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Why Brokers Go Gray**

FACE OFF
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in the eye of the beholder

A house becomes a home when a connoisseur finds an architectural gem hiding in the woods.

BY NEWELL TURNER | PHOTOGRAPHS BY GARY MCLEOD

EIGHT YEARS AGO, ANITA CALERO, a Manhattan based photographer, drove out to the East End looking for something “small and studio loft-like.” After years of weekends in upstate New York, she had finally determined to find her place in the Hamptons.

Buried in the woods on the border between East Hampton and The Springs, she found an architectural gem. In the early '60s, Richard Bender, an architect, had built a moderately priced modernist weekend house for himself. Then, as now, staking a real estate claim in the Hamptons took some creative planning. Bender purchased, with a group of associates, a 20-acre parcel of land in the woods and subdivided it into smaller lots for each party. He then built his house as a model for the others to follow. This progressive subdivision was called “Amenity.”

Alastair Gordon explores the vibrant history of modern living in the Hamptons in his book *Weekend Utopia* (Princeton Architectural Press). “The Amenity houses were designed using a modular system, standard building parts, and prefabricated framing to save costs. The 850-square foot houses had small sun decks, Japanese-style landscaping, and cost less than \$15,000 to build (including furniture and landscaping but without central heating),” Gordon says.

Wrapped on two sides by walls of glass, the house still evoked the spirit of indoor/outdoor living when Calero found it. Time and the weather, though, had not been so kind to the “affordable” materials with which it was built.

One with Nature | Window walls (OPPOSITE) line two sides of the house. Decks extend living areas in the summer. Steps lead down to the garden where Calero and her friend Miguel Pons installed boulders to anchor views from the house. See Resources.





Kitchen/surfaces

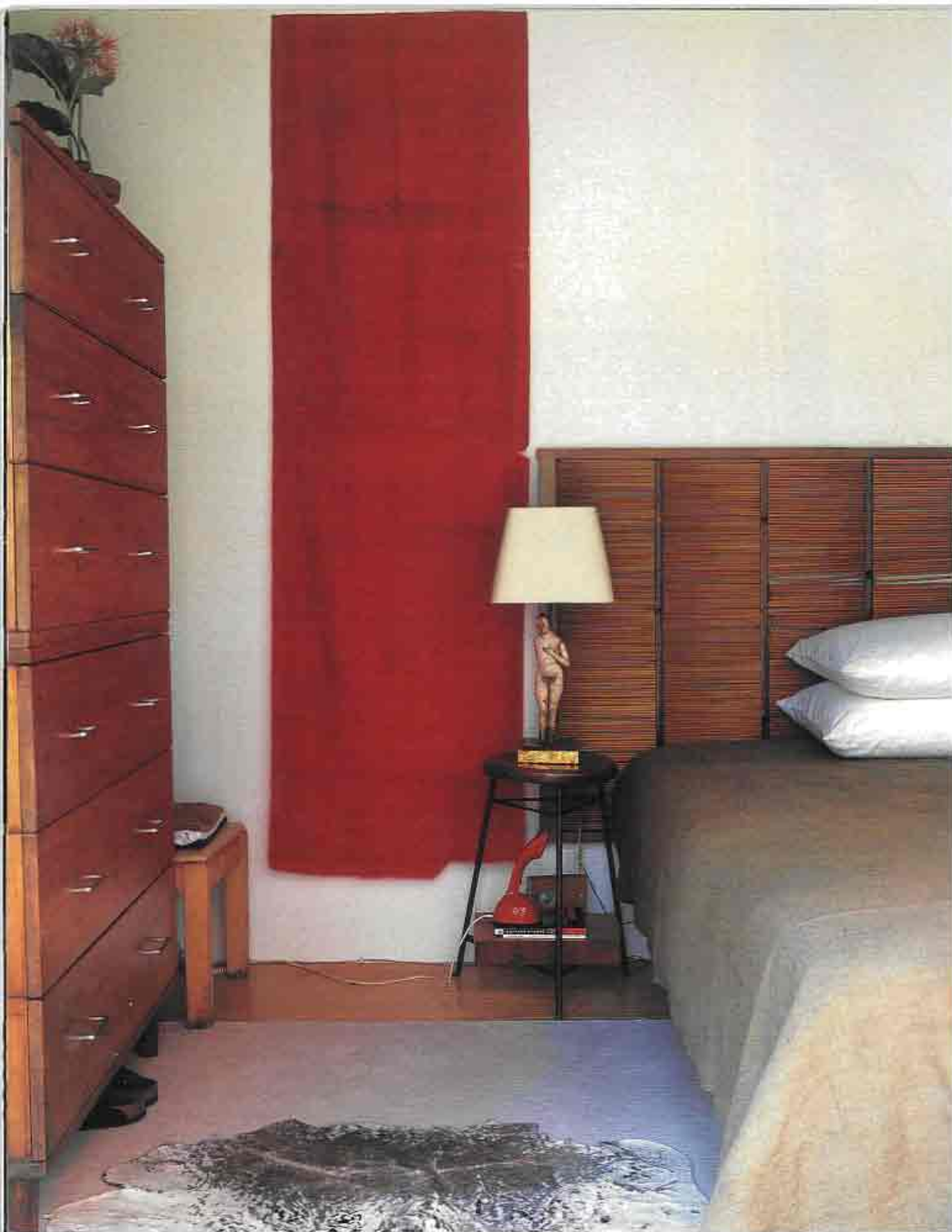
"Looking at history, we can really predict the future of color," says Reneé Hytry, vice president of design at the Formica Corporation. "It works in 10 year swings in terms of color trends." Hytry thinks people don't usually want what their mother had, but what they find new and exciting is often something their grandmother knew. ¶ "We see the current decade moving toward a cooler environment with splashes of color," she adds. "Formica's new 'Solidz' collection is built on natural colors with complimentary pops of bright retro colors like blue, red, purple and yellow. There's also a particular interest in materials by way of the '50s and '60s." ¶ Formica recently introduced two laminates in a cork pattern: Corkboard and Seasoned Corkboard. Circular brushed patterns in Buffed Aluminum and Buffed Nickel have also been added to the collections (call 800-FORMICA for the nearest dealer), offering a complementary edge to the natural patterns and colors. ¶ Formica and laminates have advanced since the heady days of experimental houses and house kits. Laminates have gone from countertops and cabinets to the floor. Architects like Richard Bender would have a field day with the colors and patterns available today—one might say the ceiling is now the limit.

