



SHIFTING GEARS

AFTER PURCHASING A BLAND HAMPTONS RANCH HOUSE, NEW YORK DESIGNER DAVID KLEINBERG EMPLOYS SIMPLE BUT CLEVER STRATEGIES TO TRANSFORM IT INTO A DASHING WEEKEND RETREAT

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DESIGNERS HAVE A KNACK for spotting potential in spaces the rest of us might well overlook, a talent that is often apparent in their own homes. Take David Kleinberg's weekend residence in East Hampton, New York. When the decorator first encountered the 1980s house, while in search of a rental four years ago, it was a far cry from anything he'd ever fantasized about owning. "Architecturally, it was pretty gruesome," Kleinberg says of the then-nondescript single-story structure. Still, the place had a few notable attributes, namely its expansive

four-acre plot adjacent to a nature preserve, its proximity to the village of East Hampton, and its secluded position down a dramatic driveway. "We got to the end of that long drive, and I said, 'I don't really care what the house looks like—I'll take it!'" the designer recalls.

This willingness to abide the home's shortcomings lasted two years, during which Kleinberg rented it. "The sense of privacy was so amazing, I just got used to the plastic-lined shower stall," he jokes. But right when the designer determined he'd had enough, the property was put on the

Opposite: Manhattan-based interior designer David Kleinberg in his 1966 Mercedes 230SL at his East Hampton, New York, vacation home. **Above:** A midcentury French cocktail table and a custom-made sofa grace the living room; RH lanterns frame the fireplace. For details see Sources.



Above, from top: Kleinberg added a pergola-covered walkway at the front of the house. In the sitting room, painted a Benjamin Moore gray, a Darren Almond photograph hangs above a vintage console topped by a 1950s French lamp; the walnut bookcase is by David Kleinberg Design Assoc., and the Bielecky Brothers wicker chairs are cushioned in a Zimmer + Rohde stripe. **Above right:** Surrounding a living room

doorway are two Richard Serra prints, one displayed over a mahogany cabinet by Paul László; the photograph in the hall is by Alejandra Laviada. Twin French Art Deco zebrawood side tables are joined by Art Deco armchairs covered in a Rogers & Goffigon fabric; the upholstery throughout the house was done by Anthony Lawrence-Belfair, the throw is from Homenature, and the raffia rug is by La Manufacture Cogolin.

market. He immediately resolved to buy it and rework the dwelling to better reflect his sensibility and lifestyle. “It’s a great luxury to live in a space before renovating it,” he says. “You already know exactly what it needs.”

In this case, those needs ran the gamut from new walls and windows to updated baths to a more efficient HVAC system—an extensive overhaul. Structurally, Kleinberg elected to retain the residence’s H-shaped floor plan, where all of the rooms radiate out from a central living area, a layout that allows the home to accommodate a crowd of guests yet still feel cozy when Kleinberg is there

on his own. Keeping the same footprint minimized design and construction time while also presenting an appealing challenge. “It was fun to see how much I could transform the house within its original parameters,” he says.

For the exterior, Kleinberg clad the walls in white clapboard planks, laying them flat (versus the traditional overlapping style) for a more contemporary look. “The house basically had no architectural referents,” Kleinberg explains, “so I tried to set it in the context of a summer cottage.” The new façade also created visual consistency with the freestanding clapboard garage, which he renovated to

include a second-floor guest suite and linked to the house with a pergola-covered walkway.

To brighten the interiors, Kleinberg had the windows enlarged and an ample dormer added above the front door. He carried the white clapboard siding through to the walls of the living room, while raising the ceilings 18 inches throughout, making the house feel roomier and sturdier. “The place seemed very lightweight before,” Kleinberg says. “Now it feels like it could withstand anything.” The kitchen, meanwhile, was kitted out with gray stone and cerused oak, materials that suited Kleinberg’s desire to



Clockwise from above: A Barlow Tyrie bench punctuates the pool area, which features bluestone coping. The dining room's oak table is set with Ralph Lauren Home hurricane candleholders, and the 1960s chairs from R. E. Steele Antiques are covered in a Perennials fabric; the walls are painted a Benjamin Moore white. The kitchen is outfitted with cerused-oak cabinetry, Poul Henningsen pendant lights from Design Within Reach, and a Wolf cooktop; the counters and backsplash are made of Pietra Cardosa stone.

avoid anything too “kitcheny,” since the space would also function as a bar during social gatherings. “Everybody always ends up hanging out around the kitchen counter,” he remarks with a laugh.

Equally important, since most of the entertaining happens during the summer months, is the back terrace. Kleinberg upgraded the space, paving it in bluestone, adding a wood-burning fireplace, and installing a set of cushioned teak sofas and chairs in the sitting area and a large teak table for dining. The move doubles the home's public space in summer, at the same time eliminating the need for a formal dining room inside.

“We eat outside 90 percent of the time,” says Kleinberg, a generous host who likes nothing more than inviting friends over for alfresco lunches and dinners.

