

interiors[®]

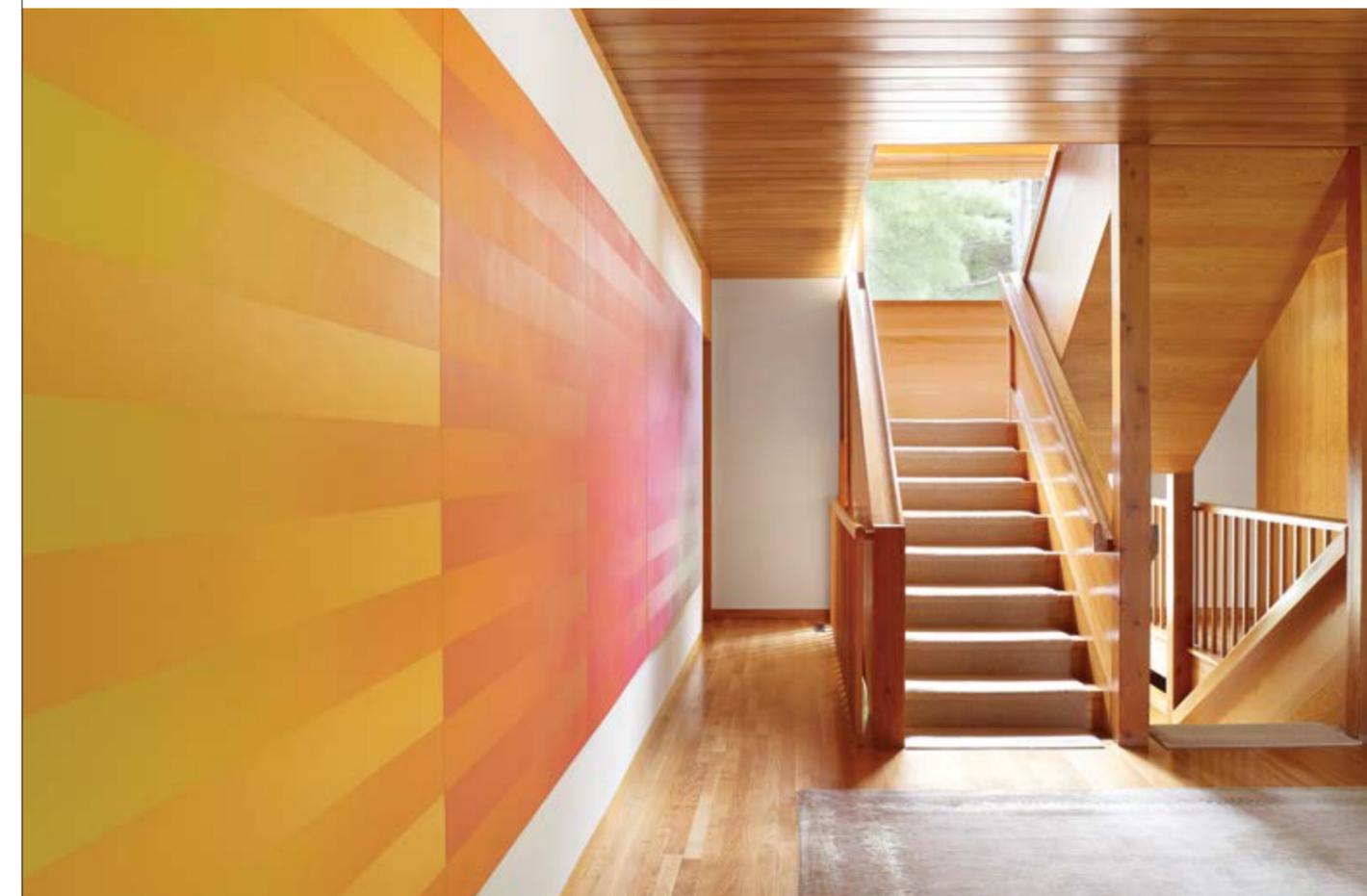


ART IN DESIGN



LOUIS KAHN
LIVING HISTORY

TEXT: ERIKA HEET PHOTOGRAPHY: PIETER ESTERSOHN



Louis Kahn certainly did not need the commission. But when Steven and Toby Korman approached him in the early 1970s to design a house for their family on four verdant acres in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania, he accepted the job, calling this rare residential project “healing.” The resulting house, reminiscent of his revered public commissions but made from cypress, Douglas fir, white oak, pine, glass and brick, was completed in 1973. The eldest of the Korman children, Larry, moved into the house in 1998 with his wife, Korin, and their children. After living with many of the original furnishings from the 1970s for years, the Kormans reached out to New York designer Jennifer Post to update the interiors.

“When they called me, I asked what kind of house it was, and when they told me, my mouth just dropped open,” Post says. But Post, an accomplished designer who has taken on important design projects for decades, was not rattled. “I knew exactly what I wanted to do for the house,” she says. “I wanted to respect Louis Kahn and the fact that he used all natural materials.” She introduced a rich but subtle palette “to respect the wood—it was very easy to choose colors that blended well with the house.” She also played off of the pinks and yellows in the acrylic painting in the entrance hall, done by abstract artist Elaine Kurtz when the house was originally finished.



Post's use of color is especially effective in the double-height wood-and-glass great room, which is anchored by a modern brick fireplace, one of several in the house whose chimneys stand as modern nods to the dominance of the material in the area vernacular. Post brought in a custom sofa and a pair of chairs from Minotti, found at ddc in New York, the chairs covered in a soft green Edelman Leather that relates to the greenery just outside. A Walter Knoll settee is joined by a coffee table Post customized with J. Robert Scott. "We created a black and white veneer that reminds me of a tailored pinstripe suit," Post says. "I nicknamed it the suit veneer." Built-in niches surrounding the bar hold sculptures by artists including Nico Yektai, and underfoot, a Doris Leslie Blau silk rug "glistens with light," says Post.

The Kormans' requests for the redesign aligned well with the designer's inclinations. "She wanted the house to be soft and warm, and he wanted there to be some brown tones," Post says. "They wanted it to be smart, handsome and classic." In addition, the designer would need to work around the important artworks that were already there. One such example is in the master bedroom, where Post brought in a Molteni bed upholstered in a suede with the faintest hint of yellow, which ties into the color in the room's presiding artwork, a portrait of Grace Kelly by Andy Warhol. "The yellows also play well with the brick," Post says.

One piece that has lived at the house since it was commissioned in the 1970s seems to encapsulate the joyful feeling of the place. The three-piece outdoor sculpture *Party Animals* by Robin Fredenthal, a student of Kahn's, has greeted visitors upon arrival since it was installed in the 1970s. "The Korman family has always entertained, and Louis Kahn was always at the house," Post says. The Kormans have carried on that tradition. "They love the house—they entertain constantly." ■ Jennifer Post, jenniferpostdesign.com; Kahn Korman House, kahnkormanhouse.com