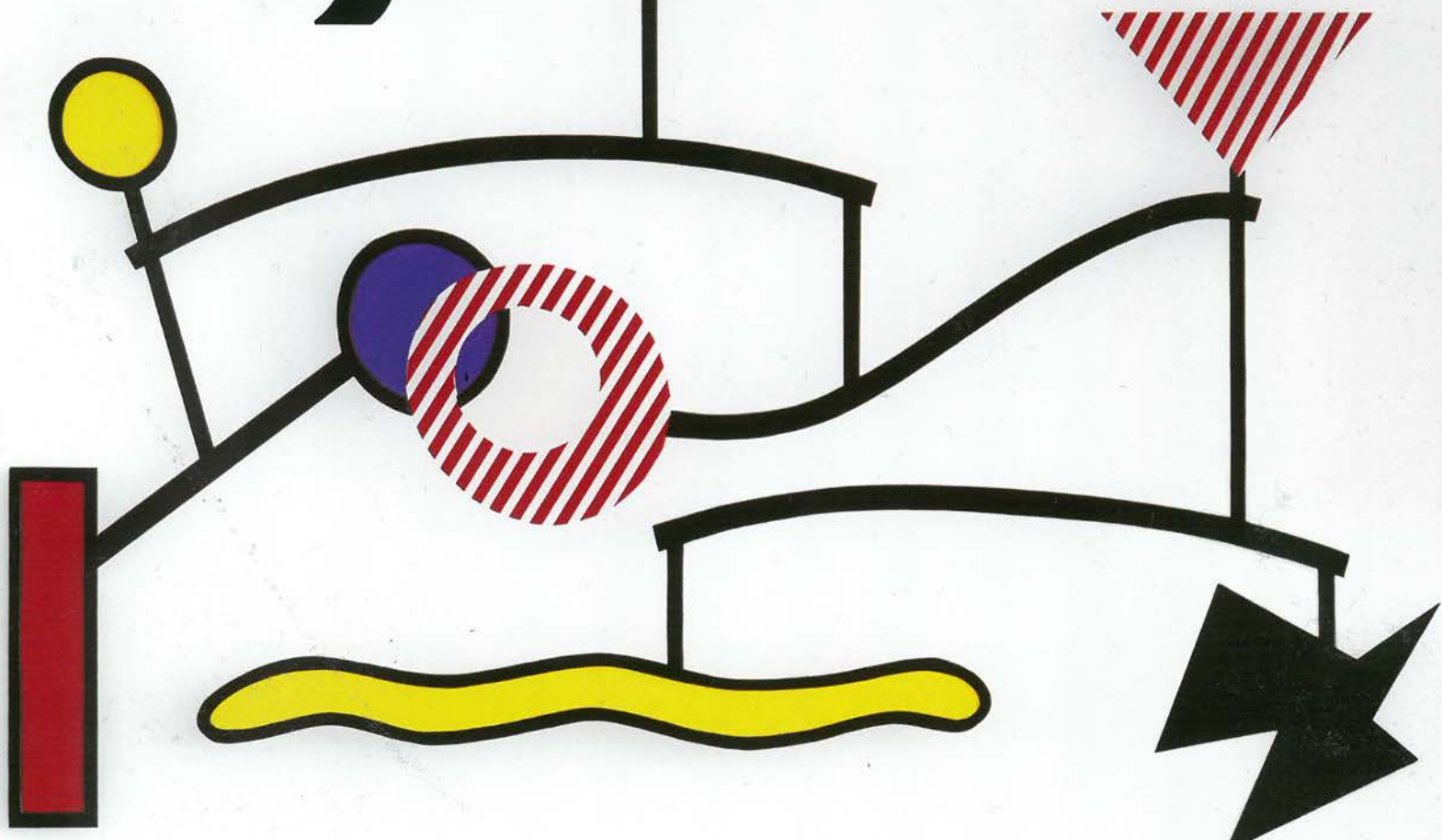


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SUPERB GEO METRY

NEW YORK ARCHITECT
LEE SKOLNICK WRITES HOW
A MULTI-LAYERED MODERN HOUSE
BECAME ONE OF HIS
MOST SPECIAL PROJECTS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTOINE BOOTZ

