Reach, and a rug from Warp and Weft form a sitting area in the library; a pastel by Geoffrey's late sister, Katherine Clark, hangs on the wall (left).

(Opposite, clockwise from top) Freeman designed the cedar, copper, steel, and granite structure to be sensitive to the environment, but its rectilinear quality is also in contrast with the existing oak trees on the site. Adjacent to the dining area is a sitting area with views out to the water; the Eames chair and ottoman are vintage, as is the Vladimir Kagan side chair. The screened porch includes seating from Cane-line.



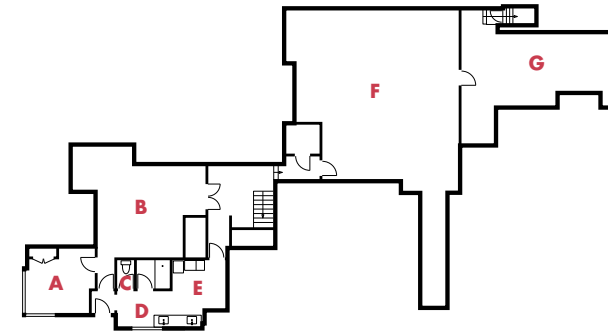




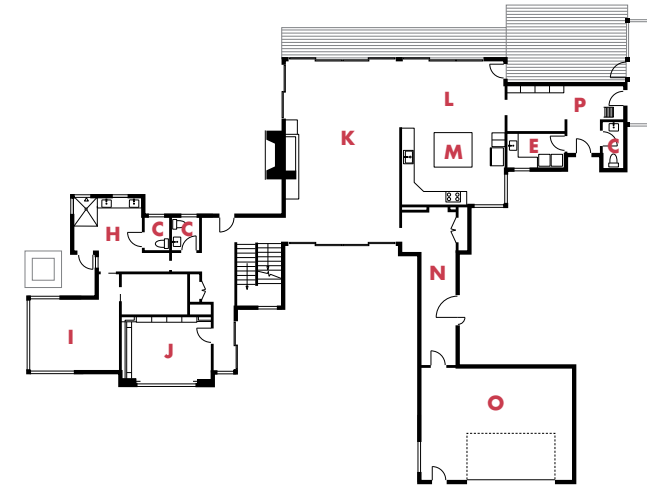
DESIGN ARCHITECT: BARBARA FREEMAN  
 PROJECT ARCHITECT: PETER WHITE  
 LOCATION: YORK

- |                 |                      |            |
|-----------------|----------------------|------------|
| A Study         | G Mechanical         | M Kitchen  |
| B Gallery       | H Owners' Bathroom   | N Foyer    |
| C Bathrooms     | I Owners' Bedroom    | O Garage   |
| D Changing Room | J Library/Music Room | P Mudroom  |
| E Laundry       | K Living Room        | Q Office   |
| F Storage       | L Dining Room        | R Bedrooms |

