

ALWAYS WANTED TO LIVE IN A GREAT BIG OLD LOFT IN Manhattan, but I didn't want to raise my two young sons in the city." The solution to this dilemma, posed by a hard-working mother and wife and creative director of the company she and her husband own, was to re-create the industrial-warehouse ambiance usually found in an urban loft on one acre of steeply sloping New Jersey woodlands.

a city loft facing the woods

Principal architect Jay D. Measley, RA, and project architect Michael Mahns, RA, fulfilled their clients' wishes with an L-shaped, soaring structure of concrete blocks, exposed black-painted steel framework and trusses, and vast expanses of state-of-the-art, energy-efficient glass that welcome wooded views into the loft-like interiors.

"I wanted nothing that would take away from the design, so that you would be able to appreciate all the lines and details," says the homeowner.

The resulting structural drama may readily be seen in the house's showplace 24-by-32-foot living room, where a barrel-vaulted ceiling, made from an industrial galvanized-steel pan normally used as a form for pouring concrete floors, rises more than 20 feet high. Vying with the trees for attention is a dramatic fireplace designed by Measley. "We were thinking of finishing it in verdigris or bronze," says the owner, "but finally decided to leave it in its natural gray plaster to go with our idea of using materials in their raw state."

Raw though the space may be in theory, it is amply warmed by its decor. An oak floor glows underfoot. Furnishings chosen by the owners in collaboration with Carolyn Coffman of Palladio Interior Design add what the owner describes as "big punctuation marks of color," most notably in comfortable, primary-colored leather chairs that are every bit as sculptural as their surroundings.



GOOD IDEAS

- LOOK TO THE NATURAL COLORS AND TEXTURES OF UNFINISHED MATERIALS TO ADD INTEREST AND WARMTH.
- IN SCULPTURED WALLS, SUCH AS THE FIREPLACE SHOWN HERE, BUILD IN SHELVES AND NICHEs FOR SUCH PURPOSES AS FIREWOOD STORAGE AND DISPLAYING A VARIETY OF COLORFUL COLLECTIBLES.
- IN OVERSIZED ROOMS, ARRANGE FURNITURE IN TWO OR MORE GROUPINGS TO DEFINE LIVING AREAS.





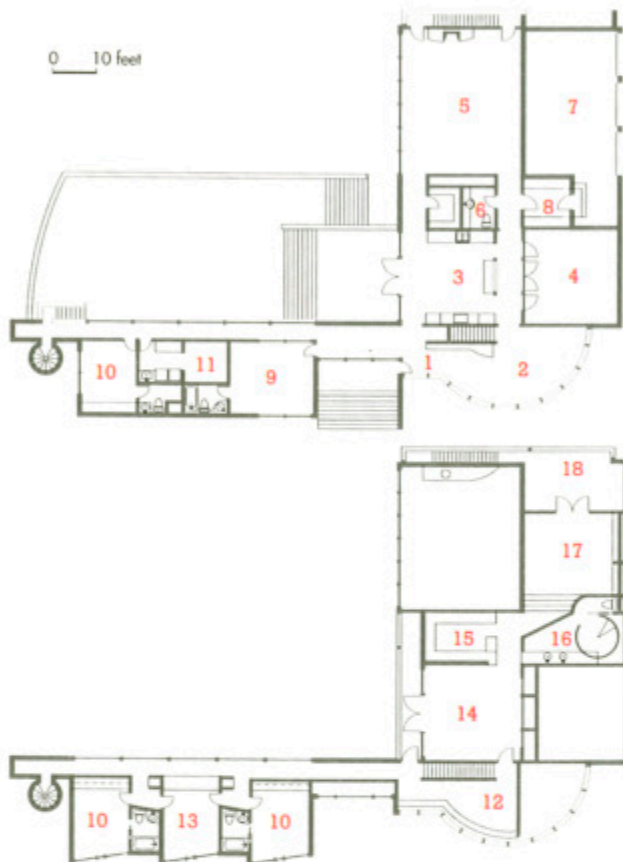
THE FORMAL DINING ROOM WAS POSITIONED AT THE CUL-DE-SAC-FACING CORNER of the L-shaped design because, says the homeowner, "we thought that it would be good as the most public room of a glass house, because you don't use it that often." To make the room all the more public, the architects supported the structure with a highly visible steel framework; the 16½-foot, curved glass curtain wall, says Mahns, "is only there to separate interior from exterior. At nighttime, the black window frames seem to disappear and it feels like you're setting the table out in the trees."

Miniature halogen lights, barely visible suspended above the table, "look like stars hanging in midair," adds the homeowner.

