

Special Section: Furniture for Every (Little) Room

Metropolitan Home

Smart
Small
Spaces

How to
Make Them
Work!



The glamorous open living room of a rammed-earth house in Aspen, p. 66



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Personal Style



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Personal Space

Homes come in all sizes, from tiny studios to sprawling country ramblers. The one thing that unites them these days is that no matter the size or style, their owners want their environment to feel bigger, airier, more open than ever before. The homes that follow fall into two categories. The first group—a new rammed-earth house in Aspen, a renovated Victorian in Chicago and a series of combined apartments in Washington, D.C.—luxuriate in interior space and direct access to the outdoors. By contrast, our special Small Spaces section features three diminutive homes: a 700-square-foot Manhattan apartment, a new 1,200-square-foot house near Seattle and a renovated 2,000-square-foot Palm Springs tract home, all of which breathe free thanks to bold ideas for making limited space seem infinite. Among them, you'll find hundreds of ideas for personalizing your own abode, however palatial or abridged. Enjoy!—*The Editors*



The Good Earth

*Manhattan interior designer Larry Laslo outfitted this steel and rammed-earth home in **Aspen, Colorado**, for a sophisticated pair of art collectors.*



A Vik Muniz painting of Bacchus on a wenge-paneled wall dominates the dining area, which features a table by Larry Laslo, Barracuda dining chairs from Holly Hunt and a vintage starburst chandelier (the cube in the foreground includes self-portraits by John Lovett and Alessandro Codagnone). Opposite: In the living room, an antique, Biedermeier-style chaise is right at home beside sofas from B&B Italia. Art over the fireplace is by Michael Raedecker; the colorful photograph is by Thomas Struth.



“I wasn’t going to do antlers or cowboy claptrap,” says Larry Laslo, a New York City–based designer, of the

house he just finished in Aspen. “We wanted rustic, not corny.”

The house, owned by Courtney and Karen Lord, stands on the main road into town. The couple chose the location partly for its convenience (“We could foresee our children taking public transportation,” says Courtney, a real-estate developer). But the site is so prominent that the Lords felt responsible for making sure their new house didn’t detract from the majestic views.

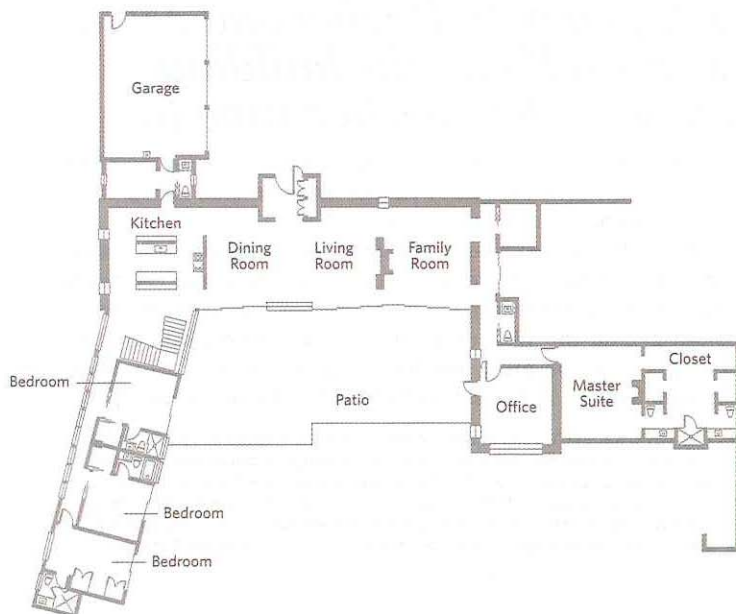
One way to achieve that end, they realized, was to build it from eco-friendly rammed earth—soil mixed with concrete and then poured into wooden forms (see “What the Pros Know”). Because the main ingredient comes right out of the ground, the house was guaranteed to blend in with its site. In fact, architect Scott Lindenau, of Studio B in Aspen, designed a house whose 22-inch-thick rammed-earth wall facing the road has just a few small

windows. By contrast, the opposite wall (facing the mountains) is almost entirely glass—which meant that Laslo’s job, as he puts it, was to design “half of each room; the other half is the view.”

As for the rammed-earth construction, Laslo was all for it, in part because he knew he’d be adding materials like the lime-green hide that covers a burl-veneer chaise in the living room. “It’s the contrast that keeps things interesting,” the designer says.

||| This page: The back of the house, with its many windows and doors, offers uninterrupted mountain views. Courtney Lord’s home office, a 16-foot-high tower of rammed earth, stands between the living/dining wing and the master suite. Opposite: Larry Laslo designed the imposing table in the living/dining area with a geometric bronze base crowned by a slab of crystal—not glass, he explains, so that the edges of the tabletop wouldn’t look green.

