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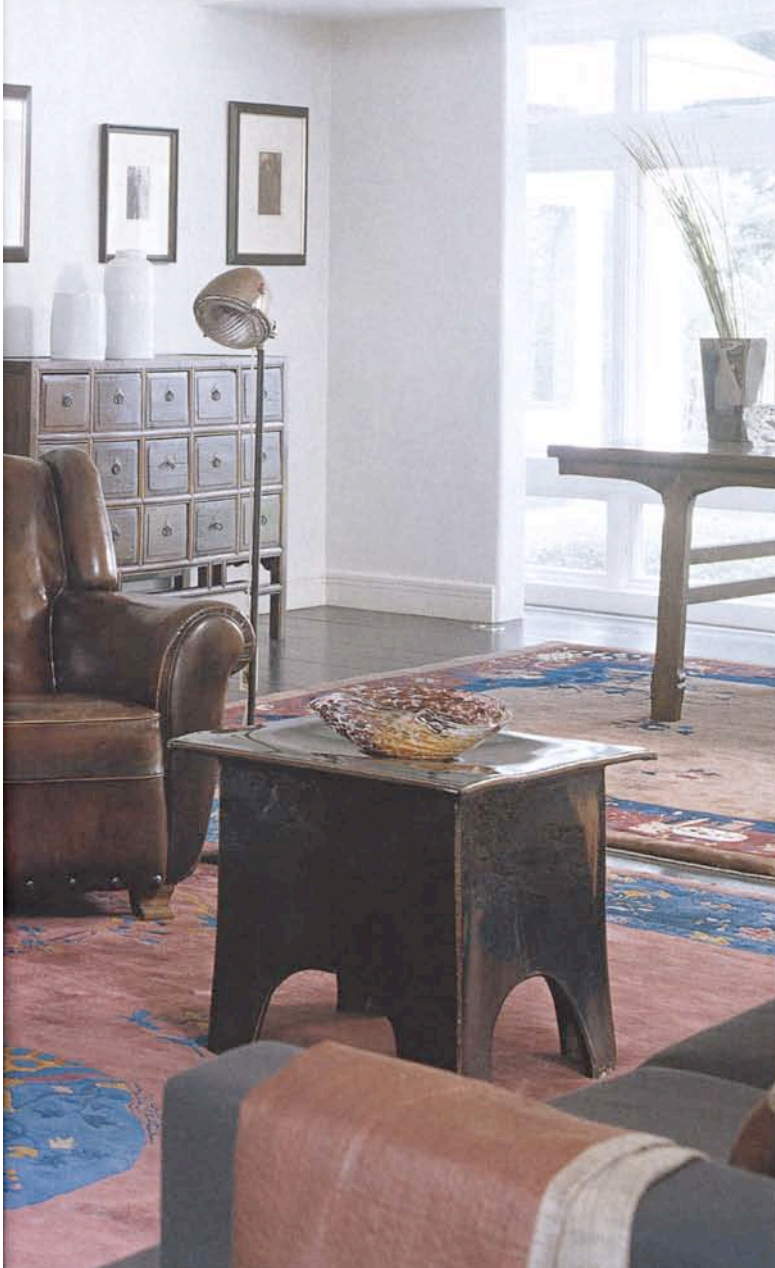


Architect Tasos Kokoris transformed a cramped 19th-century farmhouse into a bright, airy home for Barry Denenberg and Jean Feiwei and their daughter, Emma Feiwei. In the living room, designer Francine Gardner combined 1930s French leather club chairs and a Henry Becq-designed sofa from Modénature with antique Chinese rugs and cabinets.



WRITING HOME

INTERIOR DESIGNER FRANCINE GARDNER CREATED LUXURIOUS BUT LAID-BACK ROOMS FOR A FAMILY OF STYLISH HOMEBODIES.



In the dining pavilion, three walls of glass shed light on a square, cast-cement table by Valentine Deraï-Ohana of Studio Molto and classic Brno chairs by Mies van der Rohe. Opposite: On the end of the living room that opens onto the windowed breezeway, Denenberg has additional space to write while he enjoys the view. A small gazebo out back is one of many places on the property designed for intimate conversations and private moments.