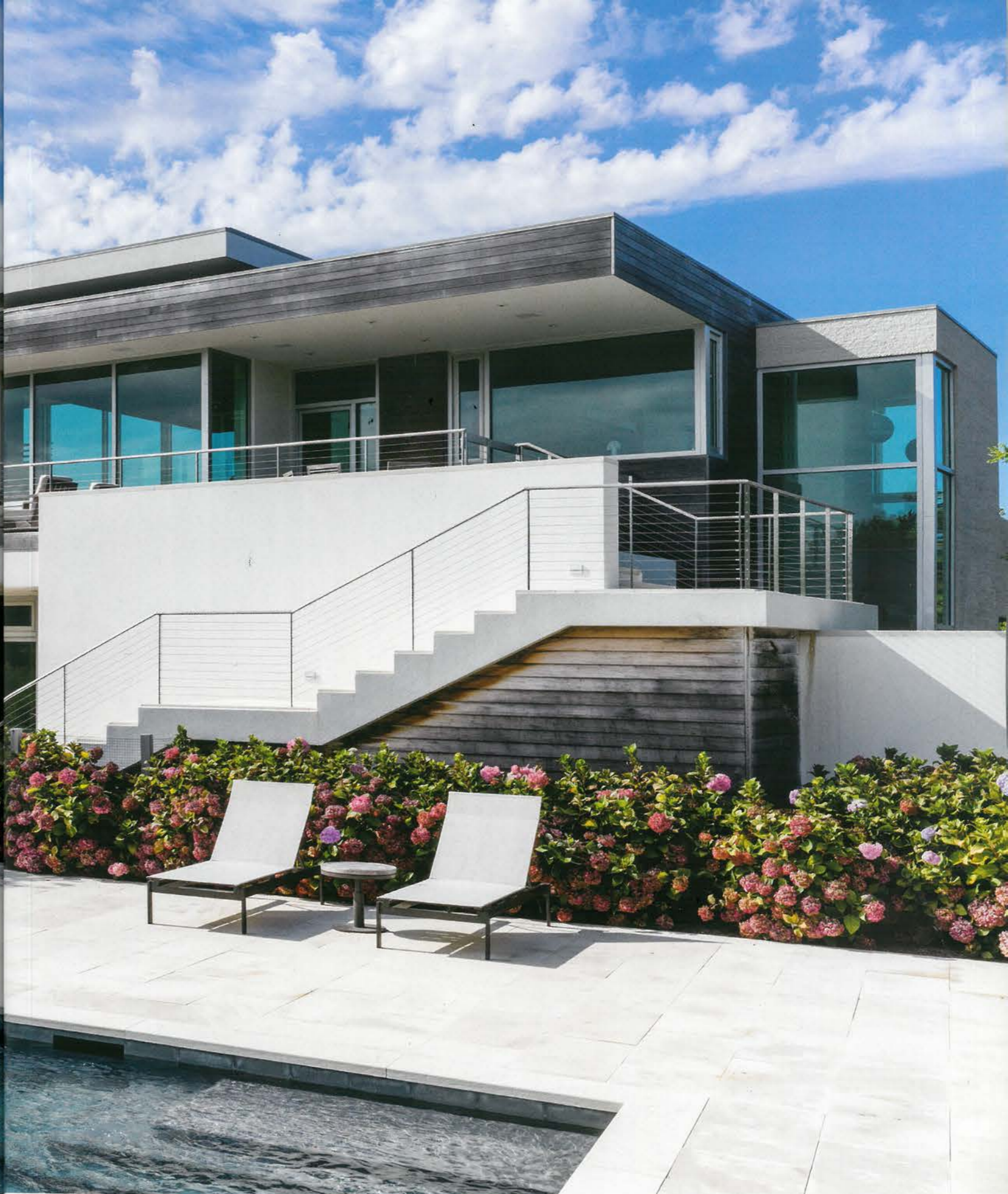
Without a story, a house has no soul. The themes can originate in the landscape and emerge from the character of its residents, to be composed into the design of a singular dwelling that uniquely embodies its place, time, and the people who call it home. Laura and Steve Riggio—he is the former CEO at Barnes & Noble, she was a teacher of preschool children—were friends of mine who shared strong values of familial closeness, a love of the natural Long Island landscape, a highly developed appreciation for the rich, uplifting experience of living with art that has personal meaning for them, and a desire for open and flexible spaces with abundant light and views. From the moment we started discussing the project, we had a sympathetic resonance—we would focus on what it means to inhabit that magical realm between ocean and land, where the shifting sun, sea, sand, and sky influence and inform how we live our lives, and how we inhabit the world and our homes. The 10,000-square-foot house would be modern, of its time. Envisioned as a very light bridge, it floats above the land, while being firmly anchored to the ground by stone bases at either end. Conceived of as a fluid composition of simple geometric forms, these elements reduce the scale of the building, belying its actual size, and preventing it from overpowering the landscape. These cubic volumes are arrayed along extended, flowing horizontal lines, creating a

