



A WELL-GROUNDED LOFT

MET HOME OF THE MONTH FOR STEVEN HOLLEY'S
HOME NORTH OF NEW YORK CITY HANRAHAN
MEYERS ARCHITECTS TRANSFERRED THE OPENNESS
OF PHILIP JOHNSON'S GLASS HOUSE TO
THE RUGGED LANDSCAPE.

The living room of Steven Holley's house outside of New York City is dominated by a fireplace wall of pale local stone cut into thin, 30-inch-long bricks. An orange rug, created by Tse Yun Chu, the project's interior designer, sets the stage for a yolk-toned *Dodo* chair by Toshituki Kita from Cassina and a classic Poul Kjaerholm bench from Fritz Hansen. Opposite: The house (seen from the backyard) is composed of three volumes: the living/dining/kitchen pavilion (at left), a guest wing (center) and a master bedroom suite (right).







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When Steven Holley, a prominent Manhattan lawyer, decided to build a weekend house north of the city, he knew just where to turn. In the 1990s, Holley bought a loft not far from his Lower Manhattan office. It had large rooms, high ceilings and abundant windows at both ends. But it was in "disastrous condition," Holley says.

"I was worried there would be a million problems if I bought it," Holley says. Luckily, his real estate agent knew a pair of young architects who were teaching at Columbia University while establishing their own practice.

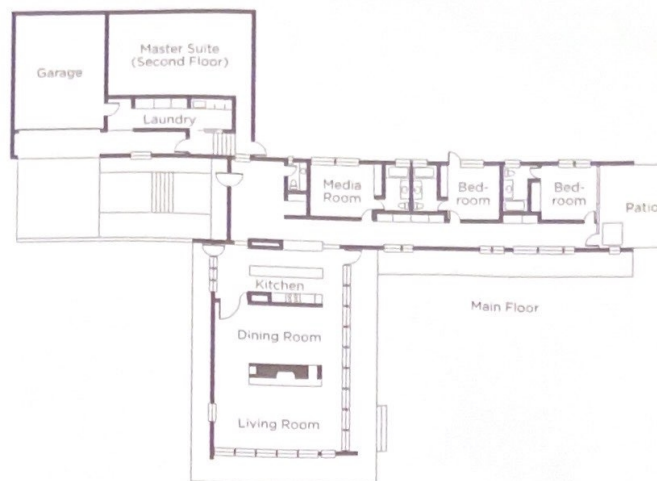
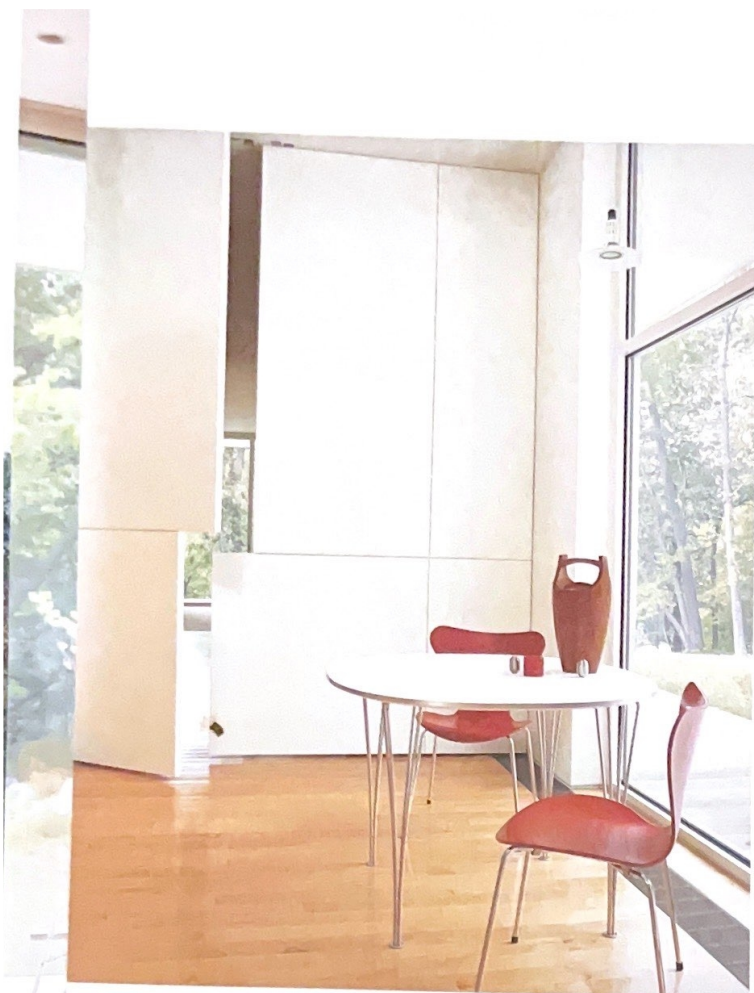
Holley bought the loft and worked with the architects, Thomas Hanrahan and Victoria Meyers, to turn it into an ethereal space where rooms are separated by detailed glass walls. In 1999, their efforts were recognized by the Museum of Modern Art, which featured the Holley loft in a show called *The Un-Private House*, about transparency in residential architecture.

