



ART Restoration

When illness struck, a couple commissioned a universally designed addition to their iconic home and filled it with their collection of art

BY ALICE LECCESE POWERS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY KENNETH M. WYNER



The addition blends seamlessly into the original home, which was designed by architect Charles Moore in the 1970s (opposite). The entry gallery displays some of the couple's favorite paintings, including an oil on canvas by Charlie Mendez (these pages, on far left).



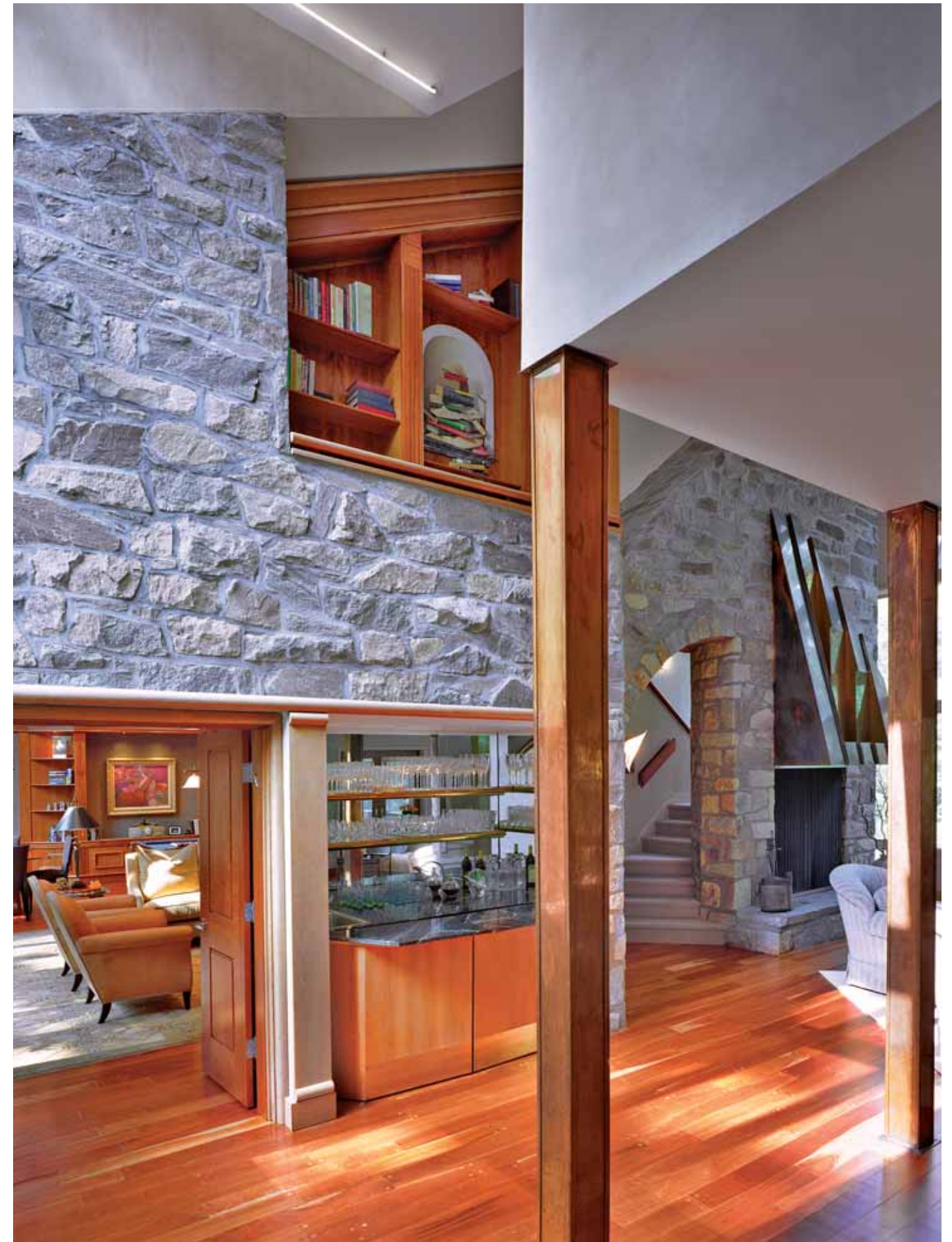
“Additions are harder to do than a house,” said architect Rui Ponte, surveying the 7,000-square-foot addition to the home of an executive and his wife in suburban Washington, DC. Ponte is a principal in the Bethesda architecture, interiors and planning firm Ponte Mellor & Associates. The original home was designed for the couple in the late 1970s by the iconic architect Charles Moore. Once an assistant to the late architect Louis Kahn, Moore was known for his humanistic approach to modernism. Instead of imposing a cold, formal aesthetic, he tried to engage his clients by creating clearly defined forms that

