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MODERN LOVE

WITH HELP FROM HIS MUSEUM-DIRECTOR CLIENT, ALI HOCEK CREATES A WHITE MODERNIST GETAWAY ON NEW YORK'S SHELTER ISLAND

TEXT BY JESSE KORNBLUTH
PHOTOGRAPHY BY FERNANDO BENGOCHEA
PRODUCED BY ELIZABETH SVERBEYEFF BYRON

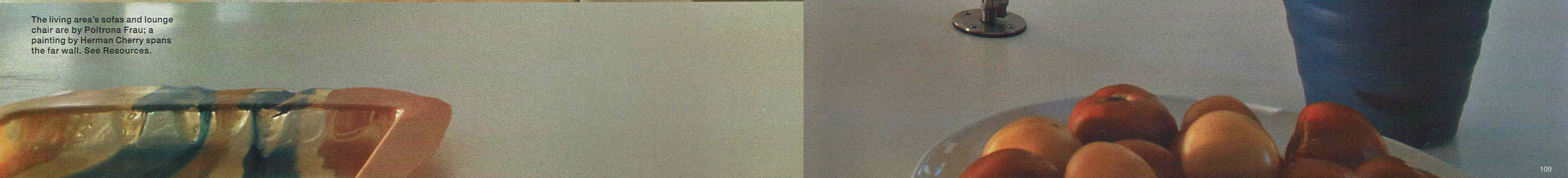
WHAT BECOMES OF A GIRL who falls in love with Modernism at the same time she discovers boys? Who stocks up on decorating magazines while her friends are poring over beauty and fashion glossies? Whose idea of a fun afternoon on vacation in England is to hike up to Manchester to see Daniel Libeskind's Imperial War Museum?

If you're Rochelle Slovin, you put your design sense to work at home and at the office. In her position as founding director of the American Museum of the Moving Image, Slovin isn't content just to oversee film and television exhibitions. Instead, she takes as much pleasure in drawing up a list of architects for the renovation of its Queens, New York, building (and later working closely with Gwathmey Siegel on the project) as she does in getting Robert De Niro's

Architect Ali C. Hocek designed a tranquil Shelter Island, New York, weekend house for museum director Rochelle Slovin and her husband, philosopher Edmund Leites. See Resources.

