

DOUBLE VISION

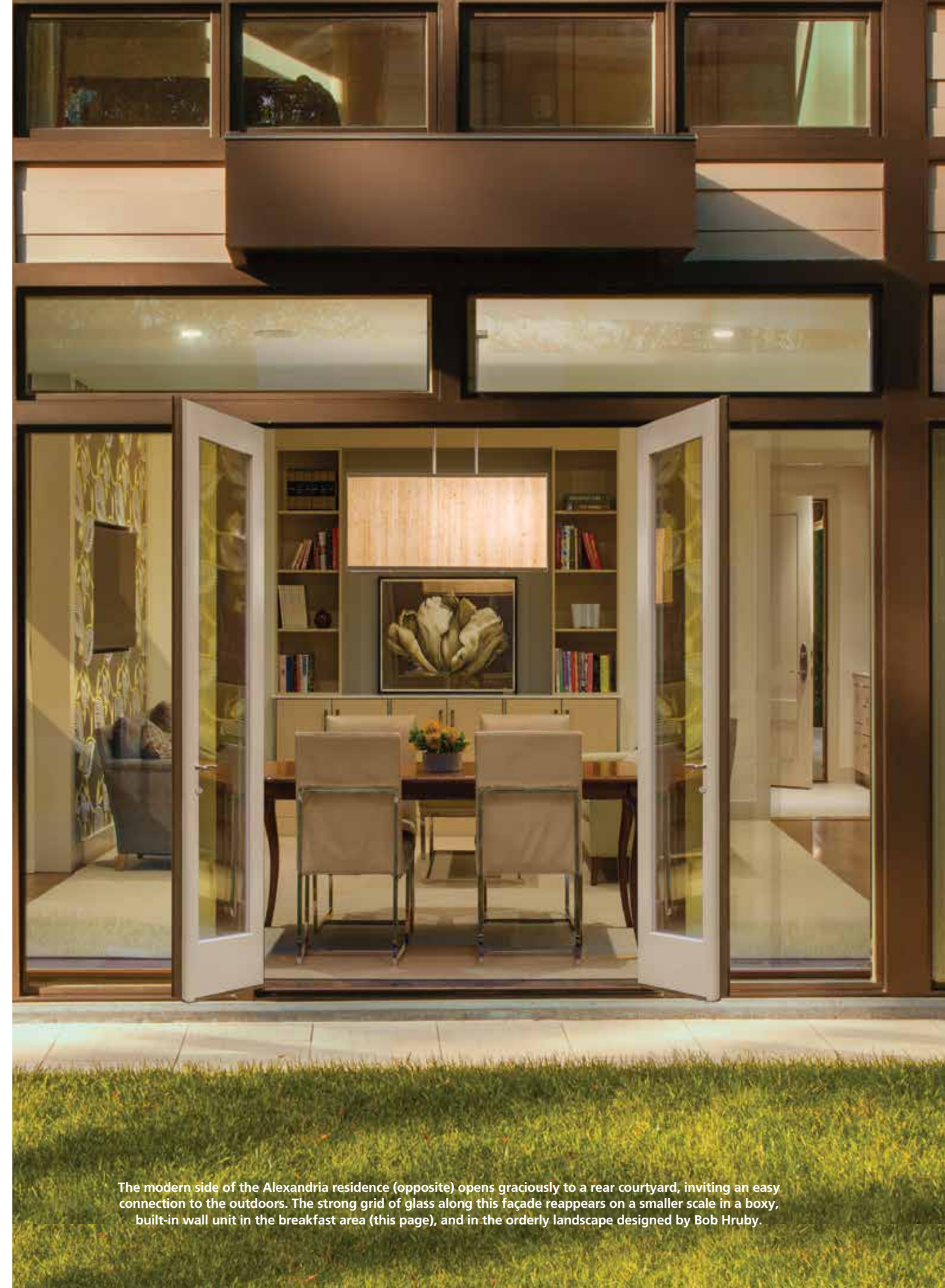


A design team melds traditional and modern styles
in an unconventional cedar-and-glass home

BY TINA COPLAN

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The modern side of the Alexandria residence (opposite) opens graciously to a rear courtyard, inviting an easy connection to the outdoors. The strong grid of glass along this façade reappears on a smaller scale in a boxy, built-in wall unit in the breakfast area (this page), and in the orderly landscape designed by Bob Hruby.



A pergola and dining terrace with a built-in grill are located off the kitchen and enclosed porch. Colored concrete walls extend out from the house to create a raised bed filled with Mexican feather grass, abelia shrubs and crape myrtle. Evergreens screen the back of the property.



In the entrance foyer (this page), a painting by Julia Dault hangs above a console by Vanguard Furniture. The foyer leads to a hall where a totem-like sculpture by Lisa Williamson is framed within the curved stairwell. The open living/family room (opposite) is separated from the dining room by a two-sided fireplace.



