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The Lightness of Being Contemporary

The Lexington lakeside home of Carl Meyers appears for all the world to be a conventional brick dwelling. But its interior surprises with stem-to-stern contemporary design; gleaming white oak flooring; custom bird's-eye maple furniture and cabinetry; sun-seeking windows that include a bathroom porthole; and impressive collections of china, glassware, sculpture and paintings.

Text by Katherine Tandy Brown.



Left: Beneath an etched Venetian mirror in the foyer, a conical, turquoise-hued art glass bowl with a thin pink lip sits atop an Italian bowfront chest. Eyeing the two-drawer piece one day at Heritage Antique Galleries, Meyers realized he "couldn't live without it" and made a down payment. Upon taking the drawers out, designer Ken Lloyd discovered the piece was signed and dated in the late 1700s, making it far more valuable than its price had reflected. Right: Predominantly light coral, a 1920's- to 1930's-era Murano glass chandelier bought from a New York antique dealer commands center stage before three stained glass windows in a vaulted foyer. "Because it hangs so high, finding anyone who'd hang it for me was a fiasco," Meyers explains. "So I convinced my insurance company to insure it for a day. My carpenter brought a lot of helpers, put a baffle all the way up to the ceiling, and hung it for me. I delight in all the fabulous colors!" A scrunched ruche cover hides its hookup wires. Facing page: Originally a dining room, the formal living room is the largest space in the 4,500-square-foot home. Jet-black lamps lighting two brown paper bas-reliefs by noted Lexington artist John Tuska top bird's eye maple stands custom built by John Leininger. Colors in a Jane Mueller painting reflect that bright maple and the bright white oak flooring throughout the house. Heavy drapes of the same oat straw hue as the Baker couch hang from formidable, scepter-like curtain rods above a window and French doors leading out to a diminutive slate patio.



Round as a harvest moon, a head of Zeus smiles a bronze greeting from atop a mossy brick wall. At first glance, this replica of the Greek god of the heavens looks to be guarding a 4,500-square-foot, red brick, Eastwood Drive traditional home that conforms to the affluent Lexington neighborhood's stringent building code.

Nestled in groundcover beside a solid cherry front door, a Dennis Whitcopf limestone-and-steel sculpture entitled "Greek Bride" hints at the lakeside abode's surprise interior with its modern makeup and ample artwork.

Known for her commercial creations, Lexington architect Sara Tate has designed very few private homes. Local merchant Carl Meyers feels lucky to have found this one nearly three years ago, when he moved from a small farm on Walnut Hill Pike. It's his first contemporary house and shines inside nearly as brightly as that big ole moon.

"I adore the space and the lightness of this place," he explains. "It's built on a T pattern and, as a result, there

are windows and light absolutely everywhere." Scads of recessed lighting and the occasional fat wall globe contribute to the ethereal effect.

In the foyer, outside light streams in through a quartet of square lintel windows and three stained glass windows. All illuminate a huge, busy painting, "The Mechanical Opera," by Lexington native Jay Bolotin; an exquisite, predominantly pink glass 1920s Venetian chandelier; four Ming Dynasty pieces (including a dog on either side of the front door); and an etched Venetian mirror from Zee Faulkner's Antiques.

Beneath it is a "very old" bowfront Italian chest Meyers discovered at Heritage Antique Galleries. Just to the left, the formal living room fills the largest space in the house, where wide windows admit sunshine through nearly every wall. Interior decorator Ken Lloyd designed a conversation grouping around a "converted" blonde burl wood cocktail table. "I couldn't find one the right height," Meyers chuckles, "so I personally cut the legs off a dressing table."

The widest of three couches, a Baker piece covered with oat straw-hued Chanel fabric, flaunts a needlepoint floral motif skirt that once graced a pair of drapes. Two overstuffed side chairs in a coffee, beige, and orange Picasso pattern stand before a pair of framed, deep brown paper bas-reliefs by noted Lexington artist and family friend, John Tuska. Each depicts the human form in a number of action poses in a style that resembles that of a sculpture he created for the façade of the University of Kentucky's (UK's) Fine Arts Building in 1999, just prior to his death. Meyers owns three original pieces made as models for the UK project.