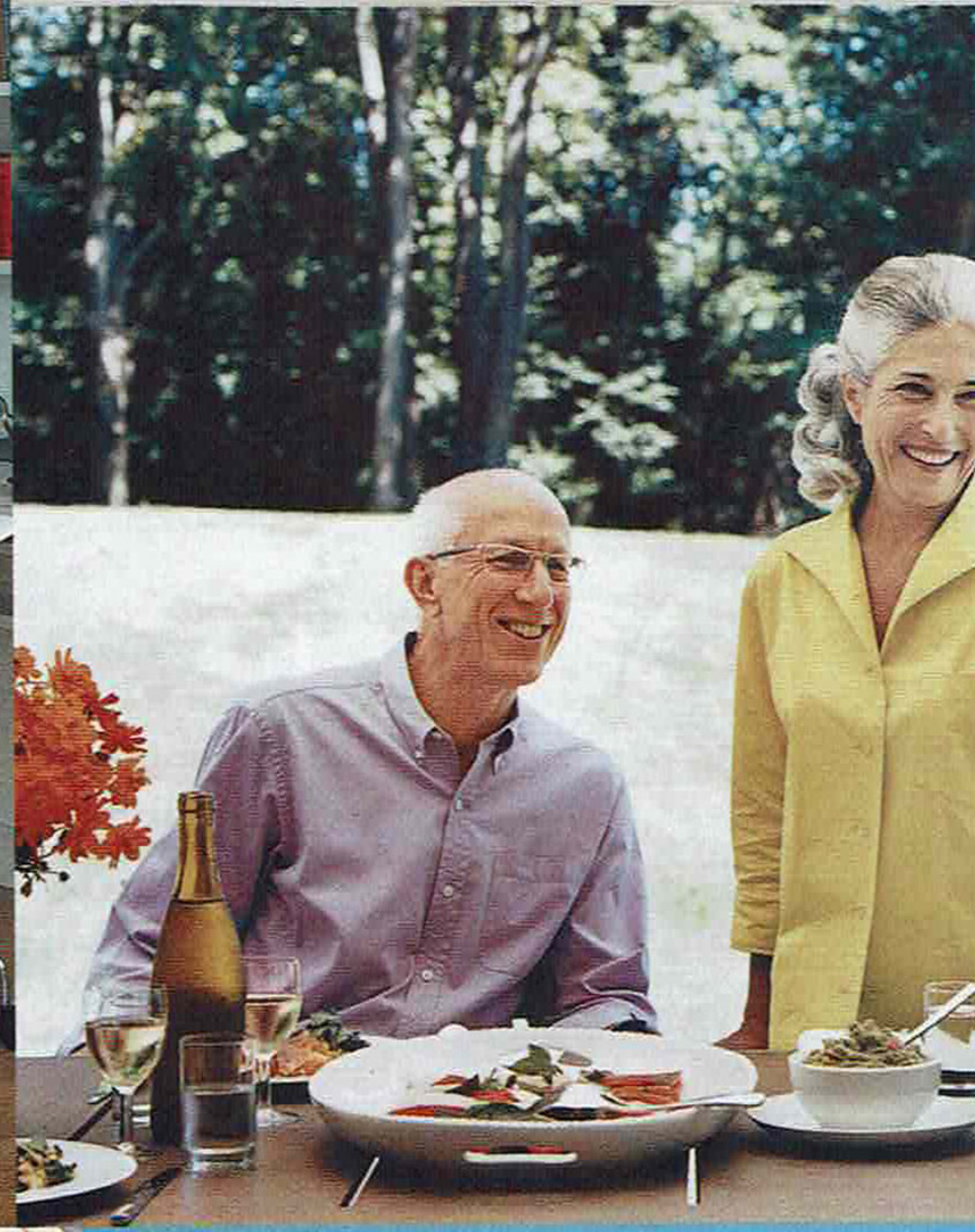


The living area's sofas and lounge chair are by Poltrona Frau; a painting by Herman Cherry spans the far wall. See Resources.





Clockwise from left: Arne Jacobsen Series Seven desk chairs, vintage Le Corbusier pony-skin-and-polished-chrome armchairs, and a 1960s plastic table in the study; the desk and bookshelves are by Vitsoe. Leites and Slovin dine alfresco. A Monica Armani table from Moss on the deck. Facing page: *Big Yellow*, an oil painting by Richards Ruben, dominates the dining area; Mario Bellini's La Rotonda table is from Cassina, and the Saarinen Executive chairs are from Knoll. See Resources.



personal collection of costumes for the museum. And when Slovin and her husband, philosopher Edmund Leites, bought two acres on Shelter Island, off the East End of Long Island, for a weekend place, their architect could expect—and got—sophisticated, precise instructions.

Slovin knew exactly what she wanted: “a cross between a shed and a horse barn.” Although the house would be built on a generous plot, on top of a gentle hill, she specified that it be on one level and one room deep so that she and Leites would have “the feeling of living in a screened porch.” And while she would choose the furniture and art, she wasn’t going to fill the house with possessions and treasures. “I don’t mind owning things,” she says. “I just don’t want to have to see them all the time.”

In architectural terms, Slovin was conjuring the memory of the Case Study House program, the 1945 effort by *Arts and Architecture* magazine that encouraged architects to design houses for families of modest income. For her, the



special attraction of these homes was that the architects, mostly based in California, "emphasized the relationship between indoors and outdoors."

Ali C. Hocek, the couple's architect, saw immediately that his clients were urbanites "who needed to go to the country occasionally but were basically tethered to the city." And he was well aware this house wasn't to be one of those "statements" that clot the nearby Hamptons. His solution was an ingenious structure that by turns has the feeling of a loft, a gallery, and the lowest-maintenance but most inventive beach house imaginable.

Take the windows, for example. They're standard-issue double-hung frames, but Hocek had them recessed in the walls for a custom-fitted look. Or, more dramatically, the sloping roof. At its most basic, the angle keeps rain and snow from settling. But the gutterless roof extends beyond the house, and the pitch is calculated so that water sluices off at a rate that creates a kind of waterfall. The water lands on a bed of rocks collected from local beaches and drains into a small pond a hundred yards away.

Then there's the positioning of the guest house. The original goal had been to create a comfortable distance between hosts and guests, so the plans called for this two-bedroom, one-bath retreat ("I hate excess," says Slovin) to be situated at the far end of the pool. "But like a shy

child, it kept moving closer to the main house," Hocek says of the blueprint changes.

Inside the main house, objects are hidden in plain sight. "In the master bath, there are shiny trap pipes under the sinks," Slovin says. "You can't get more elegant than that but still, it's visible plumbing." The closets in the master bedroom's dressing area are from IKEA, slightly modified, and the Vitsoe desk and shelves in the study were designed by Dieter Rams. "It's the most fabulous shelving ever invented," she adds. "The more you look at it, the better it gets."

Color has a place, too, though mostly in the art hanging on the walls. In the living/dining area, a Herman Cherry painting, lit from a lighting cove that's practically subliminal, is almost as wide as the house. A Richards Ruben work gives off a golden-orange field so bright it's as if the sun had sneaked into the room. Only the painting over the fireplace is at all representational—a fisherman and his catch—the sole sign that the house is a short walk to the water.

Case Study houses were built in a matter of months. No so their descendant, which took about three years to complete. "This kind of architecture and design is all about editing," explains Hocek. "It's about getting to the core of what you're trying to say, and saying it elegantly." Which works just fine for Slovin. "I used to have an 'I always wanted' list," she says. "I no longer do." ■



The Jasper Morrison Sleeper bed from Cappellini is dressed with Frette linens and a cashmere-and-wool throw from Garnet Hill; the chairs are vintage Bruno Mathsson. Facing page: In the master bathroom, the sinks are from Hastings, and the floor is paved in VetriColor glass-mosaic tile by Bisazza. See Resources.

