

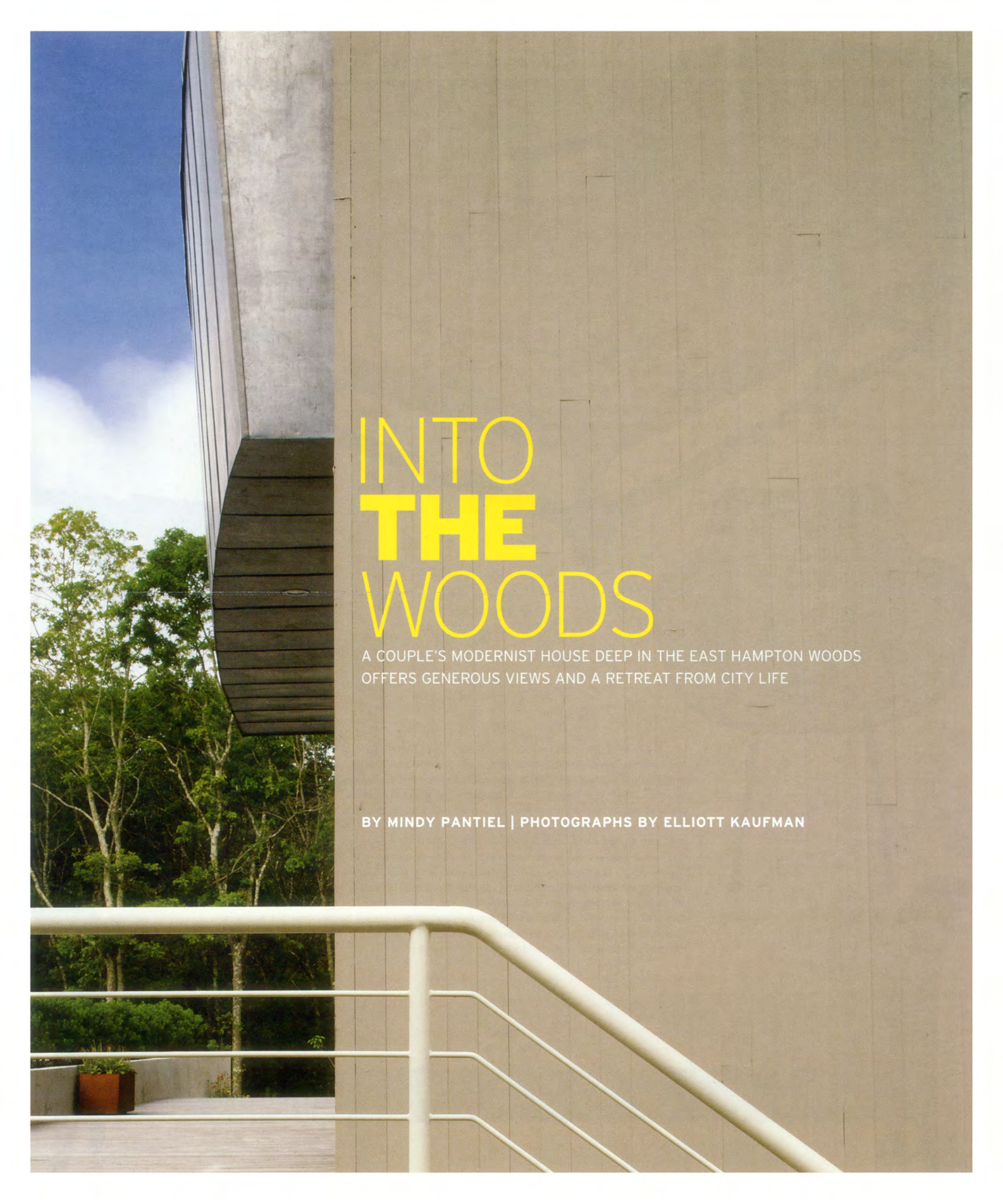
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INTO **THE** WOODS

A COUPLE'S MODERNIST HOUSE DEEP IN THE EAST HAMPTON WOODS
OFFERS GENEROUS VIEWS AND A RETREAT FROM CITY LIFE

BY MINDY PANTIEL | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELLIOTT KAUFMAN



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TriBeCa residents Carl and Louise Kane had penned a personal advertisement to find the perfect person to design their Hamptons getaway, it might have read: Established New York couple with affection for flat roof contemporaries seeks architect with modernist leanings to design vacation home in East Hampton's Northwest Woods. And very likely Bruce D. Nagel, who worked with modernist giants such as Richard Meier and Charles Gwathmey before setting up his own shop in the Hamptons in 1985, might have answered it.

This match made in modernist heaven would have spawned a monolithic sculptural structure sheathed in cedar siding and punctuated by windows, calculatingly placed to enhance the overall geometry as well as lap up the deep forest views. Personal ad aside, that's exactly what happened.

But the real story began with Carl's desire to escape the concrete jungle. "I needed green space," says the owner of a private management consulting firm. "We spent almost a year looking at houses and couldn't find one with good architecture." The decision to build led to the purchase of two wooded acres bordered by a nature preserve.

"The Northwest Woods are significant in that woods and forest are atypical of people's preconceived notions of Hamptons life. Most people think of beach and sand, and here's this contoured and hilly property," says Nagel. "The most striking thing was this precipitous rise that the house could sit on."

