

Maine Home

March 2009

+DESIGN

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A Many-Storyed Home

In the hills above the sea, an art-filled home full of life



by Joshua Bodwell
Photography Trent Bell

Sometimes we trick ourselves into believing that our lives are pencil-straight highways moving chronologically from one thing to the next, flying across the tarmac of our days. In reality, life is more akin to an inquisitive river that forever twists and bends its way ahead—even curling back on itself occasionally.

For husband and wife Liv Rockefeller and Ken Shure, life's curiously circuitous route has deposited them high upon a hill overlooking a swath of blueberry barrens that Ken tended as a young man and a stretch of landscape that Liv often trampled across during her childhood.

For many years, when their children were still small, the couple lived an "in-town" life. Close to the schools and markets, their handsomely renovated 1870 Victorian commanded views of the local harbor. But one New Year's Day a few years ago, Liv mustered the family for an impromptu hike up a small mountain on the edge of town. "After the

kids had moved out, that Victorian just felt like the walls were closing in," she remembers. But as she climbed up and up that New Year's Day, she felt a joyful release washing over her.

On a rocky promontory near the mountain's summit, the family looked with new eyes upon a house built just below the hill's rocky zenith. Contemporary and filled with light, the house spread like wings against the hillside. Built for an art dealer in the early 1990s by the architect Christopher Glass, the house just happened to be for sale.

"At that moment, I had absolutely no thought that we'd move up here," says Liv, a smile spreading across her face, "but within a week from that day, we had a deal on the house."

Today, the mountainside Rockefeller-Shure home eschews ego and opulence in favor of warmth and livability. It has been poetically dubbed Two Ponds. While many of the home's thirty-two acres are



littered with elegant stands of cloud-white birch, inside, Liv's favorite colors—tranquil shades of blue and green, and bright punctuations of orange—radiate a sense of calm throughout every room.

Unlike the many small rooms of their old Victorian, the open floor plan at Two Ponds pulls in the rugged, majestic landscape outside; the high ceilings of the main living spaces stretch unbroken from one side of the house to the other.

Beyond its spectacular views of lakes and rolling mountains stretching to the wild Atlantic, Two Pond's most breathtaking feature is its art collection. Everywhere you turn, there is art: contemporary and traditional works, figurative renderings and landscapes, paintings and sculptures. In addition, many a free surface display little clusters of Liv's collections. There is her small box collection: silver boxes and wooden boxes, Chinese boxes and Dutch boxes, Renaissance boxes and eighteenth-century boxes—everywhere boxes. There are collections of Neolithic stone tools, prehistoric shark teeth, as well as an assortment of Central and South American gourds emblazoned with storytelling carvings. An avid cook and culinary enthusiast whose recipes have appeared in *Food & Wine*, Liv has also accumulated a stunning stack of food-related books, as well as unique serving pieces and tableware.

"The layers of design will just get deeper and deeper here," says interior designer Ariana Fischer Gregg. As the owner of Rockland's sophisticated home-decor store G.F. MacGregor, Gregg has worked closely with Liv on a variety of projects over the years. "We are constantly evolving," says Gregg. "Static is just not how we live. So what Liv was going through with moving—the kids going off to school and her desire for more expansiveness—that was a huge inspiration to me. It gave this project its heart."

Though the term is often overused and misapplied, the decor at Two Ponds is truly *eclectic*—it captures Liv's and Ken's current passions while warmly embracing the legacies of their two families.

For example, a well-worn antique Scandinavian dining-room table is surrounded with Danish designer Hans Wegner's iconic circa-1950 "Y"

Earth-toned concrete floors warm this chef's kitchen designed by New World Kitchens (opposite). "I was looking for European modern," says homeowner Liv Rockefeller, "but also something that felt timeless." Interior designer

Ariana Fischer Gregg says her input on the kitchen included "toning the modern down a bit"; she points to the polished, tumbled Italian marble backsplash as an unexpected touch. "It's an overused phrase, but this house is truly eclectic," adds Gregg.

Pulling the Outside In (previous spread): The sunporch embraces views of the rugged Maine landscape for miles around. Just beyond the sunporch, a stone patio sits atop a rocky, terraced hillside that drops away to blueberry barrens and stands of shimmering birch.

Light pours into the kitchen as Gregg arranges flowers (right, top). While the stools around the island are decidedly modern, Gregg and Rockefeller wove contemporary and classic together throughout the home, such as in this transition from the entry to the kitchen (right, bottom). Many of the antiques around the house have been passed through generations of Rockefeller's family—the mellow blue of this cabinet happens to be one of her favorite colors and appears throughout the home.