Ten years later, when Holley decided to build his weekend place, he again turned to Hanrahan and Meyers, along with Tse Yun Chu, an interior designer who had helped him choose furniture for the loft. The goal was to re-create some of the simplicity and openness of the loft, but in a house that held its own against a rugged site that features rock outcroppings and a steep hill tumbling down to a pond.

The building the designers devised features lots of stone and wood—indoors and out—but there are also huge windows that extend the rooms into the landscape; indeed, the edges of the clearing, as much as the edges of the building, are the home's boundaries, says Hanrahan. No wonder the architects referred to the project as the Holley loft in space.

Thanks to their liberal use of glass, architects Thomas Hanrahan and Victoria Meyers draw the eye from a cossetting Piero Lissoni *Met* sofa (from Cassina) past the boundaries of the room to landscaping by garden designer Grace Kennedy. Occasional tables by Antonio Citterio for B&B Italia accompany the *Dodo* chairs, which are more ingenious than the name implies: Two levers transform them into lounge chairs.

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olley knew that he wanted to entertain guests on weekends, and he didn't want them to feel like they were intruding on his privacy (and vice versa). The solution was to break the house into separate volumes, one containing the living room, dining room and a kitchen big enough for multiple chefs; a second containing the master bedroom suite; and a third containing guest quarters. But Meyers and Hanrahan, while respecting Holley's wishes, were determined to create a building that read as a single, minimalist volume. Their solution was to let the volumes pinwheel around the foyer, from which every part of the rambling house is visible. Look one way and a wide hallway heads past a row of guest suites to the pool. Another way, a passage connecting the kitchen and dining and living rooms ends at a terrace, with the pond below. In both cases, says Meyers, "the progression is from trees to water," which helps draw people through the building.

Holley wanted the kitchen (above) to be roomy enough for guests to hang out in because, he says, that's what guests do. The dining room (opposite) is bounded by a wall of local stone. On the other side is the living room fireplace (first spread), which is directly under a large skylight. Though the stone hearth usually looks smooth, when the sun is overhead, creating deep shadows, "the surface becomes almost rustic," says Hanrahan. That pleases Meyers, who says her goal was to "create a space that is minimalist but where you can stand in the middle of the room and really feel those materials—it's as good as being in a beautiful natural landscape."

Above (from left): A pair of doors, which fit together like puzzle pieces, allows homeowner Steven Holley to cordon off the kitchen on formal occasions; Holley doesn't cook, but he installed professional appliances for friends who do. Right: A chandelier by French deco master Serge Mouille hangs over a Zographos Designs dining table and a collection of Hans Wegner chairs from Dennis Miller.



