

ARCHITECTURE

An elegant glass and metal home in Sagaponack designed by Barnes Coy Architects shows how warm and inviting modern architecture can be. BY DONNA BULSECO



Each angle of the house reveals another surprise: The windows on the lower level peek out below the smooth white stucco of the main façade.

Artists make us look at simple shapes in brand-new ways. In his “Torqued Ellipses,” for example, Richard Serra made monumental oval ellipses in weatherproof steel that seem less like sculpture and more like mountains. We stand in front of them and admire the majestic curves and graceful lines that feel unfettered and true. In a similar manner, architects—particularly those with a minimalist-modernist bent like Robert Barnes and Christopher Coy—reset our eyes to appreciate the purity of a strong linear silhouette. At least, that’s the impression conveyed in the flawless glass-and-metal home set within 10 gloriously lush acres in Sagaponack that Barnes Coy Architects did for music executive Michael Koch and his family. “A box,” says one of them, when asked to describe the house in a sentence; the other amends that to “an elegant box,” and everyone applauds the more appropriate description.

“There is a simplicity to the house that we bring to our projects,” says Barnes. “We like to reduce things, rather than having straight edges to them. We call it a Cartesian approach and that’s very clear here.” Essentially, they create a dialogue between the site and the structure, each



What makes this outdoor spot so restful is the waterfall pooling into the Jacuzzi below. On the lower level, there’s also spa, a gym, and media room, where the family gathers to watch movies.

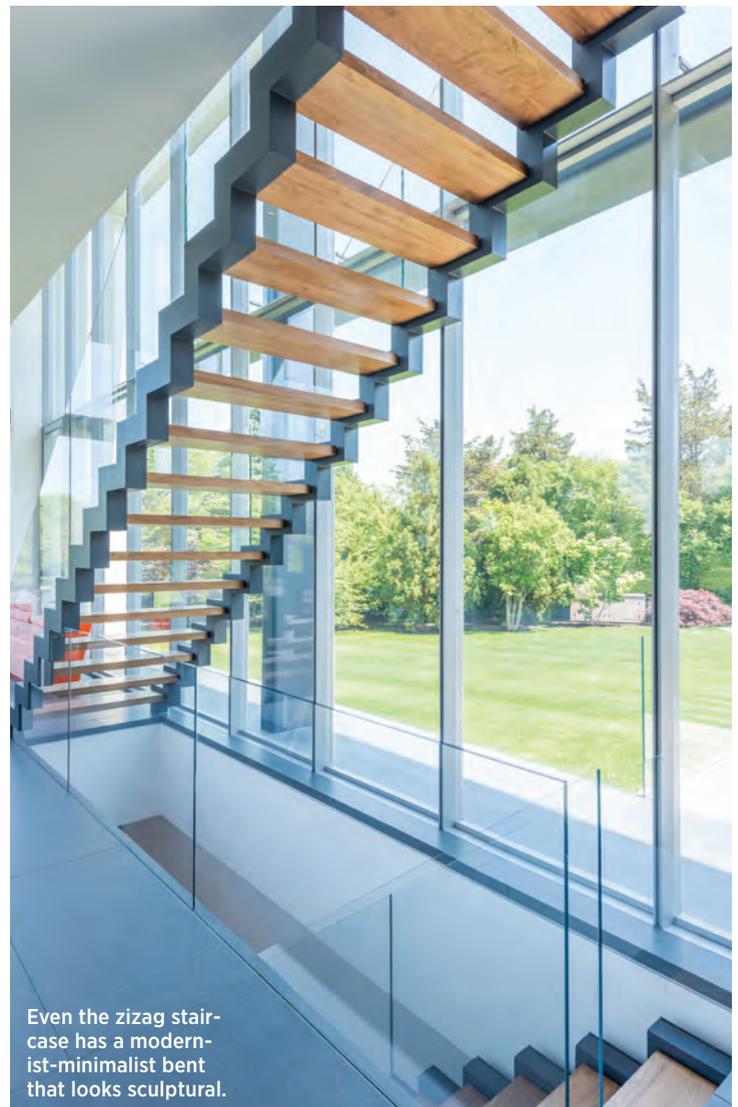
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There's nothing stark about the minimalist furnishings the owner chose for the living-dining area. Instead, a sophisticated balance of textures and neutral hues creates a comfortably chic look.

one being given equal measure so they are in exquisite harmony. "No extraneous decoration and an honest use of materials," says Coy, ticking off the keys to this 5,600-square-foot, two-story home that includes a guesthouse, a lower "wellness" level with a gym, sauna, steam room and plunge pool. While modernist designs can sometimes appear severe and cold, even unwelcoming, both the white facade and light-filled interiors feel open, airy and inviting. The sound of water contributes to the calming environment: A pristine black granite lap pool waterfalls into a whirlpool/Jacuzzi in the sunken terrace below.