"I used to go to the University on Saturdays and throw pots with Tuska when I was eight or nine years old," says Carl, smiling at the memory.

A Jane Mueller oil fills a facing wall with spirited oranges and rich browns between a light-loving arched window and French doors leading out to a triangular patio of thin slate squares. In the foreground, a view of nearby woods provides a backdrop for another



er stone and steel Whitcopf sculpture of massive proportions that dominates the intimate outdoor space.

Working in a different medium, Lexington cabinetmaker John Leininger crafted a raft of bird's-eye maple built-ins for the house, which, due to a laundry room flood several years before Meyers took ownership, had been stripped virtually bare. All of the floors were replaced with sparkling white oak. Carl had the kitchen redone with countertops of marble granite in tones of speckled browns, tans, and grays, complemented by Leininger's under-counter storage and windowed kitchen cabinets.

"I wanted all neutrals in this house," Meyers says. "They really show off my art."

Several more paintings—by Arturo Sandoval and Georgia Henkel—line a hall leading to an outside brick patio made artsy with a large white fiberglass piece by Tuska, a spiky Louis Bickett sculpture, and a heavy Santa Fe temple bell.

More Southwestern influence tops a roomy Art Deco-style entertainment center (Leininger's Bird's-eye maple). Several Hopi pots painted in earth tones are representative of Meyers's considerable Native American arts collection that's scattered throughout.

Crowning a gorgeous antique three-piece chest in the upstairs den, three old ceremonial masks gaze across a pillowed couch—lively with a rich gray "Matisse cutout" pattern—at two ink drawings of battle scenes sketched by American Indian chiefs and at a triad of original equine pen and inks by eminent sporting artist Alfred Munnings.

Serving as a cocktail table set before the couch, a vintage pale-umber leather trunk teams with a checkerboard jute rug and creamy walls to create an elegantly casual feel. Venetian blinds invite in light through low-set half-windows, one overlooking a creek.

"When I bought this house, I didn't



Left: Cozy when the north winds blow, the “winter den” sports black-and-wheat plaid drapes made to match the lively polka-dot fabric on a couch and two chairs that surround a slate-colored marble fireplace. On the mantel, black, museum-quality Santa Clara pottery pieces signed by Maria overlook an unusual table made by Carl’s mother, Sydelle, when she and his dad, Marvin, were newlyweds in the ’40s. “They didn’t have a lot of money,” Carl says, “so she painted the base from an old wood-burning stove and cut a travertine piece for the top.” Below: Part of Meyers’s collection of Native American artifacts, three ceremonial masks top a handsome, “old” three-piece chest in the upstairs den. Across the room hang scenes sketched by old Indian chiefs of battles waged “while trying to save their land.” Three unsigned but authenticated pen-and-ink drawings of a dying steeplechase horse by British sporting master Alfred Munnings were purchased in England by Marvin Meyers, Carl’s father. Designer Lloyd found the charcoal gray “Matisse-print” couch fabric. Venetian blinds light the room from windows on three sides.



like where the creek went,” Meyers explains. “So I fooled with Mother Nature and moved it. Honey, *never* try to move a creek! After three tries, lots of money and lots of stone, it now works.”

The water gurgles through the quiet backyard, where groups of tables and chairs combine seasonally with several in the den and dining room to accommodate 20 to 30 guests.

A handsome dining room sideboard/china cabinet combination is another Leininger creation. Peeking from its windows are two of Meyers’s collections—both inherited from his grandmother, Gertrude “Toots” Meyers—of delicate Rosenthal china and 1920s-era

luminous cobalt Baccarat glassware. “The only person who has a larger collection of Baccarat than I do,” laughs Carl, “is Donald Trump!”