When a couple previewed an early model for the dream home they had commissioned architect Donald Lococo to design in Alexandria, at first the wife was alarmed. “The flat back of the house looked like a square box,” she says. “I thought, ‘This is too stark.’”

Lococo also remembers that moment. “They didn’t want a house with the feeling of an office building,” he recalls sympathetically. “It had to have life, movement and contrast.” All of which he was confident the finished home would possess.

Now, after living there for two and a half years, the wife happily acknowledges a change of heart. “What’s not to love?” she asks. “It’s a beautiful home for a large family. The kids welcome their friends here. We entertain. And every room is used.”

The expansive, 11,000-square-foot residence checks all the boxes on the family’s wish list. They had hoped for a spacious home that would also be cozy—a welcoming plan that would afford privacy for a household with four children, two cats and, recently, a beagle.

“We wanted the feeling of an English country estate that would blend into the neighborhood of older stone houses on the front,

ARCHITECTURE: DONALD LOCOCO, AIA, Donald Lococo Architects, Washington, DC. INTERIOR DESIGN: CHRISTINE PHILP, Palindrome Design, LLC, Alexandria, Virginia. LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE: BOB HRUBY, ASLA, principal; NICK RIES, project manager, Champion Hruby Landscape Architects, Annapolis, Maryland. BUILDER: MURRAY BONITT, Bonitt Builders, Alexandria, Virginia.

and a California party house in the back,” says the wife, who owns a wellness spa and grew up in the rolling countryside of southern Pennsylvania. The husband, an executive at a defense-contracting firm, asked for a Miesian design in the modern style of pioneering architect Mies van der Rohe.

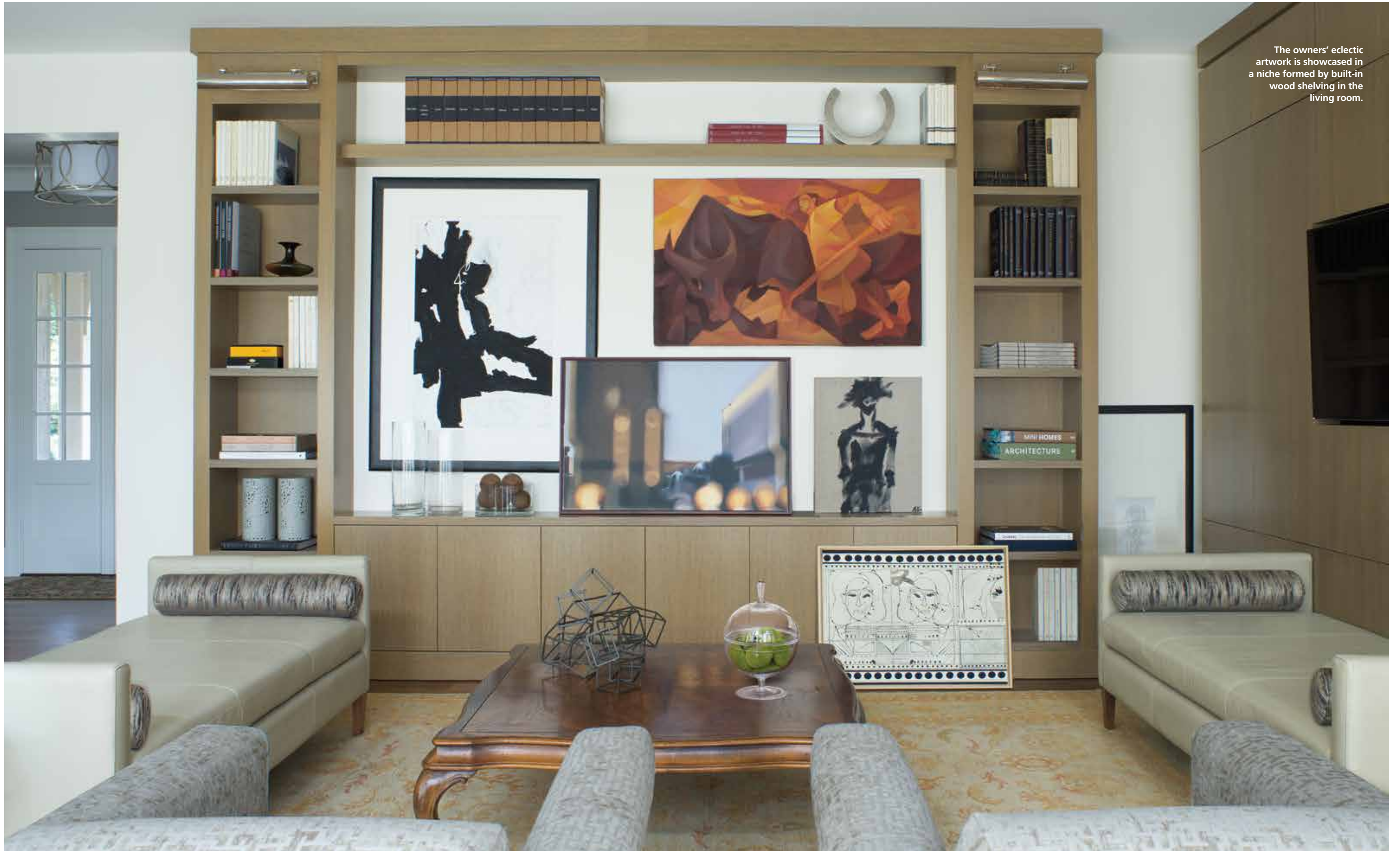
Lococo integrated those requests into a nimble, double-faced design. Along the street, a romantic carriage-house view includes a rustic stone façade and front porch sheltered by a wide-roof overhang. Angled to one side, a driveway leads to a stone courtyard and two garages detailed with charm.

