Romancing the Lodge

CASUAL GRANDEUR ON A LAKE MICHIGAN BAY

When Deborah Guerrera and Casey Cowell married a few years ago, their lives changed more or less overnight. Suddenly, as parents of a combined family that included five children, they had to have more space—lots of it, and fast. "We needed to get quite a few bedrooms in a hurry," says Cowell. "If it took five years to do it and the kids were long gone, what would be the point of that?"

As one of the fathers of the modern modem, Cowell has made a profession out of moving at lightning speed. After he cofounded U.S. Robotics with some college friends back in the mid-1970s, "we rode the modem into the age of the microprocessor," he explains. "We made it better and faster and less expensive." So there was nothing daunting about commissioning a house. Working with a tried-and-true team that included architect Linda Searl and project designer Ann Blossfeld (of the Chicago firm Searl and Associates), and interior designer Nancy Willert, Cowell shot forward at his usual breakneck pace. Within 15 months of buying property near the charmingly old-fashioned resort of Traverse City, Michigan—"the epitome of a beautiful midwestern town," as Guerrera describes it—the couple and their brood moved into their completed home.

"I call it a modern lodge," Searl says of this massive

Above: Casey Cowell and Deborah Guerrera commissioned architect Linda Searl, of Searl and Associates, to construct a lodgelike house on the shore of a Lake Michigan bay. Cozy, spacious interiors were created by Searl, project designer Ann Blossfeld and consultant Nancy Willert.

Opposite: Enrique Santana's *Civic Opera Building* hangs in the entrance hall, beyond which is the living room. The main staircase, with an *anegré* balustrade, leads to the second-floor bridge. The beams and columns were crafted from Douglas fir. Christian Liaigre bench from Holly Hunt.

Architecture by Searl and Associates/Interior Design by Nancy Willert and Searl and Associates
Text by Penelope Rowlands/Photography by Matt Wargo

OPPOSITE: Frank Martin's *Lacewoods*, 1994, is near an Indiana limestone wall, with a fireplace, in the living room. Christian Liaigre sofas and Dakota Jackson chair, with Edelman leather and pillow suede, from Holly Hunt. Kerry Joyce low table from Holly Hunt. Todd Hase side tables.

ABOVE: "The dining room is defined by a glass wall, with wood trusses, to the west and a stone wall to the south," notes Searl. "A feeling of warmth and openness is intended. At the same time, the materials suggest a casual elegance." The table runner fabric is from Donghia.

LEFT: *Seaway*, 1996, by Emmi Whitehorse hangs above the bed in the master bedroom. Searl used an Indiana limestone wall to "add strong texture," she says. Windows, with smooth wood frames, break up the rough surface and offer southwestern vistas of the water.

house, which was inspired by some of the great structures she'd encountered in Yosemite, Yellowstone and other western parks. She thought the casual grandeur of lodge architecture, with its huge volumes and its copious use of wood and stone, would be perfect for these clients. "Those spaces are so wonderful and comfortable. They're like the way Casey and Deb live. They like to entertain, but they're casual about it. The idea of this house is that it's easy to live in all the time."

Searl has done five projects with Cowell. "We were on the same wavelength by the time we got to this house," the architect says. In some ways, the project was a homecoming for Cowell, who'd spent childhood summers, as well as some adult years, in woodsy northern Michigan—a landscape he wanted to experience as fully as possible. "I like to have a lot of glass. When you're inside the house, you want to feel as if you're outside." Built on a sloping site on a bay shore near Lake Michigan—known to some midwesterners as "the Third Coast"—the residence takes full advantage of the beauty of its site.

The house is made up of three intersecting wings, with the main living spaces—including 28-foot-high living and dining rooms—in the wing that runs from north to south. Two other wings run on an east-west axis: One of these comprises two of the children's bedrooms, guest rooms, a sitting room, the library and the master suite; the other, the kitchen, the lab, the family room and more bedrooms. Almost anywhere you look, there is a view of the lake. "There's always a destination at the end of these axes," notes Searl. (The bedroom wing's lower level, for example, ends in one of the house's two screen porches.) Although the house is enormous—15,000 square feet—it appears smaller. Because it's built into a hill, with three stories on one side and two on the other, from some angles it almost seems to disappear.

