

The living room of Doug Turshen and Rochelle Udell's Ossining, New York, home, which was designed and renovated by Dick Bories and James Shearron, contains midcentury classics such as a Bertoia Bird chair and ottoman, an Eames plywood cocktail table, and a George Nelson bench; the Bories and Shearron-designed sectional is upholstered in a Holland & Sherry fabric, the cowhides are from ABC Carpet & Home, the fireplace wall is covered in hand-troweled plaster, and the original fir floor has been stained in a stripe pattern. See Resources.

# CLEAR THINKING

WHEN A DECISIVE COUPLE WITH A REFINED VISUAL SENSIBILITY ENCOUNTERS A HOUSE WITH A RICH HISTORY, THE RESULT IS A FRESH TAKE ON CLASSIC AMERICAN STYLE

*Text by Samuel Cochran · Photography by William Waldron  
Styled by James Shearron*

In the living room, George Smith armchairs upholstered in a Rogers & Goffigon linen flank a settee slipcovered in a fabric from Ralph Lauren Home; the painting is by Sam Glankoff, and the Mies van der Rohe cocktail table and vintage Hardoy stool are by Knoll. **FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Turshen with the family beagles, Scout and Lucy, on the loggia; the dining chairs are from Mecox Gardens. In the library, Le Corbusier chairs by Cassina are upholstered in a Rogers & Goffigon linen; the 1960s lamp is Swedish, the lithograph is by Alexander Liberman, and the rug is by Madeline Weinrib. The original fir floor in the entry hall has been stained a darker shade. See Resources.



**DOUG TURSHEN AND ROCHELLE UDELL** have a history of making quick decisions. Thirty years ago, Turshen realized how much he missed Udell, with whom he had worked in the art departments of *Esquire* and *House & Garden*. So he called up his former boss and asked her to marry him. “I knew I had to see her every day again,” he says of his impromptu proposal. Udell was similarly smitten, and, once her shock had subsided, accepted. “We never dated,” Turshen adds with a laugh. “We just got married.”

Those impulsive tendencies resurfaced four years ago when a property in Ossining, New York, that the couple had long admired suddenly came on the market. “It looked like it had been air-dropped from England,” says Udell of the Georgian-style house, which had the added benefit of being close to his parents. “It had such a sense of legacy.”

Never mind that they had recently redecorated their own home or that it was a Saturday night when they heard the news—they picked up the phone and immediately contacted the Realtor. “We didn’t know what we were doing,” notes Turshen, who now produces books on design talents such as Bunny Williams and Charlotte Moss. “I asked Rochelle, ‘What happens if we like it?’” Her response was definitive: “We buy it.” The next day they did so—on the spot.

The property is hardly what you would expect to find in the iconic suburb where novelists John Cheever and Richard Yates once lived, and which is now the backdrop to the fictional Draper home on *Mad Men*. Built long before automobiles and ennui swept Westchester County, the brick structure consists of a 1789 house—which actually served as a hotel throughout much of the 19th century—and a curved 1921 addition by Shreve, Lamb & Harmon.

The firm, best known for the Empire State Building, was then restoring some 29 buildings in the surrounding hamlet of Sparta. “We didn’t





realize that we were moving into this wonderful community of like-minded people," Turshen says of the area, which now forms a historic district within the town of Ossining. "Everyone cares about their house, but even more than that, everyone cares about *this* house." Much to the relief of their preservationist neighbors, the couple did little to alter its appearance. "We did a major job that ended up looking like we had done nothing," he jokes of the six-month renovation.

To guide the process, the couple enlisted designer James Shearron and architect Dick Bories, whose company specializes in traditional and classic projects. The two barely left a mark on the exterior, aside from new second-story shutters and a custom-made lantern, but they made significant changes inside. "We wanted to pare down the detail, while giving it a greater sense of luxury," says Shearron, who has worked with Turshen at various home-design publications. That meant removing woodwork (a mantel in the living room and Colonial-style molding throughout), outfitting the kitchen and powder room with granite floors, and punctuating the walls with artful light fixtures.

Nowhere did the pair take more aesthetic license than in the dining room, which they opened to the garden, dramatically paneled with quarter-sawn oak, and anchored with a mobilelike chandelier. "They would have been happy with white walls," notes Bories, "but we felt

**ABOVE:** In the dining room, a 1976 painting by Sam Glankoff and antique leather-upholstered English mahogany chairs; the Giacometti-inspired sconce is by Carole Gratale. **RIGHT:** A mobile chandelier by Intérieurs hangs above a Saarinen dining table by Knoll; the walls are paneled with quarter-sawn oak, and an antique console table holds a pair of stump vases. See Resources.





strongly the house needed a warm space.” It has since become the couple’s favorite. “It really feels like an important room,” says Turshen. “We basically live in here, especially since the kitchen is so small.”

Space constraints largely dictated the furniture arrangements. “Coming from a huge house, we only kept the things that had meaning,” he explains, referring to the comparatively sprawling Greek Revival home in which the couple raised their two children. The Saarinen dining table had been Udell’s longtime desk, while the living room’s rococo wall clock and the entry’s side tables all belonged to Turshen’s grandmother. Whatever didn’t fit ended up on eBay or Craigslist, including his hoards of faux-bois picnic baskets and vintage jeweled fruit. “Doug is a big collector, but I’m quite happy in an empty room,” says Udell, who is now creative director of the fashion chain Chico’s. Books are her only obsession, and they line built-in shelves throughout the house.

Even without his treasured keepsakes, this house, Turshen says, “best represents who we are.” And looking back, the couple is quick to attribute their successful choice of home—and mates, for that matter—to insight rather than impulsiveness. “When you feel strongly about something or someone, and suddenly there is an opportunity to make that relationship more intimate, you seize it,” Udell says. “We’ve always taken advantage of an informed moment.” ■

**ABOVE:** In the master bedroom, a four-poster by Robert Lighton/British Khaki is dressed in bedding by Charles P. Rogers; the bedside table is antique, the sconce is by Hinson Lighting, and the rug is by Madeline Weinrib. **RIGHT:** Scout relaxes on a Borjes and Shearron–designed window seat, which is topped with a cushion upholstered in the same Rogers & Goffigon linen as the antique wing chair; the trunks that serve as cocktail tables are vintage, and the painting is by Russell DeYoung. See Resources.

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RICHARD YATES ONCE LIVED