sensuous relationship with the land. They are softened in dialogue with carefully placed, curving forms that draw the eye ever-outward to the horizon. Like the stories of our lives, the diverse components of the house would be layered, revealing new and unexpected shapes and views as one moves through its interpenetrating spaces or circles its multifaceted exterior. The rich combination of exterior and interior materials would form a relaxed continuum, as well as a dynamic, yet sensitive, background on which to display the Riggios' collection of modern art. The carefully juxtaposed integration of limestone, travertine, sandstone, stucco, Alaskan yellow cedar, bleached oak, bronze, aluminum, and glass was orchestrated to enhance and elaborate upon the house's simple narrative. There would be no stark contrasts, but instead, a gentle, subtle progression from strong and solid to light and airy. I have always believed that the eye and mind are enriched by a panoply of textures and tones, forming a sensuous environment, visual interest, and strong evocation. Like a symphony that modulates through different keys and instrumentation, without ever losing its essential themes, the experience of the house would be embodied in a coherent composition. As we continued to develop the design, we agreed that it was imperative to create numerous places where art could be accommodated and appreciated in an organic manner, with many specific opportunities for the display of key pieces. A collection of colorful found letters by Jack Pierson has been hung in a skylit hallway. An Alexander Liberman painting surprises at the top of a free-floating staircase. Of particular personal significance for me was the very strong bond Steve and I share through our mutual love for playing and listening to music. Steve has an impressive collection of guitars, and I took enormous pleasure in arranging them in a music room we designed together to serve at various times as an intimate gathering place or as a private refuge. We designed the spaces of the house around how the Riggios' extended family would use it, with 15 or more people in residence on many weekends. With this in mind, we put great importance on the creation of a home furnished and finished with an eye toward casual comfort and discerning taste. To achieve this, we worked with the talented, New York- and East Hampton-based interior designer Robert Stilin, who tuned into Laura's love of natural tones and textures, as well as her informal style. We designed the spaces to have a combination of both private and open places in which to relax, enjoy the art, chat or read, be transported by music, or simply sit and watch the weather. As with all great stories, in the end, the plot dissolves as the themes take on their own life. Our desire to craft a unique story has culminated in what is now simply a gracious environment—a family home. And what began as a pleasant casual friendship between our families has evolved into a lifelong warm and intimate bond. —LEE SKOLNICK

AT THE REAR OF THE HOUSE, A CURVED RETAINING WALL OF TEXTURED LIMESTONE SLABS ENGAGES IN AN ELOQUENT DIALOGUE WITH THE LANDSCAPE.



