

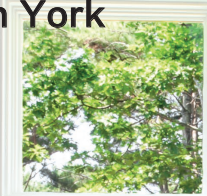
# DECOR MAINE

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MAY 2019

## THE DESCENDANTS

A family celebrates five generations in York



## CAMDEN CONTEMPORARY

A 1970s Shingle style gets a stunning postmodern remake

*plus*

Great Diamond Island's  
**CROWN JEWEL**



*left* A traditional, 19th-century bed sits alongside mid-century modern furnishings in Werber's office. Navajo textiles throughout the room tie the eclectic mix together.

*opposite page* Interior designer Ariana Fischer paired new, parachute-corded chairs in neutral tones with Werber's mid-century modern, glass-top tables to give the seating area an open, airy feeling and highlight the Navajo weaving hanging over the fireplace.





# WOVEN TOGETHER

BEVERLY WERBER AND PETER GOLDMAN MARRY  
ANCIENT CRAFTS AND MODERN DESIGN IN THEIR  
DOWNTOWN PORTLAND LOFT

WORDS: STACEY KORS    PHOTOS: MICHAEL D. WILSON

**BUILDER**

All Aces

**ARCHITECT**

Ryan Senatore Architecture

**INTERIOR DESIGNER**

Ariana Fischer



An heirloom writing desk and dancer lamp inherited from Werber's mother adorn the master bedroom, which also features paintings by Los Angeles artist Curtis Ridley (over the bed) and Seattle artist Marcus Bohne (above the basket).



Beverly Werber and Peter Goldman love to hunt. In their home in Portland's historic India Street neighborhood, their trophies are *everywhere*: hanging on the walls, lying on the floors, draped across railings, and, of course, prominently mounted over the fireplace. Not the hides and heads of elusive big game, but rare Native American rugs, tapestries, and blankets, amassed while the couple lived in Tucson, Arizona.

"We discovered that we both have a passion for the hunt and collecting," says Goldman, recalling their first finds together while traveling through New Mexico in 2011, two years after they married. "We were looking for Two Grey Hills, which, inch by inch, are considered the best Navajo weavings. We stopped at a trader's shop; the outside looked decrepit. You go in and there's cereal, canned goods, dry goods, things like that. But then way in the back is a rug room—and it was as if a magic world opened up."

Werber and Goldman have since created their own magic world of weavings—well over 100 textiles, far more than can be exhibited in their nearly 2,000-square-foot duplex loft. Some are folded in neat piles, others rolled and stacked on occasional furniture. And all still have their price tags. "The tags tell the marvelous tales of a work's journey," Goldman explains. "Region, approximate date of creation, the production process including materials, dyes, etc."

As the couple walk through their home discussing their collection, it's clear how knowledgeable they are about Navajo weavings, from the traditions passed down through generations to the types of wool and dye used in different textiles. What also quickly becomes evident is that Werber and Goldman are as passionate about the craftsmen as they are about the craft. They have commissioned works from, and become friends with, several present-day weavers; for them, collecting is intrinsically tied to connection and community, and is also an act of social responsibility.

So when the Northeast natives decided to return to the region, Portland seemed like the perfect fit. "The sense of community, and giving back to the community, is really strong here," says Goldman, an intellectual-property and patent-infringement attorney who volunteers for the nonprofit Maine Community Law Center. "Portland also values progressive social action," adds Werber, a former communications expert interested in arts-related philanthropy. "And social action, both in our daily lives and our interest in art, is key."

**"I designed the bed as well as the sofa," says Fischer. "Both are made in Maine, with Maine hardwoods, because they care so much about local community."**

*below* 1950s-60s Maine Wabanaki “flat” baskets, made from braided sweetgrass and dyed brown ash, sit atop a 19th-century Shaker child’s rocker in the main living area. A rare Zuni blanket circa 1880 hangs on the wall.

*opposite page* The loft’s high ceilings and abundant light create the perfect backdrop for Werber and Goldman’s extensive art and textile collections, including the three large, Navajo weavings hanging over the mezzanine railing.

The couple first saw their home, encompassing the top floor of a converted 19th-century building, in 2017 and immediately fell in love with the expansive white walls and open, light-filled layout for displaying their textiles. Moving from a traditional townhouse to a modern loft, however, was a big stylistic shift. “What we had in Tucson didn’t necessarily work in this environment,” says Werber. So she and Goldman enlisted the help of Portland interior designer Ariana Fischer. “A lot of the furniture they had before was rolled-armed and overstuffed,” says Fischer. “For that space, which is contemporary with nice light bouncing around, you want to see something more stylish and not as heavy.”

But this project was about far more than designing to suit a space. Fischer needed to accommodate the couple’s textile collection in her approach. “We engaged Ariana before we moved here,” says Werber, “and we schlepped some of our weavings across country for her to see. She really understood how critical the art was.”

“It’s very easy to be overwhelmed with that many textiles if you’re not in love with them like they are,” admits Fischer. “But it’s very soulful for them—so I just got into that mind-set.”