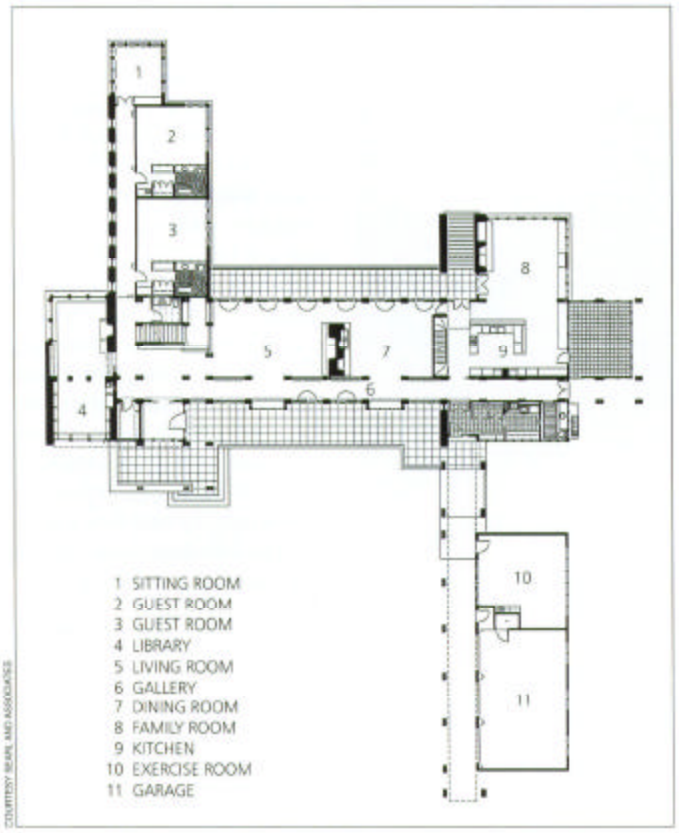
The house's centerpiece is its soaring, formal living area and the 100-foot-long bridge that traverses it—"a per-

OPPOSITE: Joan Miró's *Serie Barcelona* 1973 is at the end of the second-floor bridge, which provides access from the master suite to a staircase that leads to the kitchen and the family room below. "It defines the north-south axis and captures views of the lake," says Searl.

ABOVE: A closet and two vanities, in the master bath, are opposite a row of tall windows that look to the courtyard and flood the space with natural light. Marble countertops offset ash cabinetry and window trim and a cedar ceiling and trusses. Tub and sink from Kohler.

ABOVE: The poolhouse features a copper roof and a cedar trellis and columns. Bluestone paving surrounds the pool. BELOW: The first-floor plan. "The residence is organized into three intersecting wings," notes Searl. "The main living spaces are located in the largest wing."

RIGHT: "The courtyard is defined by the two smaller wings of the house," Searl says. "It's a place for entertaining and sunning when guests are swimming or boating on the bay." Landscape architect Maria Smithburg, of Artemisia, designed the plantings to accommodate the views.