In contrast, bold, simple forms rise on the back. The central living space and perpendicular wings open to a serene, rectangular courtyard. “It’s a minimalist aesthetic of grid and glass,” Lococo explains. “It’s architecture intended to be modern, but not sterile.”

Strong lines are tempered by textured cedar-board siding in varied widths and thicknesses that cast changing shadows. Cool panels of glass are offset by contrasting warm earth tones. Also breaking up the flat planes, valances holding speakers and light fixtures project above doorways in a rhythmic sequence. “The design is a balancing act between the traditional front and Miesian back,” says Lococo.

A dual landscape plan complements the home’s architectural poles. Visitors approach the residence through a layered English cottage-style garden, while at the back of the house and garden, spare geometries dramatically emerge.

“A very modern landscape transforms the rear of the property,” says Bob Hruby, who designed the outdoor plan. Three rectangular



The owners' eclectic artwork is showcased in a niche formed by built-in wood shelving in the living room.



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In the light-filled kitchen and breakfast area, a calm, neutral palette unites traditional and contemporary furnishings, including a vintage wood dining table—a family heirloom—paired with leather-and-chrome chairs and stools by Mitchell Gold. “The owners wanted a modern home that felt warm and livable,” says designer Christine Philp.



spaces at ground-floor level and a broad lawn below complete the straightforward concept. “The courtyard was imagined as a clean green carpet, like an outdoor room,” Hruby says. In fact, after moving in the owners hosted their first party—a candlelit, 80th-birthday celebration for the husband’s mother and 30 guests—on that flat emerald plane.

Extending the wings of the house outdoors, a gravel terrace and bosque of columned hornbeams adjoin the guest bedroom on one side. Drifts of perennials and grasses in a raised bed opposite “soften the many hard angles of the house,” Hruby notes. On the lower level, a broad lawn was left open as a recreation area for the children, ages eight to 18.

The garden’s changing vistas extend to a barrier of evergreens—tinged in autumn with the fiery hues of maple trees—that screen the back of the property. A panoramic view of architecture merging into the landscape can be seen best from the master wing and balcony, or from the children’s bedrooms along the second floor.

Large glass apertures open up silent interactions among family members across the house. “The transparency allows the family to be together visually, or decide not to be,” says Lococo.

The mother agrees. Standing in the kitchen and looking up to her youngest daughter’s room, she says, “I find it comforting in our large home to be able to see her from down here.”

Soft sheers cover the windows throughout, and blackout curtains can also be drawn on the windows above. Interior designer Christine Philp of Palindrome Design, who was enlisted to deco-

rate the interiors, ordered a total of 390 yards of the gauzy fabric.

Openness from room to room also posed special challenges for the designer. “In a way, the house is like a large dollhouse, and you’re looking into it,” she says. “We tried to get everything to look beautiful from a lot of angles.” Working closely with the architect and clients, Philp selected a palette of neutrals that flows easily inside out.

Placing the owners’ art collection where it could be seen and enjoyed was an important consideration. The first work of art the wife ever purchased—a seven-foot-wide painting in rich atmospheric colors by Fred Kline—is visible from the kitchen across the courtyard. “I look at that painting every day and still love it,” she beams.

Art is also displayed in floor-to-ceiling shelves and cabinets built into the family and living rooms. Lococo designed box shapes within the larger units to repeat on a smaller scale the forms and grid of the structure itself.

All in all, the wife’s initial alarm has turned to admiration. “The design team took our nontraditional concept and created exactly what we wanted,” she confirms. “They embraced and realized our vision for the home.” ❖

Writer Tina Coplan lives in Chevy Chase. Photographer Maxwell MacKenzie is based in Washington, DC; photographer John Cole is based in Silver Spring.

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Aglow at twilight, the linear geometry of the dwelling merges with that of the garden terrace (this page) adjoining the guest bedroom. The second-floor master bedroom (opposite) offers wooded views from comfortable club chairs by Lee Industries, and from a balcony accessible through French doors.