What the Pros Know

Architect Victoria Meyers says she likes minimalist spaces but doesn't expect clients to give up their possessions. So in every home she designs, she says, "I go bananas on the storage." A dozen closets line the hallway leading to the pool. But installing their wood doors flush into a Sheetrock wall was tricky. According to contractor Gregory Heitmann, the doors contain hardware called "ball catches" to keep them in position when they're closed. The catches fit into strike plates, which have to be mounted in something solid, in this case, 3/4-inch poplar boards screwed into the studs above the doors. But wherever wood meets drywall, getting the seam smooth requires especially good taping and caulking. (The usual solution—hiding the seam under a molding—wasn't an option for the modernist designers.) "It's the complexity of simplicity," says Heitmann.



Holley is an experienced delegator—as counsel to Microsoft, he directs legions of attorneys. Which may explain why once he hires talented people, he respects their choices. "I could probably visit his loft ten years from now, and it would look exactly as it did the day we finished it," says Meyers.

Interior designer Tse Yun Chu admires Holley for his individuality. "When I was doing the loft," says Chu, "and he told me he didn't need a television, I realized this was a very special young man, one who I could work with." In the house, she didn't go for built-ins but for sculptural pieces that stand apart from the architecture. Holley credits Chu with encouraging him to try bold colors, especially the living room's orange and yellow, but Chu says that most of her clients wouldn't have had the nerve.

While some of the pieces, including the Serge Mouille chandelier in the dining room, were pricey, Holley didn't give his team a blank check. Initially, the architects planned to raise the ceiling of the living room a foot, allowing light to stream through three clerestory windows on three sides. And the 75-foot-long hallway along the guest rooms was to have had a 75-foot-long skylight. Both features were eliminated because of cost. (In the end, Holley says, the 5,000-square-foot house cost about \$320 a square foot.)

Even as modified, the house is a second straight triumph for the team of Hanrahan Meyers and Holley, who grew up in Indiana hoping to become an architect. Ironically, his success as a lawyer may have allowed him to indulge that passion with fewer compromises than if he had followed his original ambition.

Left: When Tse Yun Chun visited rug maker Odegard, she was shown a roll of sample colors. Intrigued, she ordered a larger version of the sample roll, composed of three-inch strips, for the long hallway to the pool. Right: In the master bedroom, Holley's upholstered headboard (top) pops out to allow access to plumbing for the master bathroom (bottom).



DETAILS

1 The living room features “the largest aluminum-framed windows you can order without going custom,” says Meyers. Holley approved most of the furniture from photos. But when it came to seating, he insisted on testing every piece for comfort.

2 The exterior of the house is a mix of local stone and cedar stained almost precisely the same color. A window in one wall reveals a naturalist composition. Holley tried several landscape architects before settling on Grace Kennedy, who, he says, “has done a really nice job of making it look like she hasn’t done anything.” Kennedy, who is also a watercolorist, believes in choosing hardy plants that “I know will thrive; I don’t believe in coddling.”

3 Echoing the landscape, a pair of boulderlike ottomans by Patricia Urquiola for Moroso dot the foyer. The small works on paper are by Rosemarie Fiore; the large painting is by Bruce Pearson.

4 Large overhangs extend the house into the landscape, but cutouts keep them from seeming too heavy. Inside or out, thanks to the skylights, “you’re always conscious of the movement of the sun throughout the day,” says Thomas Hanrahan. Table cubes are by Arne Quinze for Quinze and Milan.

5 The vista from the kitchen takes in a credenza by Cappellini, a floor lamp from Sipure Design serving as a room divider and a bronze statue by Melissa Zink next to a Jean-Michel Frank card table from Holly Hunt and Hans Wegner chairs.

6 The pool is bordered by a low retaining wall that echoes the profile of the house. 🍷

See Resources, last pages.

