



Pool House

Antiques, art and a lap pool mix with contemporary details in a passive-solar home

by Stephen Lasar



other specific request from Smith—in fact, one of his reasons for working with us—was that Larry Neufeld build at least one of his signature stone fireplaces.

From plan to house—I find it easiest to clarify the program by beginning the design process with floor plans. As I work out the plan with my client, the arrangement of rooms suggests volume and flow. Next, I design the massing and elevations, working from the inside out. Designing this way creates interesting facades that pique a viewer's curiosity about what is inside.

Smith and I agreed that the house should have four levels, each more private than the one below, from the pool on the lowest level to the study on the top floor (drawings, below and facing page). The slope allowed me to bury the house in the hill. I aimed the major elevations of the house to the south to get full benefit of the sun. One elevation faces southeast and the other is angled 45° to face southwest. This turning forms the angles that appear inside the house, and it makes the house seem as if it is following the sun.

The southwest entry facade is massive and nearly symmetrical, presenting an almost traditional face to the south and the long, curved drive (photo p. 76). But a steeply sloping roof takes over the southeast facade, making most of its windows into skylights. As the hill rises around the house, terraces and retaining walls step up with it, allowing access to the outside from almost every interior level. On the north

As shown in the photo at left, a fieldstone fireplace dominates the living room and defines the edge of the dining room, to the left, and the library, behind it on the right. Flagstone finishes off the cabinet top along the wall at the right. Custom registers, which allow heat to flow from convection units behind the cabinets, fit into the kickspace of the cabinets and between the flagstone tops and window sills along the living-room walls (level-two plan, below). A small library is several feet below the level of the living room (photo facing page). Warm red paneling contrasts with the light, smooth walls of the rest of the house. Belgian block cobblestone edges the brick fireplace.



0 4 8 12
Scale in feet



and west sides of the house, the one- and two-story walls have few windows and look hunched against the northwest winds (photo p. 77).

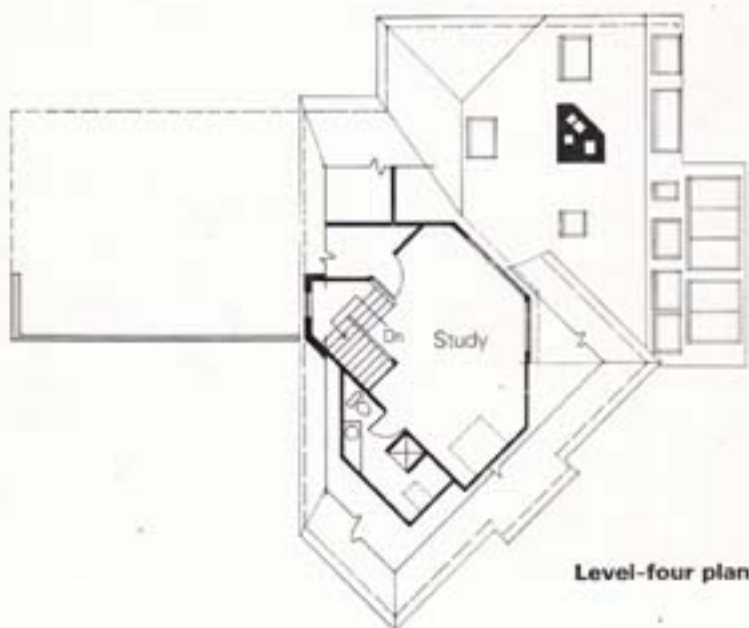
Though the massing of the Smith house isn't traditional, its shingled roof and sidewalls are. Formal granite steps along a curved, off-center stone retaining wall lead to the front door. Just inside, the traditional foyer is replaced by a glass walkway that spans the lap pool below.

Like the exterior, the interior is a mix of contemporary and traditional detail, and spaces are at once flowing and well defined. Sun angles influenced several of the rooms. A central switch-back stair connects the four levels of the house, and a few steps link the library with the living room and the pool below. Near the front door, visitors are funneled from the glassed bridge through a slightly angled hall into the living room, where a fieldstone fireplace anchors the soaring space (photo facing page).

The circulation flows from space to space in overlapping spirals. Most rooms are entered from a corner, or at least at a diagonal, so that you can't get a head-on look into a room or take in the view until you get there (although a piece of the view may intrigue you from a distance). You find your bearings in this house from the many views, both controlled and panoramic, of the surrounding hills and fields.

There's an unexpected contrast of color, mood and size between the bright contemporary living room and the tiny library around the corner, with its rich, red paneling (photo right). Then, if you open the little door in the corner of the library and go down a few steps, first narrow, then broadening, you come to the lap pool, a dark blue-green rectangle in a tall, white room with lots of glass (photo p. 81). Even the air is different there.

The pool room—The lap pool is the thermal and formal focus of the house. I cut away part of the second level so that you can see it from the entrance bridge before you actually get to it from the library or the central stair, and also to allow more surface area for the transfer of heat from the pool to the rest of the house. The sides and floor of the





Location: Litchfield County, Conn.
Owners: Christopher and Marlene
Designers: Stephen Lasar, architect
Wittmann, project manager, Stephen