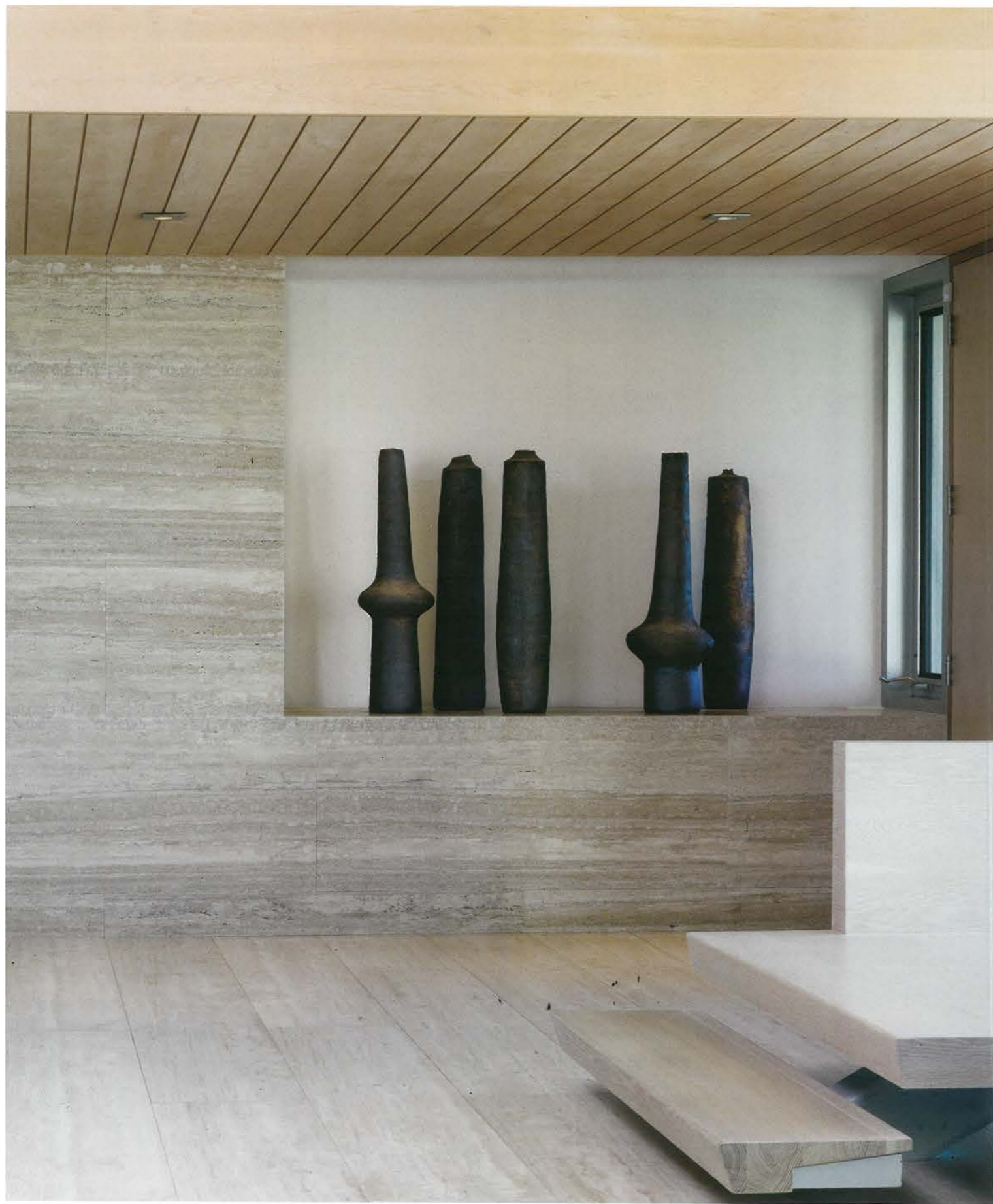
THE FRONT VIEW OF THE 10,000-SQUARE-FOOT HOUSE IS A CAREFULLY LAYERED COMPOSITION OF OPEN AND CLOSED VOLUMES RISING FROM THE EARTH TOWARD THE SKY. SOLID HORIZONTAL STONE ELEMENTS AT EITHER END ANCHOR IT TO THE GROUND, WHILE STUCCO, CEDAR, AND GLASS FORMS RISE IN EVER LIGHTER COMPOSITIONS TO THE TRANSPARENT BRIDGE THAT COMPRISES THE MAIN LIVING SPACES.