Architecture: Rui Ponte, AIA, Ponte Mellor & Associates, Bethesda, Maryland

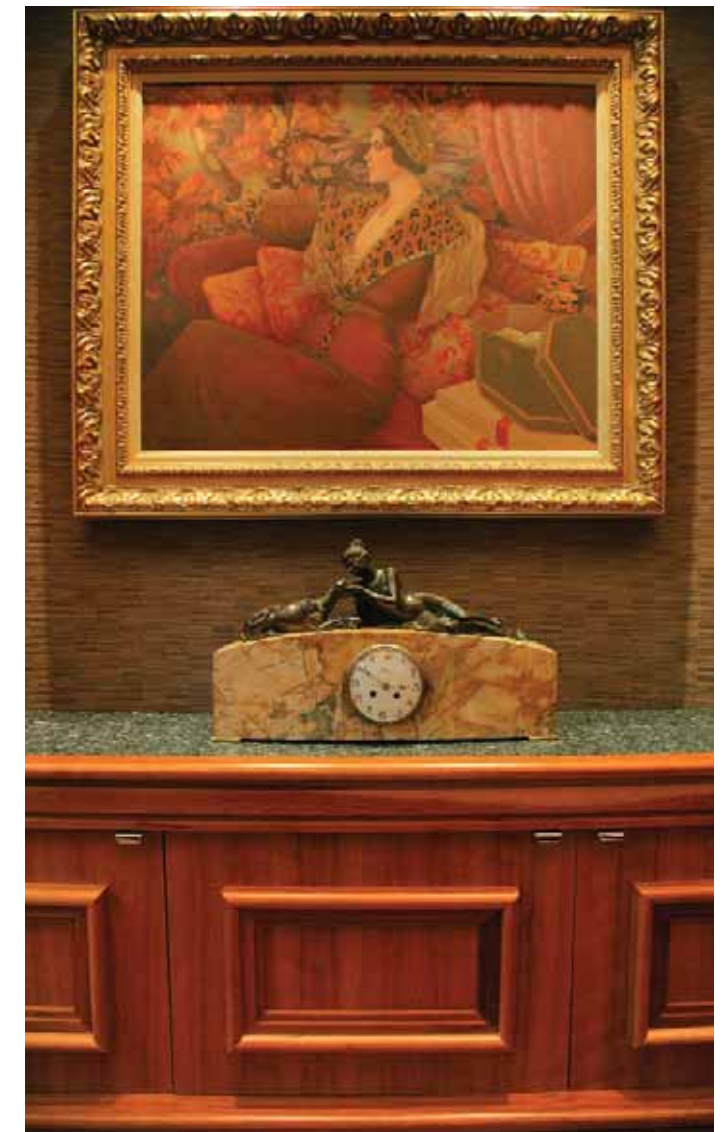
Builder: Crowell and Baker Construction Company, Rockville, Maryland

Interior Design: Marlene Weiss, Weiss Designs, Bethesda, Maryland

A dramatic Holly Hunt chandelier in the dining room (above) mimics candles resting on a steel base; Holly Hunt fabric upholsters the walls. The original living room opens up to the new library (opposite). The stone walls delineate the original exterior of the existing home. Ponte and Weiss adopted materials used in the original—copper, locally mined stone and pegged cherry floors—throughout the addition.







stimulated the senses, drawing on the influences of myth and history.

For more than 20 years Moore's design fit these homeowners until their circumstances changed—dramatically.