Long-time admirers of architect Vuko





Material World | Coming from the hustle and bustle of TriBeCa, homeowners Carl and Louise Kane craved a vacation home in more remote and verdant surroundings. Enamored by the rustic Northwest Woods of East Hampton, the Kanes decided on two wooded acres on the edge of a nature preserve, and tapped architect Bruce Nagel to realize their vision of a secluded modernist getaway. The second floor bedroom's private cantilevered porch (PREVIOUS SPREAD LEFT), covered with lead-coated copper panels, provides an excellent vantage point. Refined metal handrails and balusters employed in the back patio area (PREVIOUS SPREAD RIGHT), reappear throughout the house. **Window Display** | To maintain privacy while allowing ample light into the après-beach outdoor shower and interior bathrooms (TOP LEFT), Nagel utilizes "ordinary windows in unordinary ways" with stacks of standard PPG glass blocks. **Rust To Riches** | A rust-colored planter by Ore (TOP RIGHT) brings a bit of vitality and color to the patio. **Dramatic Effect** | The Kane's modern and sculptural vacation home is the finale of a scenic drive through the woods up along a wandering driveway (ABOVE), which only adds to the dramatic reveal of Nagel's angular design and clean geometry. See *Resources*.





Great Heights | Sunlight fills the airy living area (LEFT) through two-story high windows while clerestory windows open the dominant curtain wall to create a floating appearance. A Carolina Sardis wall sculpture and beeswax bowls from the Cheryl Hazan Gallery add personal touches. **Open Up** | Generous cutouts spanning the interior walls (ABOVE) give an open and free-flowing sense of space and allow light to travel. **Work Of Art** | Inspired by personal design heroes Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier, Nagel created an open-railed stairway (BELOW). "In a contemporary house, a staircase can be more than just a utility, it can be a piece of art," says the architect. *See Resources.*





Tashkovich, known for his dramatic modern residences in Westchester, the Kanes came to the planning table with an established aesthetic. Their needs were clear: “The house had to be very light, very open, very airy and have a relationship with the outdoors,” says Louise with Carl adding, “We wanted timeless design—something we would never grow tired of with lots of flexibility for visiting children and friends.”

Despite their architectural savvy, Nagel insisted his clients provide a detailed written program. “Not just an outline of how many bedrooms and bathrooms they wanted, but specifics on how they live: Do they like to wake up to light or sleep late? Do they have coffee in the bedroom or outside?” says Nagel, who even draws furniture into his plans to help clients determine how they will use a room. “People who really think about how they live get the best results.”

The Kanes responded with a four-page essay that

included their desires for everything from a heated garage to house Carl’s antique Porsche to an après-beach outdoor shower. Nagel delivered a building that honors its modernist inspiration. “The house is Gwathmey in its stylized modernism,” Nagel says, “while making its own mark.”

The approach to the house is a meandering driveway that snakes through the trees before allowing visitors to take in the full scope of the angular structure. “Instead of a straight shot, this approach makes arriving at the house more episodic,” says the architect.

The cedar siding was selected for its taut and skin-like quality. “There’s no texture or shadows like you get with shingles,” he says. And for nuance, both the master bedroom balcony and the square roof are covered with lead-coated copper panels, and the front door is fashioned from raw metal. “I try to make statements about materials that are a little unique,” says the architect, who took a similar approach with the window design by using

Catch Some Rays | Kitchen stools by Soho Stools tuck into the kitchen's double breakfast bar for more informal dining (OPPOSITE). Cabinetry was restricted to light colors to enhance the sunlight streaming in from both the living area and the kitchen's sliding glass doors. Neoporte custom stainless steel and glass doors access the back patio. **Keep It Simple** | A black dining table custom-made by interior designer Igal Toledano is all that separates the living area (BELOW) from the open kitchen. With just touches of color from bright throw pillows from Butter and Eggs, Toledano went with a mostly neutral aesthetic to keep things "following the philosophy and design of the house." See Resources.





Wide Open | The stairs (ABOVE LEFT) leading up to the guest room level feature prefabricated maple steps kept open for uninhibited views through the house. **Before The Fall** | Situated on contoured and rolling land, Nagel's design takes advantage of a precipitous rise with a back patio that descends to the Cassini-furnished pool area (ABOVE). Refined landscaping by Barbara Peterson Associates negotiates a balance between the burgeoning surrounding woods and the home's striking architecture. **Sweet Retreat** | With easy access to the rear patio and luscious forest landscape, the serene ground-floor master bedroom (LEFT) is a welcoming departure from the fast pace of the city. Toledano's custom-built side tables and bed complete with bedding by Archipelago emphasizes the room's neutral palette with splashes of color from a painting by Babette Herschberger and Artecnic resin candlesticks. See *Resources*.



“ordinary windows in unordinary ways.” “There were budget considerations so I got creative on assembling and blending your basic catalog windows,” he adds.

Softening the hard-edged geometry is a large curved wall. “One thing I learned from both Richard Meier and Charles Gwathmey is that architecture is not pure functionality, it is sculpture and you need to look for ways in which those sculptural qualities can be enhanced,” says Nagel. “In this case, the curve encourages your eye to move from left to right so the vista seems more panoramic than it would with a straight wall. It changes the way you look at everything.”

The minimalist materials program outside gives way to a similarly spare palette on the interior where nothing is superfluous. A

structural element in the living room was turned into a wet bar; a flat wall above it houses art; and the staircase is intentionally sculptural. “In a contemporary house a staircase can be more than just a utility, it can be a piece of art,” says Nagel, who did an open-railed stairway reminiscent of Walter Gropius or Le Corbusier, some of his early personal architectural heroes.

Interior designer Igal Toledano, who worked on four previous projects with the Kanes, continued the “less-is-more” approach with his restrained furnishing designs and selection of accessories and color. “For the most part, I kept everything very quiet to allow an explosion of color in small quantities that would have a high impact,” he says. “My job was to let the architecture speak for itself and not infringe upon it.” 🌟