LIKE A SHIP FLOATING ON THE SEA, THE SOUTH FACADE ASCENDS IN SUCCESSIVE HORIZONTAL LAYERS, WHILE EACH INTERIOR SPACE IS AFFORDED EXPANSIVE VIEWS AND NATURAL LIGHT. AN ARCHITECTONIC, GRACIOUSLY PROPORTIONED STAIRCASE CONNECTS THE RAISED OUTDOOR EATING AREA WITH THE POOL AND ITS SANDSTONE TERRACE. THE PURE WHITE STUCCO WALL SERVES AS A COMPOSITIONAL COUNTERPOINT TO THE BANDING OF THE FLOOR AND ROOF PLANES AND MAKES A THEATRICAL EVENT OF THE TRANSITION FROM BRIDGE TO NATURE.



THESE PAGES A SUITE OF 1966 COLOR STUDIES ENTITLED *WLS (SERIES I + II)* BY THE GERMAN-BORN AMERICAN ARTIST AND EDUCATOR **JOSEF ALBERS** ANCHORS ONE WALL IN THE FAMILY ROOM THAT OVERLOOKS THE POOL AREA. ROBERT STILIN FURNISHED THE SPACE WITH THE 1970s GAME TABLE, ATTRIBUTED TO THE ITALIAN ARCHITECT **ANGELO MANGIAROTTI**, WHICH CAME FROM **PATRICK PARRISH**, IN NEW YORK. THE SET OF SIX FRENCH 1950s OAK AND RUSH CHAIRS ARE FROM **R.E. STEELE ANTIQUES**, IN EAST HAMPTON, NEW YORK. OPPOSITE THE NATURAL-EDGE SLAB COFFEE TABLE IS FROM **TUCKER ROBBINS**, IN NEW YORK, AND THE CUSTOM-MADE SOFA WAS COVERED IN A SUBTLE **COWTAN & TOUT**-STRIPED FABRIC. THE CUSTOM-MADE WOOL FLATWEAVE RUG IS FROM **TAI PING CARPETS**, IN NEW YORK. PHOTOGRAPHS ON THESE PAGES BY JOSHUA McHUGH.



ABOVE DIRECTLY INSIDE THE MAIN ENTRY, A NICHE CARVED OUT OF A TRAVERTINE WALL, AND A NATURAL WOOD CANOPY, CREATE CONTINUITY WITH THE OUTDOOR ENTRY PATH. THE 2012 CERAMIC BRUSHED, BLACK SLIP STONEWARE SCULPTURE, *FAMILY*, BY EAST HAMPTON-BASED ARTIST **TONI ROSS**, WHICH WAS SPECIFICALLY COMMISSIONED FOR THE SPACE, OFFERS NOT ONLY A STRONG SENSE OF ARRIVAL, BUT PROFFERS A DEEP PERSONAL MEANING FOR THE RIGGIOS. OPPOSITE A STAIR OF FLOATING OAK TREADS LEADS TO THE ELEVATED LEVEL OF THE MAIN LIVING SPACES. THE 1961 BOLDLY GEOMETRIC *TWO CIRCLES* PAINTING, BY THE MULTI-TALENTED RUSSIAN-AMERICAN ARTIST **ALEXANDER LIBERMAN**, INSTALLED ON THE WARM, NATURAL CEDAR WALL, PROVIDES AN IMPORTANT PAUSE IN THE PROGRESSION OF THE SPACE.