Five years ago the husband was taken suddenly ill with a rampant staph infection that left him immobile. When he, his wife, Ponte and interior designer Marlene Weiss of Weiss Designs conferred about doubling the size of the family home, the homeowner was confined to a wheelchair. His prospects for recovery were uncertain, and the plans had to accommodate his medical needs and include a gym in which he would receive intensive physical therapy.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: The new library/billiard room is a soaring, two-story space with a balcony. The homeowners acquired the painting of books on a trip to France. **THESE PAGES:** Cherry panels lend the room a clubby, masculine feeling (left). An arresting portrait by Jacqui Osborn of a woman in a leopard collar hangs in a custom niche near the billiard table (above).



An oil on wood by Bernard Scholl hangs over the billiard table (above). A wide, wheelchair-accessible door leads to the media/sitting room.

Ponte's challenge was to create a seamless addition to the classic home and make it comfortable for his clients. His goal was not to make it the home of someone with limited physical abilities, but to create a space that was universally designed for both the disabled and the able-bodied. He pointed out doors that are exceptionally wide, a generous bedroom that allows the turning radius of a power chair and a large shower without a threshold for both his client and an attendant. The addition is all on one floor. The children's bedrooms and the former master bedroom on the second floor are now reserved for guests.

The result is not a parabuilding, that abomination of "a house and an addition," but an improvement on Moore's design. A visitor would be challenged to define where the old house ends and the new space begins. Ponte and Weiss adopted materials used in the original—copper, locally mined stone and pegged cherry floors—throughout the addition. Crowell and Baker of Rockville, Maryland, constructed both the original house and the new wing, reviving the same attention to detail established in the first building. A few architectural elements were altered from Moore's design—a new front porch and entryway, for example—and other spaces were redesigned. Ponte designed a dramatic cove in the circular dining



The media/sitting room, which leads to the master bedroom, has an understated and soothing color palette. Louison Woodworks created the custom millwork in anigre (above).

room with a Holly Hunt chandelier that mimics candles resting on a steel base. (Hunt's chandeliers are such a hot commodity that one was featured in Aleksandr Petrovsky's über-chic apartment in one of the last episodes of "Sex in the City.")

The new space starts in a dramatic library/billiard room. "The library was originally three steps down, and when the addition was put on it had to be level with the original floor," says the husband. "We raised the floor and made a cathedral ceiling and left the original balcony overhead—taking out the old guest room." The result is a dramatic two-story room with a balcony. The focal point of the room is an Art Deco gas fireplace mantel constructed by stacking slices of marble. The Swaim sofa is flanked by two Holly Hunt lamps of human nudes, one male and one female. Conscious of the client's need for level surfaces, they had the custom-made Stark carpet countersunk into the wooden floor. The metal railing on the balcony was constructed by a company that inadvertently left it out in the rain, which resulted in an unexpected effect. "It developed a patina that we liked," said the husband, "so I told them to keep it that way." The cherry panels lend the room a clubby, masculine feeling; the windows did not come in cherry so the sills were faux-painted to match the walls.

A painting by Miguel Avanteneo dominates one wall of the master bedroom (right). Artist Stuart White painted an Art Deco motif on the elevator leading to the lower level. Marlene Weiss designed an upholstered wall with fabric from Old World Weavers in lieu of a headboard above the bed (opposite).

