







# no place like home

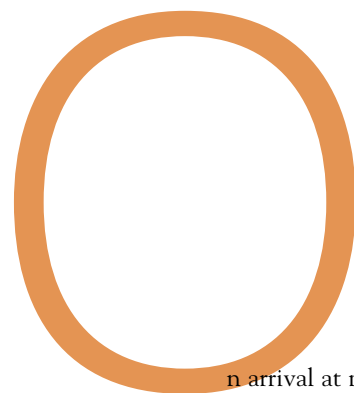
*Meet this traveling twosome whose house is a world away*

BY ELIZABETH McCONNEL | PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE FREIHON | STYLED BY ROBIN CURNAN





The Arts & Crafts style house had the subtle elegance the owners sought. Large well-placed windows allow light to bathe the main staircase and other chosen spots.



On arrival at my destination—a grand, cedar-shingled house nestled in a forest of trees—the first thing I notice is that the main door has been left wide open for me. At once intrigued and a little touched, I knock on the door just in case I am mistaking the gesture. “Come on in,” hollers a voice, and soon I am face to face with Jewels Rossellini—sun-streaked hair spilling in corkscrew curls around her shoulders, sporting a tiny silver nose ring and bright blue eyes that smile when she does. She introduces me to Duncan Coker, whose longish hair is reminiscent of a California surfer, and baby Delia, a golden combination of the two, tottering around the kitchen. The couple leads me out back to a woven sofa situated just above a lagoon-like pool, shaped as if a giant raindrop had fallen to create a free-form puddle. Stacked stone walls and rocks resembling cannonballs surround the blue-black water.

Between sips of lemon Pellegrino the couple explains that they were renting in Westport when they began searching for homes in Ridgefield, Westport, and







An L-shaped sectional eases conversation opposite a fall blaze in the stone fireplace. Windows spanning the walls lend a treehouse feel. A painting of a seaside harbor, a theme carried through many of the home's paintings, perches against an Arts & Crafts style grid.

Redding. Duncan worked in Westport with well-known hedge-fund manager Victor Niederhoffer and he wanted a location nearby. The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum attracted the twosome to Ridgefield initially. Avid collectors themselves, they sought a house to accommodate their respective art collections, but one that was not formal and stuffy. Upon seeing the Arts & Crafts-style house that is simultaneously rustic and modern, they recall their realtor "picked up on our vibe," knowing they didn't want a typical McMansion with formal spaces.

The house was constructed by builder and visual artist Chris Curnan and wife Robin, who owns and operates Olley Court, the design shop on Main Street. "When we saw this place it kind of spoke to us, and we really connected with Chris and Robin as a couple," Duncan says. They explain that the home was crafted with an artist's eye. For example, to the side of the front door hangs a teak grid of repeating squares, which is then duplicated as a screen to let light filter through in the next room. The couple so admired Curnan's sensibility that they bought several pieces of his art painted on sculpted old boilers and recycled materials, which feature prominently in the home.

Finding a home base was a critical task for these self-proclaimed gypsies, whose relationship began with a journey. A friend introduced them in New York City six years ago. "It was like, You kite-surf? You just got back from Nepal? I just got back from Tibet," says Jewels. On their first date Duncan asked her to go kite-surfing in the Dominican Republic—hardly Chinese dinner and a movie—and they have been traveling ever since. The year prior to their daughter's birth, they traveled through Venezuela, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Things didn't slow down afterwards either. "Delia is probably the best traveler of the

The home was crafted with an artist's eye, an admired sensibility.







FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH BY KRISTEN JENSEN

The couple's diverse travel experiences create a genuine ease of living in the home. An outdoor dining space sheltered beneath an arbor and warmed by a fire pit allows for seasonal suppers under the light of the fall moon.



three of us. She's very mobile. She likes adventure," Duncan says, surrounded by mementos from the family's sojourns. All of which makes coming home to Ridgefield even sweeter.