Textiles weren’t the only acquisitions that Fischer needed to integrate into her design. There was also an art collection, including early American folk art paintings, ex-votos from the desert Southwest, and contemporary encaustic sculpture, as well as an eclectic assortment of Shaker, midcentury modern, and 19th-century furnishings.

“When you have so many things that seemingly don’t relate,” says Fischer, “how do you bring commonality to them so the spaces transition and feel comfortable?”

For the open-concept public space, Fischer created a sophisticated and airy seating area, flanking the couple’s own glass-topped midcentury coffee table with wooden chairs backed in black parachute cord and a clean-lined custom charcoal sofa. “With their textile collection everywhere, I didn’t want too much fabric,” she says. “The furniture needed to have some structure and balance.” Behind the sofa, a

modern bench in the Shaker tradition acts as both additional seating and a place for Werber and Goldman to store and exhibit their weavings. “They’re always moving their textiles around,” says Fischer. “It’s how they make sure they see their whole collection.”

In the home’s cozier private spaces, Fischer played with more whimsical furniture pairings. Beverly’s upstairs study, which doubles as a guest room, features a midcentury modern floor lamp and Eames molded-plywood coffee table next to an elaborately carved walnut twin bed. Dominated by a large abstract painting, the master bedroom utilizes a sleek white lacquer end table and an antique wooden desk as nightstands for a simple-yet-elegant platform bed with turned legs that masterfully blends with both. “I designed the bed as well as the sofa,” says Fischer. “Both are made in Maine, with Maine hardwoods, because they care so much about local community.”

Given the importance of both community and Native American weavings to their lives, it’s no surprise that Werber and Goldman began another, more local collection when they moved to Maine. “Our focus has switched to Wabanaki basket weaving,” says Werber. “The Wabanaki settlement in Maine is at least 12,000 years old, and their baskets tell of their long connection to heritage and history.”

As new basket collectors, Werber and Goldman already have a couple of dozen pieces so far—like the large “utility” basket that sits atop a Navajo textile as the centerpiece on the dining room table—but have several commissions in the works. “This was made by a 16-year-old,” Goldman says, picking up a small, slightly askew acorn basket from the coffee table. “One of the important things is to collect weavers at various stages in their careers. If you buy only the people who are at their peak, then you’re really not supporting the growth of the arts.”

“And for us,” says Werber, “it’s all part of the discovery.”







**above, left** Built by Elkins Woodworking in Boothbay, the bookcase was designed by Fischer with custom specifications by Goldman to accommodate his collection of rare books. The piece is finished with an imported specialty archival finish from Italy called Circa. **above, top right** Werber and Goldman kept the shades closed in their Tucson townhouse to protect their art from the intense Arizona sun. "We're so thrilled to be able to open the place up," Werber says.

**above, bottom right** A professor before becoming a lawyer, Goldman had a "working scholar's" library, which later expanded to include old books, with a focus on pre-1800s imprints. "I had a library of 11,000 books," he says of his collection. "I've now got about 340. It was very, very hard to give them up, but when we moved...let's just say that I was lovingly coaxed to do it."





*below, top left* A curated spot in the master bath features a painting by Bruce Everett over a French nun's prayer bench from the late 1700s. On the bench is a Krampus by E. Michael Contreras and two Wabanaki baskets topped with porcupine quills. A circa-1920s Navajo weaving completes the look. *below, bottom left* A contemporary Peruvian vase (left) sits on an Eames molded plywood coffee table in Werber's study. *below, right* Fischer recovered the midcentury Danish chair in Beverly's study, which sits on a Navajo weaving circa 1930s. In the background is a contemporary pack basket by Wabanaki weaver Gabriel Frey and an ex-voto (over the window) by Neda Contreras with a prayer for protection of the Werber-Goldman home.





**left** One of the couple's favorite artworks is this painting by contemporary Argentinian artist José Marchi, which hangs in the dining area of the loft's main space.

**below, left** A set of tapestries commissioned by Werber and Goldman from Barbara Teller, a fifth-generation Navajo weaver, her sister Lynda, and Lynda's son Michael. "They are important to us as friends and family," says Werber, "and they are great teachers of the art."

**above, right** "The hand," says Werber of the bronze cast in the powder room, "has a story. We commissioned E. Michael Contreras to cast this for us. It broke in Michael's mold while cooling, so he didn't want to sell it to us. He showed us the pieces and we loved them. We asked him to weld it together. The result is the hand seems more sinewy, wounded, and (we think) beautiful."



Peter and Beverly are serious about art and social action, but there's also a lighthearted freedom to their collection—particularly when it comes to contemporary works. Entering the hallway that leads to the master bedroom, there is a series of small sculptures by Tucson, Arizona, artist Miles Conrad mounted on the wall: phallic forms made from wax, hair, soap, etc. "We don't like to be constrained by rules," Peter told me.

*Stacey Kors is the former editor-in-chief of Take Magazine and has written extensively about the arts and culture for publications including The New York Times, Financial Times, Boston Globe, and TimeOut New York.*