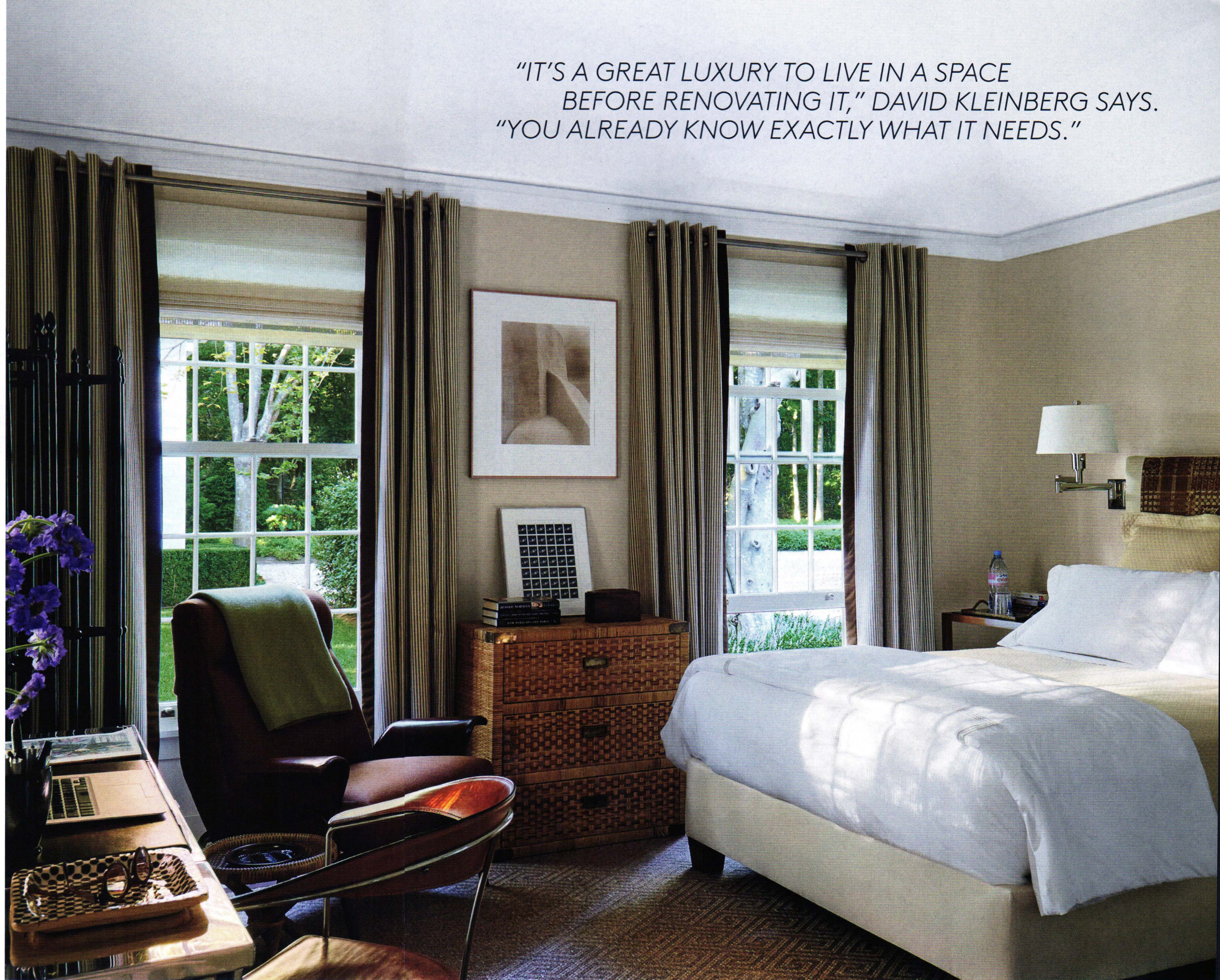
Indoors, Kleinberg went for a timeless feel, mixing contemporary wicker elements (the sitting room's chocolate-brown Bielecky Brothers chairs), antique-inspired custom-made items (the Arts and Crafts-style dining table), and midcentury finds (the living room's George Nakashima-esque walnut console). In fact, many of the furnishings had been thoughtfully collected by Kleinberg over the years, notably the master bedroom's circa-1956 Gustavo Pulitzer armchair, purchased on a trip to London. →



Still, some shopping was needed, and for this Kleinberg turned to online resources such as 1stdibs—something he had never done on such a large scale before. His search yielded a variety of gems, among them a handsome mid-century U.S. military field desk designed to withstand airdrops. “It’s essentially American campaign furniture,” he says.

For the grounds, Kleinberg teamed up with a close friend, landscape designer Hal Goldberg, whose eponymous firm is based in Brooklyn and Southampton, New York. “Hal took my ideas and told me how to make them work,” Kleinberg says. “I’ve had so much fun learning about plants from him.” Around the front of the house the pair put in neatly trimmed boxwoods and holly hedges. In the backyard they opted for a natural, unmanicured feel, with clusters of ornamental grasses placed at one end of the rectangular pool, which Kleinberg aligned with the center of the house. But perhaps most striking is the newly sown meadow, a romantic setting punctuated by a series of crab-apple trees planted by a previous owner. “In spring the blossoms look like pink snowballs,” Kleinberg says with evident delight. It’s a sight you certainly don’t have to be a visionary to appreciate. □

Right: In the master bedroom, a pair of sconces from Circa Lighting (one is shown) flank the bed, which is upholstered in an antique textile and dressed in RH linens; the small artwork on the chest is a Vija Celmins print. **Above:** Kleinberg’s desk is a vintage U.S. military design, and the circa-1956 armchair is by Gustavo Pulitzer; the rug is by Patterson Flynn Martin.



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