We tour the pool and fire pit and I am led through a cozy screened porch into the kitchen. In the expansive saffron space, stained-concrete floors are both stylish and ideal for easy clean-ups with a toddler. The black brushed-granite counters and handcrafted teak cabinets lend a modern feel to the Arts & Crafts style. The kitchen windows mirror one another, the sort of symmetry that is seen throughout the house. The focal point of the space is the family's extensive travel wall. Pictures from the past few years include photos of kite-sailing safaris in Brazil and scenes of the couple in exotic locales.

The photos are not all recreation, however. Jewels points to a shot of herself in Zambia on one of the annual trips she makes there for her charity, Give a Jumpstart. As CFO of the organization, she arranges business loans to Zambian women, using her ten years of expertise as the global strategic account manager at Hyperion Solutions. "Someone gave me a chance," she says. "I was an art-history major. Someone needs to give these people a jumpstart. These women do amazing things with little money." In keeping with that idea, the center island of the kitchen will be the hub of a benefit Jewels will throw for her charity on October 25.

In the family room a handcrafted wall of stacked stone envelops the television and fireplace. Solid wood beams comprise the mantel and repeat along the width of the ceiling, giving the home a rustic feel. A wall of windows opens to the tulip trees that cover the property. Many of these trees were milled into floorboards, stained a dark mahogany, and finished with silver nail heads. All of these features



A sizable island provides the serving space for gatherings, such as Jewels' Give a Jumpstart benefit on October 25. Photos of their travels adorn a windowed wall.



create an intimate atmosphere in the home. "It's a fairly large house but the rooms are not huge. It's a very warm house," Duncan summarizes.

The next room, technically a dining room, is the couple's ballroom. They love to kick off their shoes and dance. The ballroom showcases one of Chris Curnan's pieces, a round industrial metal sculpture washed in cranberry and sunny yellow called "Sunrise." A numbered print of Bob Marley resides nearby in a silver frame. The ballroom spills into the music room where Jewels often plays the grand piano and Duncan the guitar. A small Pakistani rug sits in front of the boxy concrete fireplace. Above hangs a painting of a beach in Dubrovnik, Croatia, where Jewels and Duncan often visit. She had sketched the Croatian beach in pen and later that evening saw the same scene in a gallery. The couple's aesthetic is spare, and the sense is that each object is chosen for its story rather than its value.

To be sure, the home is not short on art. Throughout are sublime landscape scenes bathed in golden or silver light by Duncan's great-great-grandfather, Edward Gay, a prolific painter of the Hudson River School. These old-world paintings in museum frames are juxtaposed with more modern pieces like Redding artist Dave Dano's painting of a hefty baseball player. Pieces such as illuminated manuscripts from Istanbul featuring swirling dervishes are woven into the interior. More personal still, as we approach the master bedroom, are artistic travel photos. Duncan's series, what he calls "the belly chronicles," feature Jewels's pregnant belly in silhouette against scenery during the year she was pregnant.







The rich-chocolate-painted bathroom sealed the deal for Jewels, who often soaks in this sanctuary's tub. The natural stone of the bathroom is complemented by natural light that floods the master bedroom on all sides.

The sleigh bed in the master bedroom is framed by mirrored side tables from Olley Court, and pale-blue walls create a perfect canvas for travel artifacts. To the right of the bed hangs a Nepalese tonka that dominates the wall. Nestled between two French-styled linen chairs from Olley Court is an antique rice-roller from China that Jewels found on her travels and brought home to create a footstool. Over the bedroom's fireplace hangs a 17th-century map from Istanbul. The bathroom, resplendent in deep brown, features an inviting soaking tub and is an oasis in natural materials. "The bathroom did it for me. The tub was the closer," says Jewels.

The house in the woods is an anchorage for this family, who have created a sense of place by bringing back bits and pieces of the world beyond Ridgefield. Theirs is a life they have crafted for themselves and continue to sculpt—with their newest arrival in mind. One-year-old Delia is learning Spanish and has already traveled to more places at her young age than most people have in a lifetime. As Jewels points out, "The world is much bigger than Ridgefield and her education must be bigger. We want her to experience the world. We get the itch. We only live once. And there's a lot of places we still haven't been." ■



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