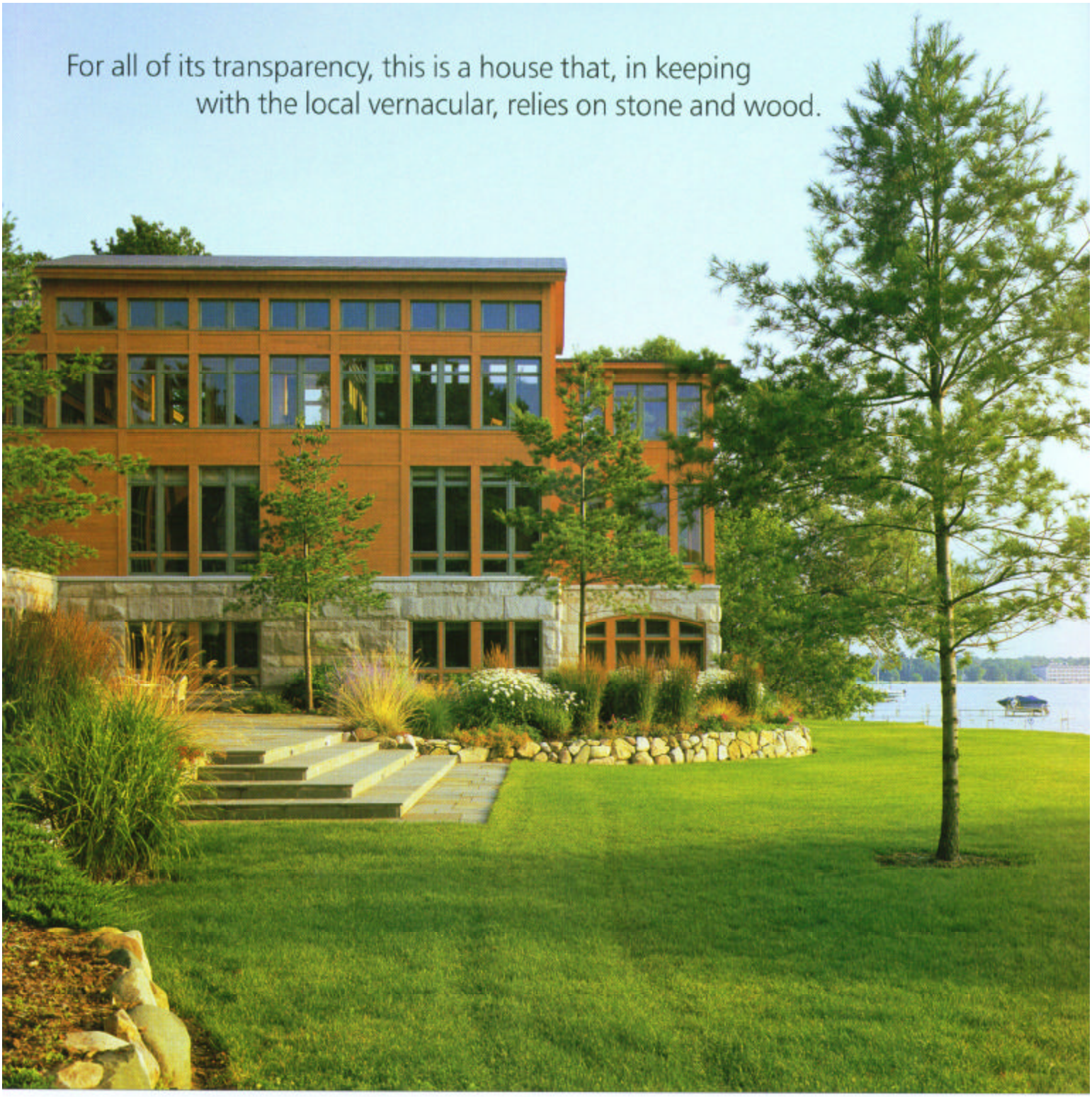
COURTESY BEARE AND ASSOCIATES

fect connection," according to Guerrera. Located on the second floor, this dizzyingly open walkway runs parallel to the dining and living rooms' sheer glass walls and connects the master suite to a staircase that leads to the kitchen and the family room. "When you're up there, it's as if you're floating in mid-air," Cowell says.

For all of its transparency, this is a house that, in keeping with the local vernacular, relies on stone and wood. On one second-floor landing, all of the major components used in the house can be seen, including cedar ceiling beams with black steel plates, stone walls, *anegré* railings and columns of Douglas fir. "There was this kind of system of parts," Searl explains. "We wanted to pare things down and keep them interrelated." Most of the woods used—including ash, which predominates—are local, she adds.

Lavish attention was spent on the stone, which Cowell wanted to be rough-cut. "The house is very clean and crisp in parts," he says. "We wanted to soften that and add texture." They installed a copper-shingled roof, which would become greener over time. "Between the strong stone and the tingeing copper, the house has a natural feel," remarks Cowell.

That the client, who's now an investor, is still an inventor at heart is evident in the



house's numerous playful details. "I'm reasonably idiosyncratic, if not eccentric, when it comes to these things," he admits. Several rooms foster discovery and play, including a crafts room where kids—and adults, for that matter—are encouraged to let go and even paint on the walls. In the electronics lab, on the house's lower level, one can toy with such amazing gear as massive printers (for making outsize photographic prints), oscilloscopes and frequency counters.

Almost every room has one whimsical element or another. In the master bath, a fold-down table swivels out from the side of the tub. Cowell and Searl worked out the table's design together several residences ago, and it now figures in all of his homes. "It's sort of his meditation place," says the architect. Here, he reads the morning newspaper and indulges in paperwork—with the occasional predictably soggy outcome. Cowell, who's an avid fly fisherman, also finds this surface to be an excellent place for tying fish flies. And he doesn't rule out other uses: "Nothing prevents you from putting hors d'oeuvres, a bottle of wine and a candle on it."

Working with such an inventive client and following through on even the most scattered-sounding concepts

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STROKES OF GENIUS

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other I planned to keep. Then one fine Saturday the director of a major university art museum came in, saw 'mine' and wanted to buy it, and I didn't think it was right to stand in the way of Ken's being represented in an important collection—so there went my beautiful small Noland! I thought, I'll just pick one out of the next group he does. But he went right over to painting chevrons and diamonds instead. A few years later, though, as luck would have it, the museum's new director wanted to swap *Noon Afloat* for one of the diamond-shaped works. I said yes in a heartbeat, and the painting came home."