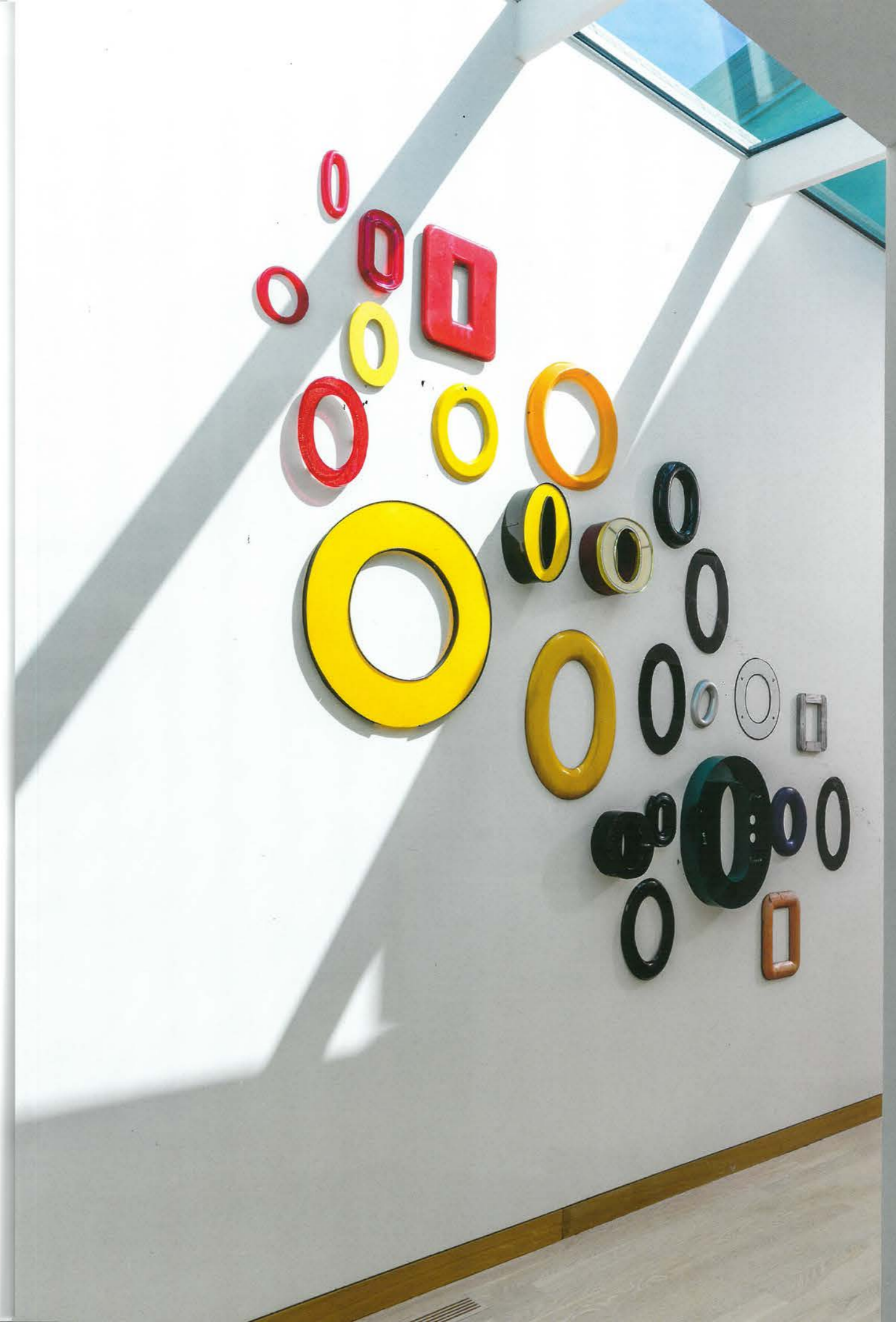