"I re-did it over again but with new materials," Calero says. While the original Formica-fronted cabinets were in good enough shape to keep in place, the plywood on the half-wall separating the kitchen and the living area was replaced with a more finished looking ash plywood. All of the sliding doors and pine floors were replaced.

"It had been a purely summer house," Calero says. "The outside shower was just a hose. And, there was no heat." Still using the house primarily in the summer, Calero thrives on the beauty of nature just outside her walls of windows. "The house is like a big leaf under so many trees, and I live under that leaf," Calero emphasizes in her soft Spanish-inflected English.

The gardens were non-existent until Calero started respect-

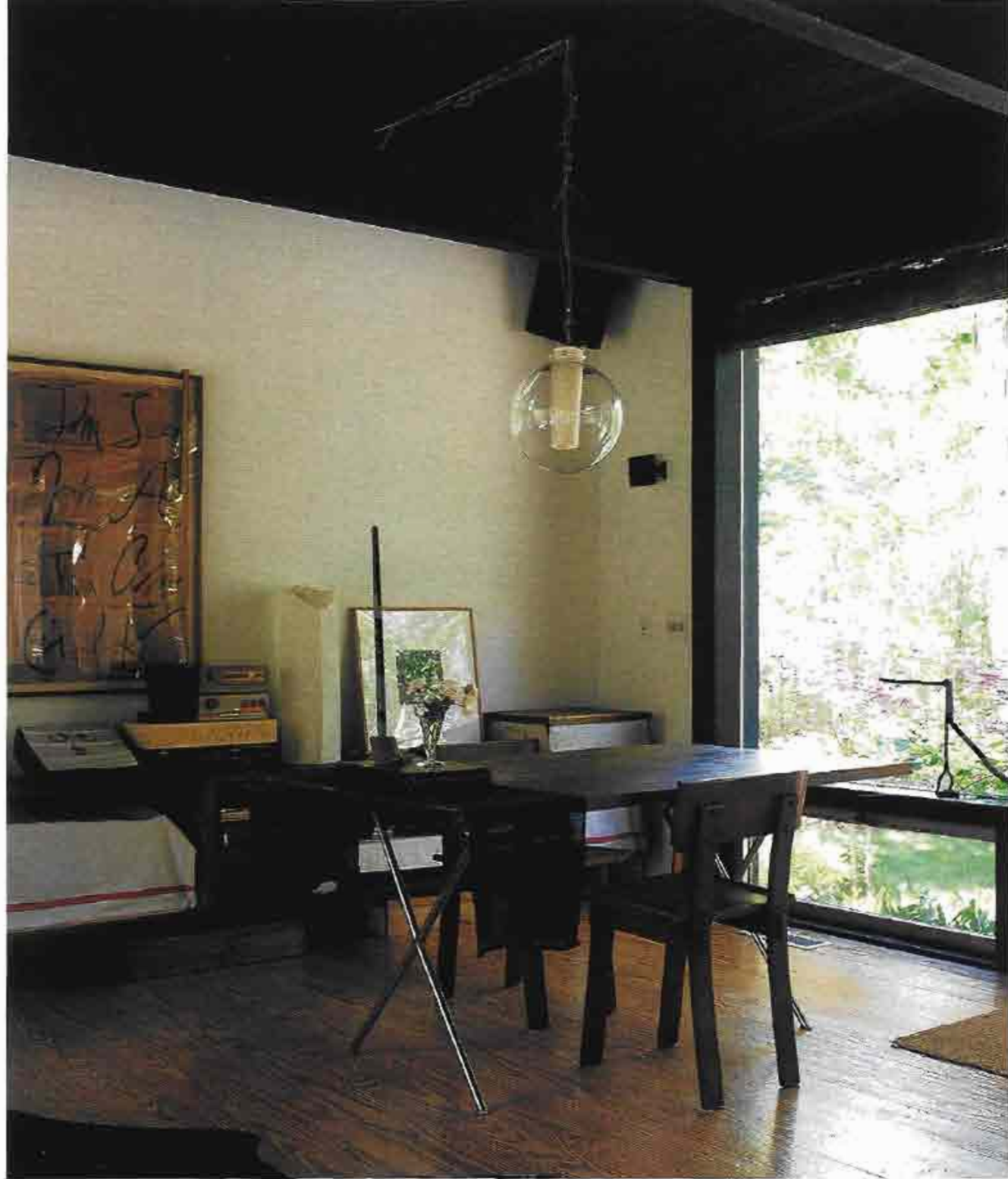
Retro Modern | A Jean Prouvé chair Calero found in Paris (OPPOSITE) joins two Eames tables, all facing a bolted mid-century sofa found at ABC Carpet and Home and upholstered in a Ralph Lauren Home kbaki fabric. Calero replaced the old plywood half-wall with a beautifully figured ash plywood. Along the rear wall of the kitchen, the original Formica cabinets (ABOVE) still glow. See Resources.



Company | Calero found a 1920's Japanese door in a gallery on Madison Avenue in Manhattan. Captivated by its surface, she gave it a new life as a bed headboard (LEFT) in the guest bedroom. A demure Mexican statuette was made into a lamp. A cowskin from her father in Columbia is layered on a wool from ABC Carpet and Home.

Summer Nights | Though the house is only used in the summer, the original freestanding fireplace (RIGHT) keeps cool evenings cozy in the open living room. See Resources.