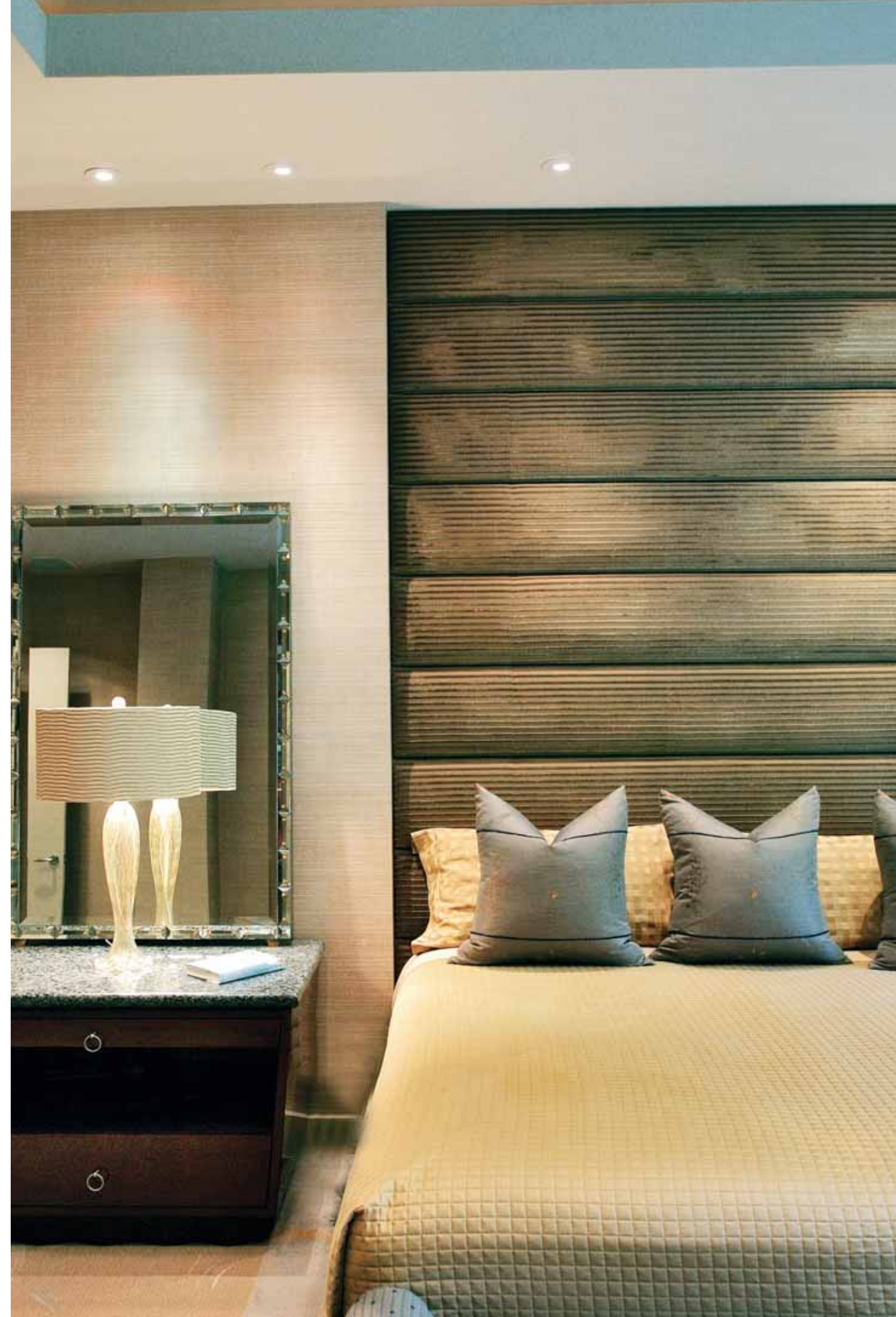
Art is a passion that this couple shares. They have purchased many paintings on their travels, including the large oil of books acquired in the south of France and hung to the right of the fireplace in the library. Several of their pieces are from Discovery Galleries, a Bethesda-based gallery with an international roster of artists, including the surrealist Rob Gonsalves, Tina Palmer, Robert Sarsony, Kurt Bittle and Joseph Michetti. Boots Harris of Discovery said that a reputable gallery can screen art for its clients. "I see more than 10,000 artists a year and choose between two and four. The art has to be wonderful, appealing and have great personality."

Paintings in the library and the master bedroom were acquired through Discovery, including an arresting portrait by Jacci Osborn of a woman in a coat with a leopard collar that is hung in a custom niche near the billiard table.

The library flows into a new media/sitting room and then a master bedroom. The color palette is understated and soothing, taking cues from the custom Edward Fields carpet with blue accents in the bedroom. "They wanted the palette to be very soft and serene," said Weiss. "It's an oasis. I had not used blue before, but after I installed this house, I used blue in my own house." The bedroom is an example of the compromise of the couple's tastes—he, more traditional and she, more contemporary. That compro-



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While the wife's new bathroom is a medley of light wood and glass (above), the husband's recreates the clubby atmosphere of the library (opposite).

mise diverges in their respective bathrooms where his recreates the clubby atmosphere of the library and hers is a medley of light wood and glass.

