

by Kristin Colella

Mad about VIEWS

BREATH-taking VISTAS STEAL THE SHOW IN THIS SIMPLY DESIGNED WEEKEND RETREAT



THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THIS STAGGERING, ultramodern Clinton Corners manse is surprisingly simple: “It’s all about the views,” asserts architect Martin Holub, principal of Martin Holub Architects & Planners in Manhattan and Clinton Corners, who designed the abode from the ground up as a weekend retreat for a professional couple from Manhattan, then set about decorating it. “We built the house atop a hill on 15 acres of secluded land in the woods, which the homeowners purchased for the picturesque vistas of rolling hills, dense trees and the Catskills in the distance. The home is designed to take advantage of those views.”

The sheer height of the house helps make the vistas grand. “The higher you are, the better views you get, so we built the house as tall as the building restrictions would allow,” says Holub. Careful not to overwhelm the homeowners with lofty flights of stairs, though, Holub fashioned a clever floor plan: “We actually built 11 total levels—from the mechanical basement to the roof terrace—each separated by just a few stairs,”

he says. “The flow from one level to another is so easy you hardly notice it.”

But from the outside, this unconventional structure—crafted of wood and steel framing—appears a geometric marvel. Three distinct finishes cover the multifaceted exterior: exposed concrete foundation; natural cedar siding, which reflects the home’s wooded surroundings; and stucco siding, which offsets the sculptural forms of the house. A unique pyramid-shaped bluestone stairway leads to the porch and front doors.

Inside, “the homeowners wanted maximum light and openness,” says Holub, who achieved this through high ceilings, unenclosed spaces (except in the bathrooms and guest bedrooms), white plaster walls and an abundance of windows. “With the exception of shades placed on windows facing west to block the afternoon

LEFT, with sharp angles and levels galore, this modern house offers spectacular views of the secluded surroundings. ABOVE, “light and airy” was the directive for the home’s interior, which this minimalist-style living room achieves to grand effect.

PHOTOS BY GEORGE ERMIL



Two expansive 1950s leather sofas add softness and comfort to the crisp, clean space.

sun, most windows have no treatments,” adds Holub. “There are no neighbors nearby, so nobody can look in.”

Holub’s next task, therefore, was to add warmth to this airy abode while keeping the simple style the homeowners desired. Take the expansive minimalist-style living room: Maple hardwood floors add a touch of rustic elegance, and a wall of glass windows provides a pastoral backdrop. A corner fireplace, set in a custom-designed enclosure, creates coziness while maintaining the modern aesthetic. “The enclosure is finished in the same stucco as the exterior, so we brought the outdoors in,” says Holub. A honed bluestone shelf stores extra fire logs to help keep flames burning.

A dash of fun comes from two comfy, super-cushy leather sofas—“a design classic from the 1950s,” says

Holub. For additional seating there’s a wire-framed chair by Harry Bertoia for Knoll and a long bench crafted of honed bluestone and strewn with a profusion of pillows. In the center, a low marble-top coffee table on a maple pedestal makes an ideal spot to rest a book or beverage, while thin, flexible floor lamps provide both reading and up lighting.

Just a three-step ascent from the living room, the kitchen is discreetly hidden with a low wall at the homeowners’ request. “If you walk into the living room you have no idea there’s a kitchen right there,” says Holub. But the location has other perks: “The owners wanted the kitchen to be at the heart of the house, and from here you can see the living room below, the adjacent dining room and the views outside,” he adds. Maple custom cab-



Though nestled in the hub of the house, the home’s kitchen is largely hidden from view.

inetry and a maple refrigerator face match the hardwood floors, while a backsplash made of slabs of Broughton Moor, a volcanic stone, provides a dark contrast.

Simplicity reigns again in the small informal dining room, which is anchored by a maple dining table that seats 10. Wicker “handkerchief chairs” by Massimo Vignelli for Knoll provide comfortable seating atop black rubber tile flooring.

Looking up, the 20-foot-high ceiling provides a fairly striking view of its own. Cedar panels add a touch of warmth amid exposed, sun-dappled flying

beams, which keep the home structurally sound. “When you have this kind of complex, multivolume structure you have to consider the winds,” explains Holub. To give the beams further practicality, Holub notched them with low-voltage lights that illuminate the kitchen and dining room below.

When the two-year design process was over, the homeowners were the ones beaming. “They visit the home every weekend, all year round,” Holub says. “If you buy a property for the views, you want to make the most of it.” ■