For dinner parties, china and crystal combine with two Tiffany silver “Deco ’50s” candelabra, gifts from Carl’s mother, Sydelle, on a Philippe Starck Art Deco table. Lloyd added the accompanying minimalist chairs padded with wheat-colored fabric and standing on dark wooden legs. Under it all lies a rug in shades of crimson and orange that Sydelle, one of Lloyd’s first Lexington clients, purchased when he opened his business in 1964. “My decorators, Ken (Lloyd) and Matt Carter, just did a

marvelous job,” says Meyers. “I’m a big believer in having clean lines.”

The adjoining den reflects that philosophy, with four black leather chairs on slim silver legs at a round glass Biedermeier table; several Tiffany Art Nouveau vases on a baby grand tucked in a corner; and a cushy brown, tan, and white-striped corner couch.

Similar hues define the master bedroom, with its two khaki 1950s “swirly, Las Vegas bar-type” chairs, except for the wall treatment, a Carter selection of wavy-patterned, vibrant orange-ochre wallpaper handmade in France. The room is decorated around an Oushak rug in tans and light corals. A one-of-

a-kind Baker Furniture bed of chocolate wood and padded leather (found in High Point, North Carolina, by Lenabelle Harkins) peeks at the lake.

A wide oil collage above the bed and artwork by Tuska and local artist Margery Guyon, whom Meyers now represents, round out the room's gallery.

A few drawings by the homeowner, who holds an art degree from Boston University, hang in the master bath, a multi-mirrored room lit by skylights and low, opaque windows, with a tumbled marble tub, heated floor, and steam shower. An Art Deco Bird's-eye maple washstand modeled after a yacht sink design crafted by Leininger supports a light green glass bowl as its sink.

A spacious dressing room sports a blonde wood Art Deco bar with a fold up mirror on top and glass shelves within, a round-cornered rectangular

Plexiglas table on another Oushak rug, and reams of closets.

"The dressing room is one of the main reasons I bought this house," says Carl, whose Chevy Chase-based shop sells upscale men's and ladies' sportswear and custom riding apparel, carrying on a Lexington family tradition his grandfather began in 1920. "In my business, I have a ton of clothes. Actually, all the bedrooms are full too."