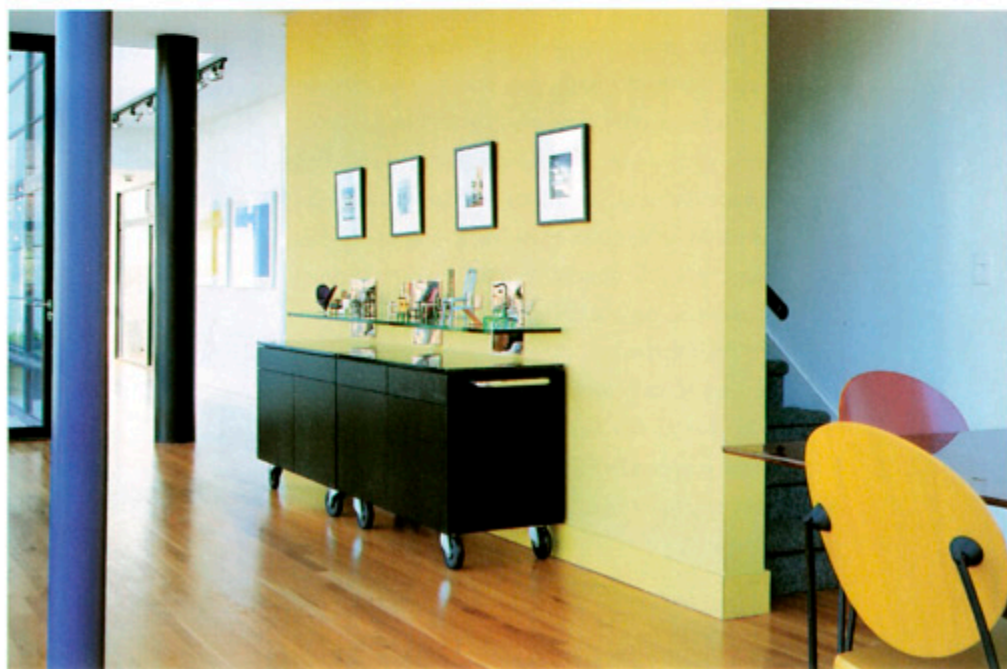
To enhance that sparkling illusion, Coffman and the owners selected a Vikter dining table by Dakota Jackson with a highly reflective ebony top. Once again, colorful punctuation is introduced, this time through Dakota Jackson's Vikter stacking chairs stained in red, yellow, and blue, as well as blue-painted steel columns and a yellow-green wall that conceals the stairs leading up to the master suite.

As functional as the dining room's architecture, a pair of black serving carts custom-designed by Palladio roll right up to the table. When not in use they form a sideboard against the wall. Displayed above them, on a glass wall-shelf also from Dakota Jackson, are whimsical miniature chairs.

setting the table out in the trees



1. ENTRY
2. DINING ROOM
3. KITCHEN
4. FAMILY ROOM
5. LIVING ROOM
6. POWDER ROOM
7. GARAGE
8. MUDROOM
9. LIBRARY
10. BEDROOM
11. LAUNDRY ROOM
12. STUDY
13. CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA
14. MASTER BEDROOM
15. DRESSING ROOM
16. MASTER BATH
17. EXERCISE ROOM
18. DECK



a retreat where modern is serene

AS WIDE-OPEN AND BOLD AS THE PUBLIC ROOMS MAY LOOK and feel, the owners, architects, and designer alike strove to achieve a more intimate, subtle effect in the master suite. "We underplayed color here to make the rooms more serene and quiet, going for a monochromatic scheme with black as an accent," says Coffman, who selected an ivory-colored, industrial-quality, finely ribbed wool Eurotex carpeting for the bedroom and the elegantly appointed dressing room.

That is not to say, however, that the whimsy to be found elsewhere in the house was thrown by the wayside here. Coffman points out the "Alphabet" duvet cover, which struck a strong chord with her creative client. So, too, did the draperies, made from a fabric of translucent filaments and deliberately cut long to billow cloudlike on the floor. A Mackintosh chair and Aalto chaise longue pay tribute to the historical past of sculptural, functional furniture.

Form and function combine as well in the dressing room's custom natural-birch built-ins. Explains the owner, "There's lots of really neat stuff going on behind those doors, with shoe racks, cubbies for bags, sliding partitions with hooks for belts, and one whole side for hanging clothes." Lighthearted touches of postmodernism are introduced in an "Iselde" bench from Trout Studios and Philippe Starck sconces nestled within the skylight well.

The granite-topped birch cabinetry flows into the master bath, too, ending at a semicircular brick-style glass-block wall. On the other side of the wall is a shower with freestanding pipes. Beyond, a sunken whirlpool tub faces outside, where the glass-brick wall completes its circle. "It almost feels like you're bathing outdoors," says architect Mahns.

"We've used all these industrial materials in a user-friendly way," sums up the owner. She delights in the fact that people who come to visit perpetually tell her, "I don't like modern houses, but I love this." □



See Shopping Resources, page 153, for details.