Pavilion Dining | Calero's dining table (LEFT) was originally a cafeteria table designed by Eames. Chairs were designed by Russell Wright. **Twilight** | Indigo is the color of choice for the master bedroom (RIGHT). The quilt is a patchwork of kimono's from the 1800's. The indigo panel of fabric above the bed is from Cans Ginsburg, NYC and hangs from a vintage shoulder carrying pole, from Youngblood Gallery, Sag Harbor. See Resources.

fully improving the surrounding grounds. Miguel Pons, a friend and landscape designer brought in specimen rocks from as far away as Connecticut. Carefully selected, they act as focal points against the surrounding forest. Every room now has some view of a large boulder outside. Calero speaks of them reverentially. "The big one is the heart of the house," she adds.

Before launching a career in photography, Calero had a very successful career as a stylist of home furnishings, fashion and jewelry. Like the still lifes she's become so known for styling and photographing, Calero has thoughtfully composed (she would never call it decorating) her home.

In the master and guest bedrooms, panels of ethnic fabrics hang above or beside the beds. It's a celebration of subtle texture and the heady elegance of simplicity. "Joe D'Urso is a big influence on me," Calero says. D'Urso, a designer whose career was launched with the high-tech/high-touch movement in the 70s, has recently returned to the design limelight.

In many ways, one could say that this house was actually built for Calero, who came to the Hamptons looking for a home that would re-connect her to the beauty and simplicity of nature. Fortunately, this ambitious little house was found and restored by a kindred spirit. 🌞