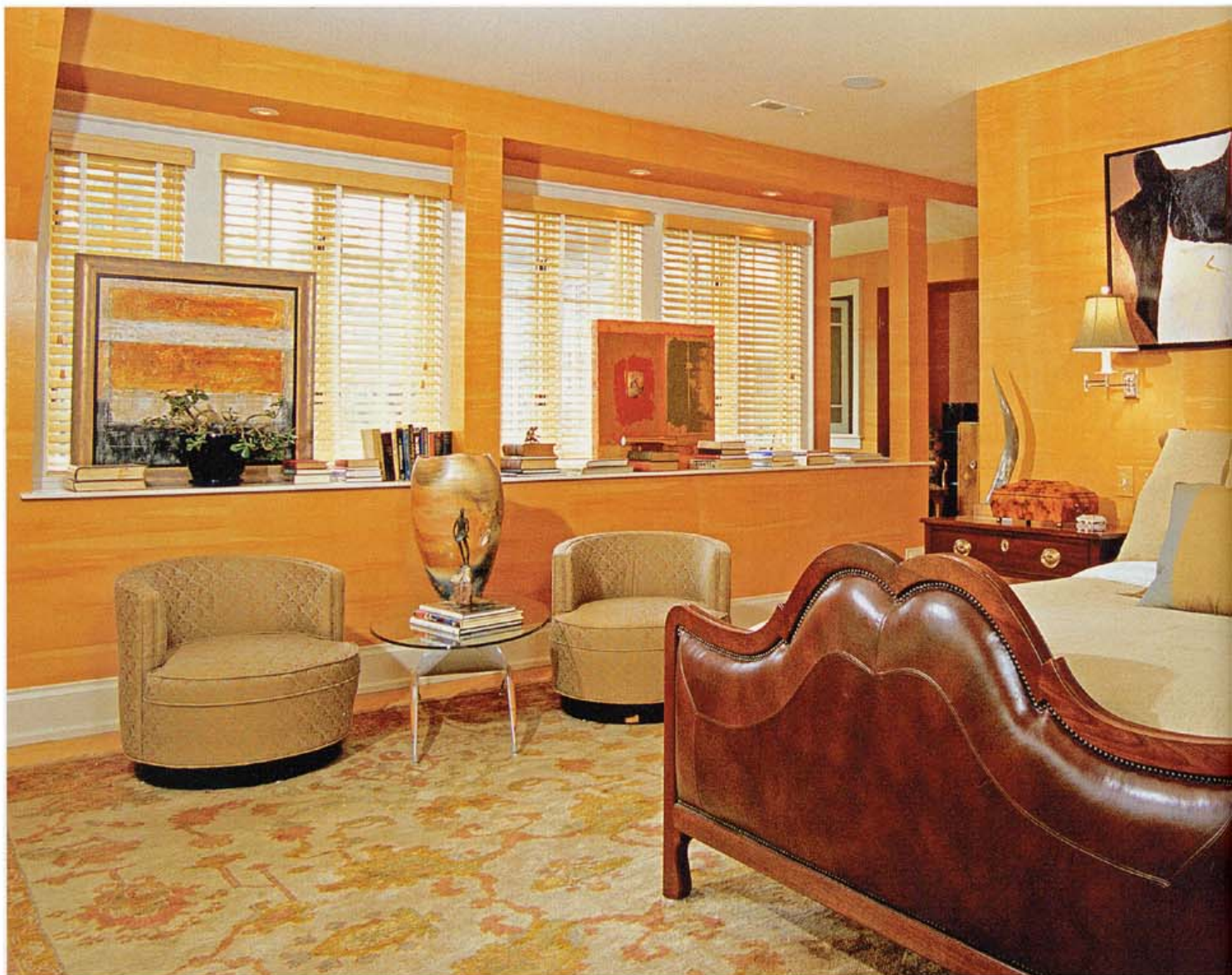
A feminine and a masculine bedroom accommodate guests at the end of a lemony hallway dotted with family photos, paintings, and sculpture, including one of Louis Bickett's "Pillow" series. All frills and frou-frou, the former bedroom is homey with a beautiful woven cane bed from Decoratifs; a fat, smiling Buddha lamp; and two Dutch ocean-themed paintings from Heritage Galleries. Its outside walls are rife with



Above: Marble granite counters in mottled browns, tans, and grays top bird's-eye maple cabinets custom designed by John Leininger. Tucked into their shelves is a collection of metal toys that include German-made train cars from a boyhood set owned by Carl's father. Admitting filtered sunlight, the room's unlined curtains—the idea of designer Ken Lloyd—are cotton with hand-appliquéd loops. "It gives an open feeling yet affords privacy," says Meyers. "They have personality. I wanted a kind of '50's look but wasn't quite ready for shag carpet. So I did it on my windows!" Right: Illuminated by near-floor-to-ceiling windows, the dining room is a virtual "designer central," with a contemporary table by award-winning expressionist Philippe Starck and a bird's-eye maple sideboard/china cabinet created by Lexington cabinetmaker John Leininger. With a mirror that adds light by reflecting one wall of windows, the cabinet contains two collections left to Meyers by his grandmother. His rich cobalt crystal was made by Baccarat, the French company created in 1765 by royal decree of King Louis XV. Place settings of delicate Rosenthal china complement the crystal.







clear and clear blue-checked windows. Another window just above the floor consists of floral stained glass and swings in from the guest bath. A matching window swings from the bathroom into the masculine bedroom. "These windows were designed so that children could play in secret passages," Meyers explains, "or so that adults could sneak through the bath from one bedroom to the other."