Outside of the master bedroom is an elevator to the lower level. In that small space Weiss and her clients created an homage to Art Deco. The elevator doors were faux-painted by Stuart White. A Deco chandelier illuminates the space. Nearby in the master bedroom is a nude by Miguel Avanteneo, also represented by Discovery.

The elevator leads to a large, informal family room with a wrap-around sectional sofa and a fully equipped pilates gym. "We had a little gym in the basement, but this is more professional," noted the husband. "The equipment is embellished from those that would be in a regular gym and pilates has now become popular for rehabbing people with certain disabilities."

It has been five years since the homeowner's illness and his recovery is remarkable; he is walking with the assistance of a cane. And both he and his wife are enjoying the new spaces in their revamped home filled with the art they love.

"I think the house got more serious (with the addition)," he said. "The house grew up. The kids grew up and the house grew up." ❖

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RESOURCES

DINING ROOM

Carpet: Stark Carpet, Washington, DC. **Wall Covering:** Custom Furniture & Wall, Rockville, MD. **Chairs:** Artistic Frame, New York, NY.

Chandelier & Fabrics: Holly Hunt, Washington, DC.

LIBRARY/BILLIARD ROOM

Carpet: Stark Carpet, Washington, DC. **Wall Covering:** Stark and Old World Weavers, Washington, DC. **Millwork:** Louison Woodworks, Sterling, VA. **Sofa & Chair:** Swaim, Washington, DC. **Lighting:** Boyd Lighting Company, San Francisco, CA.

Cocktail Table: Holly Hunt, Washington, DC. **Accent Table:** Dakota Jackson, Inc., through Holly Hunt, Washington, DC. **Chairs & Table Lamps:** Holly Hunt, Washington, DC. **Bar Stools:** Swaim, Washington, DC. **Draperies:** Carol Studios Fairfax, VA. **Art:** Female portrait

by Jacqui Osborn and city scene by Bernard Scholl, both through Discovery Galleries, Bethesda, MD.

Chandelier & Fabrics: Holly Hunt, Washington, DC.

Chandelier: Donghia, Washington, DC. **Master Bedroom**

Carpet: Stark Carpet, Washington, DC. **Wall Covering:** Custom Furniture & Wall, Rockville, MD. **Chairs:** Artistic Frame, New York, NY.

MEDIA/SITTING ROOM

Carpet: Edward Fields, New York, NY. **Walls:** Custom Walls. **Draperies:** Carol Studios Fairfax, VA. **Drapery Fabric & Sofa Fabric:** Donghia, Washington, DC. **Sofa:** Swaim, Washington, DC. **Chairs:** Pugrant, Washington, DC. **Ottoman:** D'Cota Casa Deco, Dania, FL. **Wall Unit:** Louison Woodworks, Sterling, VA.

Chandelier & Fabrics: Holly Hunt, Washington, DC.

Chandelier: Donghia, Washington, DC.

ELEVATOR

Door Trompe L'oeil: Stuart White, Annapolis, MD. **Chandelier:** Donghia, Washington, DC.

MASTER BEDROOM

Wall Unit & End Table: D'Cota Casa Deco, Dania, FL. **Bed:** Custom design. **Bed Fabric & Wall Covering:** Stark and Old World

Weavers, Washington, DC. **Custom Furniture & Wall Upholstery Fabric:** Old World Weavers, Washington, DC. **Lamps & Mirrors:** Donghia, Washington, DC. **Painting:** Miguel Avanteneo, through Discovery Galleries, Bethesda, MD.

HER BATH

Carpet: Edward Fields, New York, NY. **Millwork:** Louison Woodworks, Sterling, VA. **Wall Covering:** Donghia, Washington, DC.

HIS BATH

Carpet: Edward Fields, New York, NY. **Millwork:** Clutter Control, Dania, FL. **Wall Covering:** Clarence House, Washington, DC.

BASEMENT

Walls: Innovation. **Carpet:** Stark Carpet, Washington, DC. **Painting:** Lee Connerat Cohan, through Discovery Galleries, Bethesda, MD.



The elevator leads to the lower level, which has a home theater. An oil on canvas by Lee Connerat Cohan hangs above the sectional seating (above). Ponte designed a spacious gym that has played a major role in his client's rehabilitation (right). He also restored architect Charles Moore's original outdoor pavilion next to the property's tennis court (opposite).

