







There's an entire wall of framed insects in the living room. Was something bugging you?

JUAN CARRETERO: I love art that tricks you into taking a long second look. Study the images a little, and you'll notice those aren't actual bugs—they're recycled-metal sculptures by architect Thierry Despont. They're intriguing and witty, which is exactly the style I wanted in a weekend home: eclectic, slightly formal rooms with a sense of humor. Because I'm here to relax! That also explains why the room has a plaster bust of George Washington in it. I placed him on top of the high English Regency cabinet so he can surveil the entire space. He was purchased at an antiques shop in Quebec. I was driving past when I spotted him and hit the brakes. "George," I said, "you're going back home!" In winter, I dress him in a rabbit-fur hat.

KATHLEEN RENDA: What drew you to this property?

The insane views! The house is across the river from Olana, the eccentric 1870s Victorian-Middle Eastern castle built by landscape painter Frederic Church and set in the woods. I can see the grounds from here; it's like gazing out onto a fairy tale. Another plus was the river frontage. Direct water access is a rarity along the Hudson, because a road or train tracks usually blocks the way. But you can launch a kayak right from our backyard.

Was the house as picturesque as the setting?

To be honest, it was run-down and joyless—like Grey Gardens on the Hudson. While the original section dates to the 1790s, there were haphazard additions in the 1860s and 2000s. It had become a mazelike warren of dim rooms weighed down by a palpable shroud of unease. And the house ignored the stunning







views rather than embracing them. Luckily, I'm an architect and a renovation veteran. During the past decade, I've overhauled six local buildings with my life partner, David Usborne. We had dealt with worse, including a home without a roof. This place at least had some historical details—and a roof.

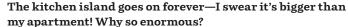
Still, that's some heavy lifting. Where did you start?

With serious structural changes. I reconfigured the layout to a free-flowing open plan with uninterrupted sight lines to the river. The decor reinforces that. For instance, in the living room, both the marble Saarinen table and Louis XVI-style cane chairs are in pale white. The effect is almost ghostly: The furniture seems to disappear, so as not to distract from the views. I chose an opposite strategy in the master bedroom, where I brought the outside in with an etching-inspired Anthropologie wallpaper of fleeting clouds and deciduous trees. It creates this amazing 360-degree panorama of nature.

Your rooms deftly team modern and antique pieces. Is that juxtaposition difficult to pull off?

Mostly it's intuitive. The 18th-century dining room, with its low ceiling and cooking fireplace, is the oldest room in the house. To make it feel alive, I brought in a mashup of furniture: Verner Panton S chairs, a streamlined oak table, a 1920s Chinese rug,

and a Louis XVI fauteuil. I always find that marrying past and present creates an opposites-attract tension. Also, I'm a nostalgic soul who appreciates the charm of things you can't find anymore. For me, uniqueness is the ultimate luxury.



It's 17 feet long, because I realized the need to surrender to the reality of life. I always preferred a sequestered kitchen, with cooking done in private. But it just doesn't make sense for our lifestyle. When we have people over, everyone always—always! gathers in the kitchen. Knowing that, when I designed the addition on the back of the house where the kitchen is, I deliberately went colossal. A friend even calls it "the catwalk." Sure enough, everything-meal prep, informal dining, hanging out—happens at the island. I don't know if it's made us into great cooks, but our dinner guests always seem to come back.

Oversize dice stools, a circus-striped ceiling: These rooms clearly don't take themselves too seriously. Does that say something about your personality?

I do always try to have fun, and that's reflected in some of the objects that I choose for my surroundings, to be sure. Because if you're not having fun, what's the point?







RIGHT: In the master bedroom, a reed table purchased at auction is paired with vintage chrome-and-suede chairs to create a sitting area with a view of the river. After it was stripped of paint, the mantel was left as is to show off the raw wood's grain. Sculpture, Oly. Lamp, Aerin for Visual Comfort. **BELOW**: A Jonathan Adler oak bed is set against Anthropologie's woodsy wallpaper. Bedding, Boll & Branch. Lumbar pillows, Target. Curtains in a Kravet cotton. Valance trim, Scalamandré. Belgravia white lamp, J. Randall Powers. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES





ABOVE: A ceiling painted in sunny yellow stripes by decorative artist Mark Chamberlain makes the tiny guest bedroom seem bigger and brighter than it is. "It's a dose of happy in a north-facing room that doesn't get much light," Carretero says. Rug, Madeline Weinrib. Sconces, West Elm. Roller shade with Lee Jofa trim. LEFT: Carretero in the media room. RIGHT: Carretero and his partner, journalist David Usborne, call their Victorian-style home Wildings, after the farm in Sussex, England, where Usborne was born. A flock of cast-concrete ewes playfully references the property's early days as a sheep farm.