Leonard Baskin's woodcut *The Poet Laureate* dominates the dining room (opposite, top). Homeowner Kenneth Shure is the representative for Baskin's Gehenna Press, and at least one piece of the revered artist's work can be found in nearly every room of the house.

Danish designer Hans Wegner's iconic circa-1950 "Y" chairs line up around the elegant simplicity of an antique Scandinavian dining table (right). The chairs hold special appeal for Gregg, whose grandmother was one of the first people to import Wegner's furniture to Boston over fifty years ago.

Behind the "Y" chairs, bookcases overflow with just a fraction of the Rockefeller-Shure collection of hand-bound, private-press books; the couple has begun planning the construction of a new library to accommodate the entirety of their collection.

Collections Abound: Thos. Moser's Lolling chair and ottoman sit before a built-in bookcase brimming with a collection of steins (opposite), and a tabletop offers just a glimpse of Rockefeller's box collection, some of which date to the Renaissance and eighteenth century (opposite).

"I spent a lot of time creating forums for Liv to move her collections around," says Gregg. For her part, Rockefeller is appreciative, noting that Gregg "does not create static spaces, but rather, spaces that are constantly evolving."



chairs. Just across the room, a boldly angular couch by French designer Philippe Starck sits beneath a massive mirror encased in a dazzling, 200-year-old gilded rococo frame that once belonged to Liv's grandfather. "Liv was craving some modern, so I thought: *Let's verve it up a little!*" says Gregg of the couch.

In both cases, the blending of "old" and "new" is seamless and stunning. "There is something inspiring about living in a space that has brought all of these different pieces from different eras together and made it work," says Gregg with evident enthusiasm. "But you have to constantly be thinking: *What is too much and what is okay?* Eclectic spaces do not work unless you constantly bring in balance."

The strongest binding thread throughout the house is perhaps the honesty and authenticity of its contents. "Everything in our house must have meaning, not just look good," insists Liv. "Every



Leonard Baskin's monumental woodcut *Man of Peace* anchors this smartly designed bedroom (above). "That woodcut was in the hallway, but I moved it and now it gives this room a lot of character," says Gregg. "This bedroom is a little severe but in a chic, sophisticated way that makes it relaxing." The deep, lush red of the armchair in the corner is another of Rockefeller's favorite colors and is used throughout the home to punctuate the principally serene color scheme.

The newly remodeled master bathroom is a restrained paean of organic modern design (right, top).

The Entrance: Large windows to the left and right of Two Ponds's main entrance were in architect Christopher Glass's original design (right) but were left out when the home was built, as the original owner, an art dealer, strove to maximize wall space; Rockefeller and Shure had the windows installed, fulfilling Glass's design vision.

Rockefeller and Shure were attracted in large part to Two Ponds because of the land around it (opposite, inset). The couple has expanded the home's landscaping and connected it to paths that wend off into the surrounding woods. "We're in our own climate up here," says Rockefeller of the magical setting. "The fog is thicker, and we often get double the amount of snow that falls in town. We call it 'Little Switzerland.'"

object, every painting has a story.”

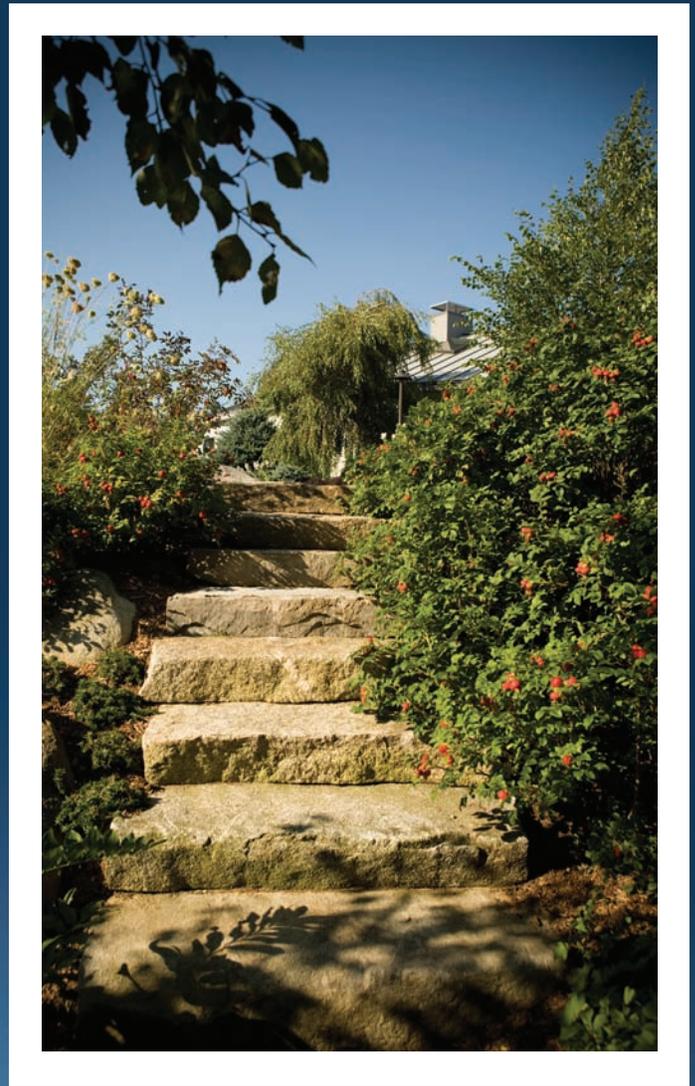
In many ways, these shared values made Liv and Ken perfect clients for Gregg, who admits an aversion to designing and decorating one’s own home in a formulaic manner. “This would be the antithesis of how I regard things—the individual is at the forefront, always,” says Gregg.