LOWER LEVEL



MAIN LEVEL



UPPER LEVEL

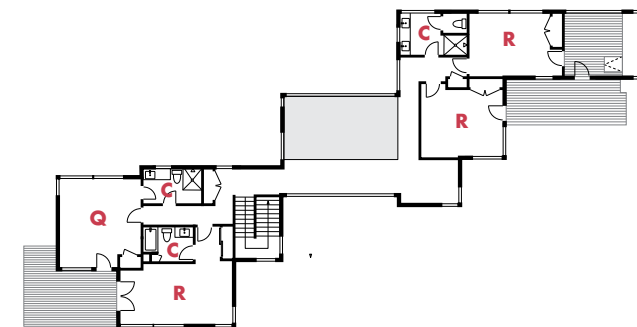
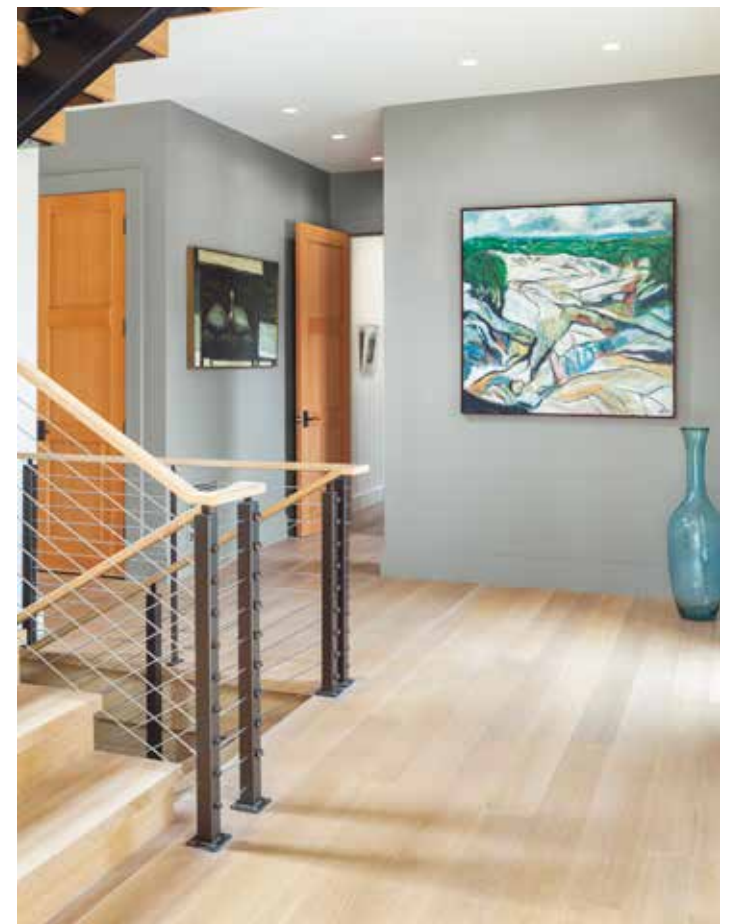


ILLUSTRATION: Tim Lohnes



the lower level, where there is a dedicated gallery that's used as a rotating art space. "We are slowly acquiring additional art for the gallery," says Martha. "One of our sons is an artist, so we hope to showcase some of his pieces there as well." The other rather unorthodox space is the music room, which was constructed for audio and video with the help of sound engineer Lou Clark. "This room was a challenge because it needed to be precisely designed according to the geometry of sound," explains Freeman. "The proportions had to be just so in order to optimize sound absorption quality. It ended up taking quite a bit of time."

When it came to the decorating, the Clarks turned to Kittery-based interior designer Nadine Cole, whose work they had admired in a house in Scarborough. "We didn't want anything flashy," explains Martha, "and Nadine has a great, low-key design sensibility." Cole took her cues from

the architecture. "Barbara and I discussed the Japanese influence, so I thought about intimacy with the landscape, natural materials, simplicity, and handcrafted furnishings and fixtures," says Cole. "When selecting wall colors, I referred to museum displays to see which tones would best enhance the art. We stuck with neutrals as well as some deeper shades that create a nice backdrop." The furnishings themselves are an eclectic mix of new and old, with several vintage items satisfying the Clarks' admiration for mid-twentieth-century design. "Martha and I always scuffle over who gets to sit in the Eames chair in the living room," says Geoffrey with a laugh. "It's the perfect place to have a cup of coffee and watch the lobster boats go out." Martha concurs, citing the home's great connection to nature. "We see everything from deer to wild turkeys," she says. "It's very satisfying indeed." **MH+D**

Artwork by Bonnie D'Abate hangs above a bed designed by Birgit Gämmerler for Zeitraum in the primary bedroom (above); the Eames chair and ottoman as well as the side table are from Design Within Reach, the rug is from Warp and Weft, and the coat stand in the corner is from Objects and Ideas. This view of the sitting area highlights a vintage Vladimir Kagan sofa, a cocktail table from Gubi, a floor lamp from Hubbardton Forge, and a rug from Angela Adams (opposite, above). Works by John Laurent, on the left, and Arthur DiMambro, on the right, hang in a hallway (opposite, below).