Emmerich's professional life and Noland's art literally came full circle at the same time. One of the first solo shows the dealer put on was Kenneth Noland circles; now some four decades later, all things having turned to a roundness, they were also the occasion of the gallery's very last exhibition—with the image not just revisited but reinterpreted. Over one of the living room sofas is the circle

> "I tried to buy with my heart and not worry so much about what would sell," André Emmerich explains.

that Emmerich himself purchased from that valedictory gallery show: *In the Pink*. "I was drawn to it by the tender, luminous quality that it has—by its totally seductive *translucence*."

There can in fact be no better word for the luxurious lightness that André Emmerich's own apartment possesses, and is destined never to lose, since what it radiates is far more than the sum of a couple of dozen pictures and sculptures with their importances—it is nothing less than an abiding belief in art itself. "The apartment is a comfort in every way—climbing into a feather bed, that's what it's like, if you will," he says. "Corbusier talked about housing as a machine for living, but as far as I'm concerned he left something out. Because I want to do more than live—I want to be happy. And," he adds, "I am." □

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is a privilege, asserts Searl. "He lets you create an idea. He lets you go with it. You can really explore your creativity. Many clients don't have that kind of confidence." That this one does is evident everywhere, down to the close juxtaposition of the study with the master bedroom. This positioning was critical, since, Cowell says, "I do my best thinking when I first wake up. I like to be within a minute or two of my study. It makes a difference." He finds that the room itself provides inspiration. Three of its walls are made predominately of glass, and "when you're in the study, you think you're on the prow of a ship, right over the water."

The interior was a collaboration among Searl, Blossfeld and Willert. "I wanted the house to be comfortable and cozy for being so large," says Guerrera. A realist, she knew the interior would have to stand up to quantities of teenagers in full hanging-out mode. She favored "slouchy sofas" and informal but beautiful fabrics. "We needed them to withstand salsa spills," she says. "There are no silks." Willert designed the house's bright, often geometric-patterned carpets, with input from Guerrera, who delighted in adding "little whimsical secrets" throughout, including the five small fish, representing the children, that are woven into a corner of the dining room rug.

"I wanted to keep it very minimal and contemporary and playful," says the designer, who's based in Milwaukee. "That was my challenge, to make it feel like a home." Willert gravitated toward casual yet highly stylized pieces, such as an angular chair and, next to it, an elegant, surprising occasional table—one of two—in the living room. The massive photographic monoprint on a nearby wall, *Lacewoods* by Frank Martin, complements the lakescape that is seen through the massive opposite window. The art is "pretty eclectic," says Cowell. "It's things we picked up here and there. Just things we like."

Now that the project is done, Willert is the first to say the interior still feels incomplete. One thing is missing. "I was going to hang a racing scull above the bed in the master suite," she says, "because I have room to do it and it would be so beautiful." But she hasn't found the right boat yet. Still, you sense that, when she does, her clients will approve. □

HUBERT DE GIVENCHY

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Once the architectural shell was finished, the objects and furnishings found their places without difficulty. But "decoration isn't just a matter of pushing décor into a neutral area," says Sévigny. In this case, the Boulle armoire was the dominant feature of the composition. Lined as it was with the same kind of bronze mirror used to make the screen, it "vanished" when its doors were open, which drew the eye to the fine collection of gold-patterned lacquered vases inside.

The bronze mirrored low table was laden with gilt bronzes and Chinese objects in mirror-black lacquer. The overall black-gold tonality enhanced the somber harmonies of a Rothko and the azure blue of a painting by Miró. On the rough-textured rug, the furniture and chairs designed by Sévigny seemed to float around the table. "I like to concentrate on my friends' conversations and not feel obliged to move from one group to another," is Givenchy's comment on the arrangement.

He's a genuine collector—even though he hates the word—and he has always taken a special delight in the histories of his objects, the random changes and coincidences they have undergone and the ways their successive owners have viewed them. As Givenchy explains, "The mere acquisition of objects is far less interesting than finding out about them and comparing the imagined with the possible."

Today Hubert de Givenchy is still collecting, even though he has moved on from the rue Fabert. From his current base—a town house on the rue de Grenelle—he remains a familiar figure in the antiques shops of the Left Bank and at various auctions. He appreciates "very beautiful Empire furniture" and has rediscovered Fernand Léger, whose work he acquires for his house in the country. Now retired from couture and from his work at Christie's, he devotes himself to his own art, which consists of Cubist-style collages made with string and cardboard—modest materials that he paints in gouache and oils and places in antique frames. These collages share the walls of his château with the remaining pieces of modern art from the rue Fabert apartment—a large Picasso drawing, a painting by Ben Nicholson and a blue oil by Miró—the latter being one of the beautiful, poetic pieces that so enlivened its beige salon. □