What makes the house unique is the luxury of privacy. A curvy cement driveway leads up to the structure; 7 acres



Even the zigzag staircase has a modernist-minimalist bent that looks sculptural.



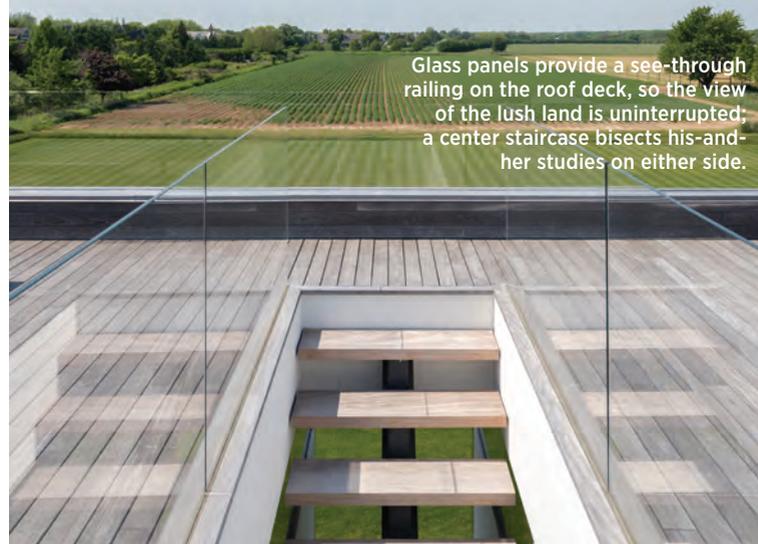
Pops of color show up on the second floor landing and below. Orange strikes a bright contrast against windows looking out on verdant foliage.

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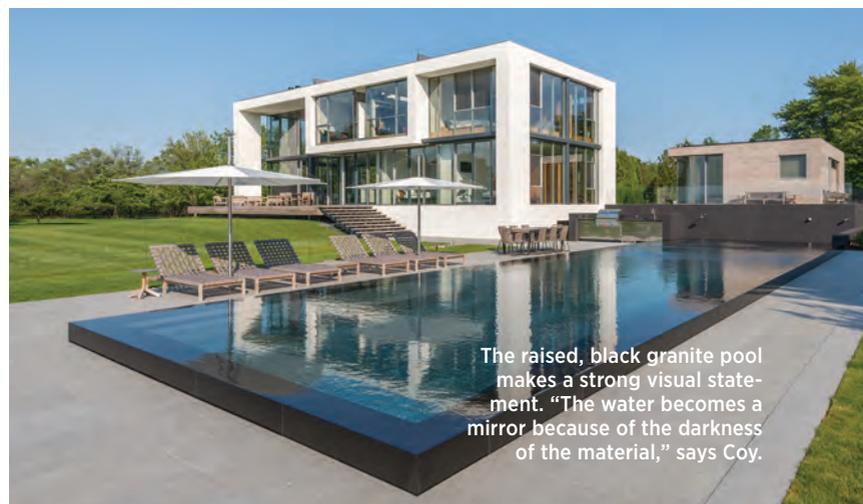
of agricultural reserve are leased to local farmers to the north, and there's a private pond to the east. "The fact that it's in a totally private area enabled us to make it entirely of glass," says Coy. On the second floor, Koch and his wife have his-and-hers studies, bisected by a staircase that leads up to a glass-railed roof deck, all of which look out onto the green lawn, and in the distance, a summer crop of corn or potatoes. "Occasionally, you'll see a farmer on his tractor; it's kind of cool," says Koch. "You can look in every direction forever."

Other exterior materials include metal, plantation-grown Burmese teak and smooth white stucco twice-coated with acrylic to prevent leaks. "Growing up in the '70s and '80s as I did, you notice how a lot of modern houses then were poorly built with the wrong materials and didn't look good," says Barnes. "That gave modernism in residential architecture a bad name. So we always research materials that do well in waterfront microclimates. The mix of moisture and salt is like a laboratory of destruction."

The project took around two-and-a-half years to complete, with architect Chris Caruso traveling with Koch to Milan to shop sources like Vitra for the sleek furnishings. Both Barnes and Coy enjoyed working with the owner, who has a vast library of architecture books and is as much a perfectionist as they both are. "He speaks our language to an incredible degree, so it's always fun to interact with him," says Barnes. "He's got a great eye and he knows exactly what we're trying to do." But there was one thing on his wish list that made the architects shiver: install an ice-cold plunge pool near the sauna, so he could do his own polar bear challenge whenever he desired. At 45 degrees, it's the one "cold" part of this modernist masterpiece. 🌿



Glass panels provide a see-through railing on the roof deck, so the view of the lush land is uninterrupted; a center staircase bisects his-and-hers studies on either side.



The raised, black granite pool makes a strong visual statement. "The water becomes a mirror because of the darkness of the material," says Coy.



A view of the Barnes Coy Architects "glass house" in Sagaponack with its connecting guest house as seen from the serpentine driveway approach.