Darry Denenberg never thought he'd hire an interior designer. "After all," he says with a self-mocking grin, "I have pretty fabulous taste."

But then one afternoon, he and his wife, Jean Feiwei, were strolling around TriBeCa and wandered into a shop called Intérieurs. "I really liked what I saw," recalls Denenberg, "and I realized that while Jean and I could talk about liking this chair or not liking that chair, we needed something more than that. We needed somebody with a plan." On an instinct, he and Feiwei invited the store's co-owner Francine Gardner out to their home in Bedford, north of New York City.

The property was already under renovation when Gardner and her business partner at the time, Laurence Pichon, visited,

and the designers saw immediately that architect Tasos Kokoris's plans for the place were somewhat unconventional.

Instead of centering the living and dining rooms on an entry hall, Kokoris opened them off a long, glass-walled breezeway. And rather than supersize the original 1800s farmhouse, he stopped at 3,500 square feet and then transformed an old garage into a 500-square-foot cabana/studio for additional living and lounging space.

While some designers might have balked at the quirky architecture, Gardner and Pichon embraced it—and eagerly agreed to come on board. When Pichon left the business a few months later, Gardner completed the project on her own, working closely with Kokoris and Denenberg to ensure that every



element of the interior enhanced the architecture and perfectly met the homeowners' very particular needs.

As an author who works at home and leaves the house as infrequently as possible, Denenberg requires plenty of bright, comfortable space for thinking and writing. As a children's book publisher, Feiwel commutes to Manhattan daily, works long hours and can think of few things she'd rather do less on weekends than entertain. So instead of designing for parties or houseguests, Gardner kept seating to a minimum and supplemented the home's two official studies with several informal work areas: She placed an Eames lounge and ottoman in a corner of the dining room for reading and cut down the legs of an 18th-century Chinese drafting table to create a large desk for

the open end of the living room, where Denenberg can sit and type while he enjoys the views. Yes, of course Gardner knows that cutting the legs off an antique significantly diminishes its resale value, but she understood from the beginning that all that mattered on this project was the furniture's value in this house, at this time, to this family.

To ensure that each piece of furniture was exactly right—beautiful but dog-proof, striking but not likely to detract from the homeowners' important collection of black-and-white photography—she mixed pieces of her own design with valuable antiques and selections from high-style showrooms.

PRODUCED BY LINDA O'KEEFE. PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTOINE BOOTZ. WRITTEN BY SUSAN KLEINMAN.



There were many instances of serendipity throughout the project, and perhaps the most pleasant surprise of all was the way the architect, designer and builders—perfectionists, all—checked their respective egos at the door to work collaboratively. But still, even the smoothest renovation is stressful, and by the time Gardner was ready to start work on the cabana, Denenberg was tired of examining small details and making big decisions.

“So,” he says, “I told Francine, ‘Just do the cabana by yourself. I trust you, and I don’t want to see it till it’s done.’”

His confidence in Gardner was entirely justified. The cabana is a little gem of a studio, decorated simply and soothingly with neutral colors and natural fibers: a beige linen rug on the floor, taupe Korean silk cushions on the chaise. Additionally, there’s

a spa-inspired bathroom with a rain-head shower, and views from the main room to the swimming pool and garden make this the perfect spot for Denenberg to practice yoga, for Feiwei to relax and for 15-year-old Emma to host sleepovers.

Sleepover space is crucial, because both of the home’s two bedrooms are small. The walls are close and the ceilings slope—and yet the rooms feel cozy rather than cramped.

“I didn’t want the home to look like a designer did it,” says Gardner. And it doesn’t. Because, as Denenberg had hoped, Gardner did indeed have a plan—and that plan, expertly executed, was to leave the place looking as if it had been created casually by someone with pretty fabulous taste. ☘

See Resources, last pages.

In the master bedroom, a blue bench originally designed by Laurence Pichon was made in a smaller size to suit the spot. As in the rest of the house, black-and-white photographs are an important element of the decor. Opposite: Designed by Gardner for Intérieurs, the cabana's chaise (far left) is the perfect place to take a nap or gaze at the waterfall-illusion swimming pool.