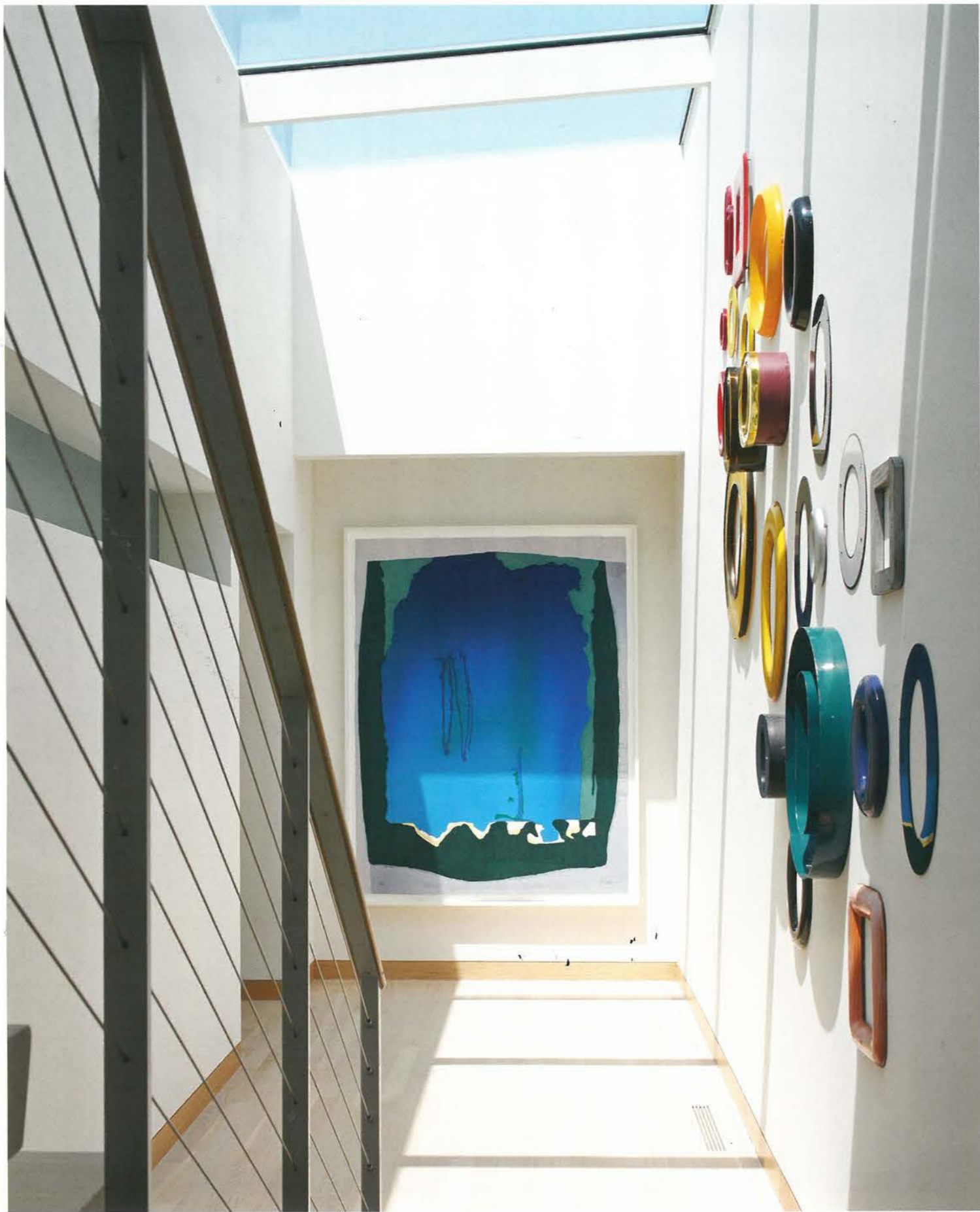