A half-moon window and two hanging globe lights in the guest bath illuminate two Janet Mueller paintings, a white furry rug, and a freestanding black-and-white Kohler cylindrical sink and washstand.

Next door, the man's bedroom is modernistic, with its floor-level bed, white leather chair, and silver-padded side table. The room also features a

Plexiglas table scattered with shells and a jungle rendition by equine artist Jessie Pettite. From Heike Pickett Gallery, a burgundy pyramid springs open to reveal a hooded cobra, a mechanical sculpture by Steve Armstrong.

Paintings by Linda Hoff and Henry Faulkner line a staircase winding to the ground floor, where slate-toned marble rims a fireplace warming the winter den. Black-on-black museum-quality Santa Clara pots grace its mantel, and above the metal hangs an unusual Tuska, titled "Eve." In it, a woman's head and breasts emerge from a black, cast paper relief.

Next to, and higher than, the fireplace is a stunning wooden chest—its Persian designs hand-painted in England—that Meyers purchased in Santa Fe. And to add a contemporary

touch, Lloyd chose black-and-white plaid drapes to complement a three-cushioned couch and two overstuffed armchairs covered in a wheat-and-black-polka-dot print.

So Zeus smiles like a Cheshire cat, for he knows that under this home's conventional exterior lies a contemporary gem. **K**

House Credits:

Architect: Sarah House Tate, Tate Hill Jacobs Architects Inc.

Interior Designer: Ken Lloyd

Bedroom Wall Treatment: Matthew Carter

Bird's-eye Maple Kitchen and Dining Room Cabinets, Bathroom Washstand, Entertainment Center, and Lamp Stands: Leininger Cabinetry and Woodworking



Facing page: In his previous home, Meyers had three Turkish-made Oushak rugs. To avoid replacing them, he had the bedroom designed around one of the rugs, a gorgeous one in muted tones of tans and corals. "I have a fondness for the '50's look," he says, adding, "These two 'swirly' chairs look as though they were in a Las Vegas bar at one time." Handmade in France, the wallpaper is a vibrant, unusual orange-ochre chosen by designer Matthew Carter. One bank of windows overlooks a neighborhood lake, where Carl sometimes fishes or canoes, while another overlooks a brick patio with sculpture by John Tuska and Louis Bickett. Top left: A dressing room just off the master bedroom boasts wall-to-wall closets. In the center of an Oushak rug, a wide Plexiglas table hints at '50s style. From the dressing room, a window overlooks the foyer, its exquisite Murano glass chandelier and an intricate painting by Lexington-born artist Jay Bolotin. "Even this inside window brings in light. Everything [Sara Tate, the home's architect] did was all about light," says Myers. Top right: Safer than ordinary shiny, slick marble, the tumbled marble floor in the master bath is heated, making a rug unnecessary. Adding an Art Deco feel to rounded corners on a wall and on a mirror reflecting the tub is a washstand designed by John Leininger. Meyers borrowed the idea for the bird's eye maple piece from a photo he found in a yachting magazine. Above left: Between the upstairs "feminine" and "masculine" bedrooms, a guest bathroom is rendered sunny by a large wall mirror that reflects two globe lights over a freestanding Kohler washstand. A floor-level, floral stained glass window is one of two that swing out from the bathroom into each bedroom. Leaves and branches visible through a broad, half-moon window lend the illusion of being in a tree house. A hand towel states the houseguest policy: "Do not mistake endurance for hospitality." "My guests are welcomed to two nights," says Meyers. "Then I'll pay for a hotel for them." Just outside the bath, a long hallway serves as a gallery of family photos and paintings, all well-lit by wall-mounted half-globe lights and three arched, skylight-like windows. Above right: Spread in shades of rust, pink, denim, and white on a powder blue background, the "first good rug" Meyers ever purchased teams with a sneak-through stained glass window that leads into the bathroom next door (and subsequently into the women's guest bedroom) to add a bit of whimsy. The simple, clean lines of the twin beds and bedside tables lend the room a ultra-contemporary feel.