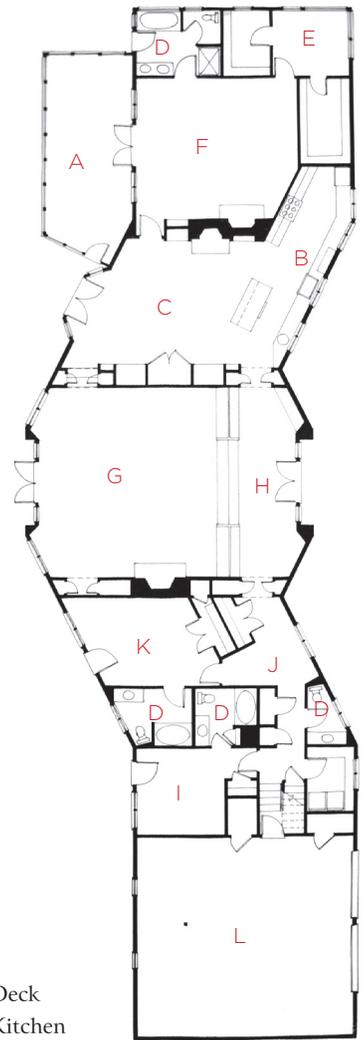
“Working on the interior design of Two Ponds,” she continues, “was solely about what was pleasing for Liv and Ken—the ‘Joneses element’ wasn’t part of this at all. It was about these two coming home and feeling good.”

For Ken, feeling good means the home’s walls are overflowing with the work of one artist in particular: the late Leonard Baskin. In 1977, Ken opened the Goose River Exchange on Lincolnville Beach, which quickly became a destination for those seeking fine-paper Americana and other ephemera, including postcards and books. After Baskin made a surprise visit to Goose River Exchange, the two men became friends. And in 1986, Ken became the representative for Baskin’s Gehenna Press, a revered fine press responsible for producing some of the last half-century’s most stunning books. While the bookcases overflow with Baskin’s work (plans to build a new library beside the main house are in development), the walls are bedecked with several of the artist’s monumental woodcuts, such as *The Poet Laureate* and *Man of Peace*, and the living room is graced with Baskin’s bronze sculptures, including *Sibyl with Owl* and *Phaedra*.

An art lover as avid as Ken, Liv’s favorite art in the house is not a specific artist or piece—it is an entire wall of landscapes in the couple’s bedroom. “It’s the first thing I see each morning and the last thing I see each night,” she says. Among the grouping of landscapes—many containing the rich blues and greens that Liv adores—are pieces by Maine painters Janice Anthony and John Schmidtberger. Just below the paintings are Tim Van Campen’s contemporary wool rugs, which make even the bedroom floor feel bathed in art.

Standing before her sunny living-room window, Liv says the couple never considered building a new house because they’d never really considered leaving their Victorian before that fateful hike on New





- A Deck
- B Kitchen
- C Dining Room
- D Bathrooms
- E Walk-in Closets
- F Master Bedroom
- G Living Room
- H Entry
- I Bedroom
- J Hallway
- K Back Entry
- L Garage

Year's Day. Outside Two Ponds, wide stone terraces, tinged blue in the late afternoon sun, drop toward the blueberry barrens. "I realized that I was feeling hemmed-in, even in that grand house," says Liv. "But this house's expansiveness...it felt like we could breathe."

And, she admits, the move was "always" about the location—this miraculous knob of land kissing the clouds high above the Atlantic. "When we arrived here, it felt like I was going home," says Liv. **MH+D**

For more information, see Resources on page 88.

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