EVOKING A GANGPLANK LOWERED TO INVITE PASSENGERS ONTO A SHIP, THE MAIN STAIRCASE SOFTLY INTERRUPTS THE EXPANSIVE VIEWS OUT TO THE FRONT GARDEN, WHILE REINFORCING THE INTERIOR'S CONNECTION TO SURROUNDING NATURE. THE SHAPE AND ASSEMBLY OF THE INDIVIDUAL STAIR TREADS WAS INTENDED TO PROVIDE A DYNAMIC AND AIRY PROFILE, AS WELL AS DISTINCTIVE VISUAL INTEREST.



THE ELEVATED CENTRAL LIVING SPACE IS BATHED IN NATURAL LIGHT. THE TALL CEILINGS ARE TEMPERED BY ELEGANT WOOD TRELLISES THAT PROVIDE DEFINITION AND SCALE TO SPECIFIC AREAS WITHOUT RESORTING TO WALLS AND OTHER CONVENTIONAL STRATEGIES. THIS LOFT-LIKE VOLUME IS ANCHORED BY A GRAND TRAVERTINE FIREPLACE, WITH A TALL NICHE FOR THE VINTAGE WOODEN SCULPTURE FROM **ROARK**, IN NEW YORK. STILLIN CHOSE THE FURNITURE TO ACCOMMODATE THE RIGGIO FAMILY AND NUMEROUS GUESTS. THE WALNUT DINING TABLE AND CHAIRS ARE FROM **HOLLY HUNT**. THE BENTWOOD FRAME ARMCHAIR IS A c.1940 CZECHOŠLOVAKIAN DESIGN BY **JINDRICH HALABALA**, UPHOLSTERED IN A **COWTAN & TOUT**

FABRIC; THE PAIR OF c.1968 OAK ARMCHAIRS WERE DESIGNED BY **ESKO PAJAMIES** FOR THE FINNISH COMPANY **ASKO** AND COVERED IN A FABRIC FROM **DE LE CUONA**. THE MID-CENTURY CERAMIC TABLE LAMP, ATTRIBUTED TO THE AMERICAN DESIGNER **LEE ROSEN**, CAME FROM **NEO STUDIO**, IN SAG HARBOR, NEW YORK. THE CUSTOM BRONZE GLASS-TOPPED COFFEE TABLE IS FROM **C.J. PETERS**, IN NEW YORK. TO THE RIGHT OF THE SOFA IS DISPLAYED A SMALL EMBROIDERY ON FABRIC WORK BY THE CONCEPTUAL ITALIAN ARTIST **ALIGHIERO BOETTI**. ON THE FAR RIGHT WALL HANGS THE MONUMENTAL 1991 *UNTITLED*, A SERIES OF COAL ON SOLID STEEL PANELS, BY THE GREEK ARTIST **JANNIS KOUNELLIS**.



THESE PAGES GENEROUSLY SCALED, SKYLIT HALLWAYS PROVIDE THE PERFECT CONTEXT FOR THE DISPLAY OF BIG, VIBRANT ARTWORKS. A CUSTOM-DESIGNED NICHE FEATURES THE 1993 *FREEFALL*, A WOODCUT ON HANDMADE PAPER BY THE LATE AMERICAN ARTIST **HELEN FRANKENTHALER**, ABOVE. AMERICAN ARTIST **JACK PIERSON**'S 2009 *HER ANCIENT SOLITARY REIGN*, CREATED FROM FOUND LETTERS IN METAL, WOOD, AND PLASTIC, OPPOSITE, HAS AN EVOLVING CONVERSATION WITH THE SHIFTING SUNLIGHT. PHOTOGRAPHS ON PREVIOUS PAGES AND ABOVE BY JOSHUA McHUGH.



OPPOSITE BECAUSE OF STEVE RIGGIO'S AND THE ARCHITECT'S MUTUAL LOVE OF MUSIC, SPECIAL ATTENTION AND CARE WAS DEVOTED TO CREATING A PLACE TO LISTEN AND PLAY. ICONIC HIGHLIGHTS FROM RIGGIO'S FABULOUS GUITAR COLLECTION WERE COMPOSED IN A VISUAL ARRANGEMENT ON A PADDED AND FABRIC-WRAPPED PANEL. ABOVE A SPECIAL GLASS VITRINE WAS FABRICATED AND INSTALLED IN THE MUSIC ROOM TO SHOWCASE THE *PIECE DE RESISTANCE*—THE LAST GUITAR SMASHED BY PETE TOWNSHEND OF THE WHO.