PRODUCED BY LINDA O’KEEFE. PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREY CRAWFORD. WRITTEN BY FRED A. BERNSTEIN.



What the Pros Know

To build the first-ever rammed-earth house in Aspen, a crew drove up from Arizona, where the method is in wider use. First the workers sifted soil to remove stones and other debris. Then they mixed the soil with concrete and water and poured the mixture into wooden formwork, adding about eight inches of the mixture at a time. (That's what gives the finished wall its painterly striations.) Next they used machines that vibrate the formwork so that air bubbles escaped and the mixture settled.

Eventually, the forms (which, like most molds, are first coated in a waxy substance) were pulled away; the bit of wax remaining on the walls helps give them their unique lustrous patina. The rammed-earth walls not only block sound, but they serve as a "heat sink"—radiating warmth after the sun goes down and thus reducing power usage. All in all, a rammed-earth wall costs about as much as a conventional masonry wall, but the Lords got a material that, in Scott Lindenau's words, "evokes the site itself."



After Courtney Lord sold his real-estate business in Michigan, he and Karen were free to move to Aspen with Rachel and Max, their two children. Courtney threw himself into the building project, which was fine with Karen, who devotes her time to

volunteer work. The couple agreed that it was important to hire a designer, in addition to an architect, to work with them to personalize their home. "Our concern," says Courtney, "is that sometimes when an architect also does interiors, they become predictable, with the same Mies van der Rohe chairs that every other architect uses. We wanted a modern house," he says, "but we wanted the furniture to be comfortable."

For Laslo, comfortable furniture is fine, as long as it's not slouchy. These days, he points out, sounding only slightly horrified, "when people watch TV, they want to spread out, lie down, put their feet up." A sectional sofa was the obvious choice; luckily, he says, "sectionals can be elegant." He covered this one, of his own design, in chenille with leather piping, dressing it up with pillows made with classic Jack Lenor Larsen prints from the 1960s.

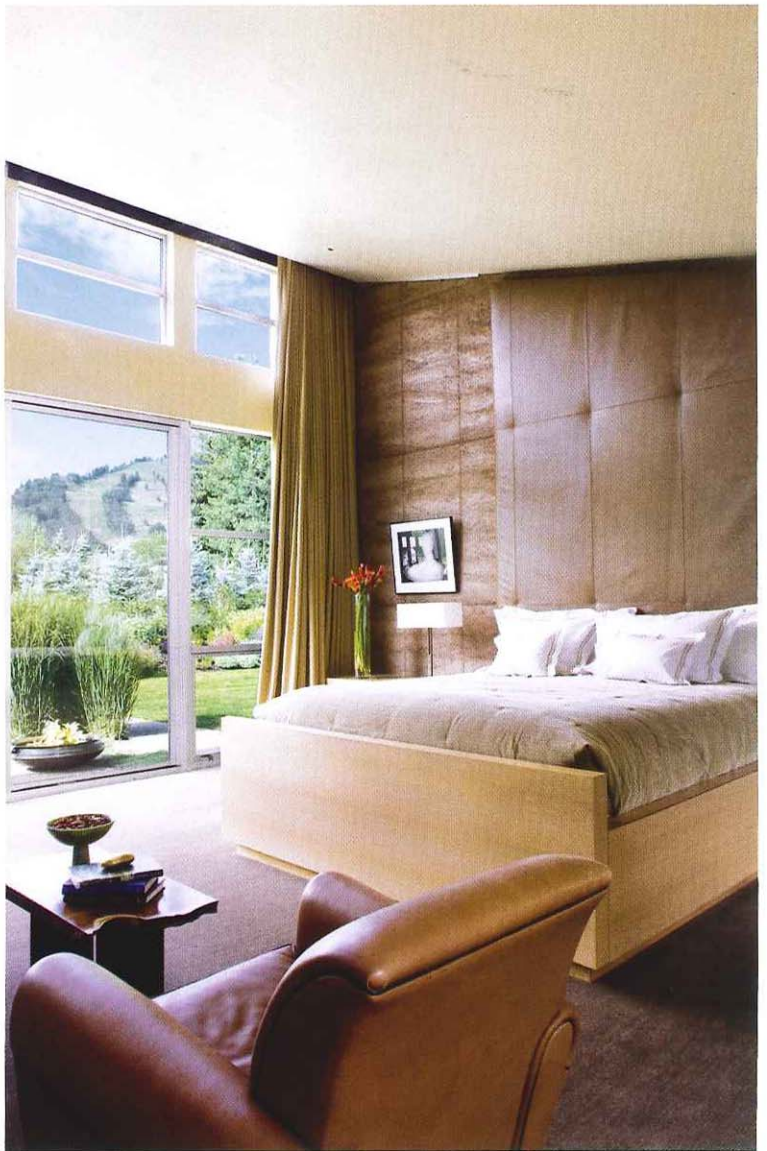
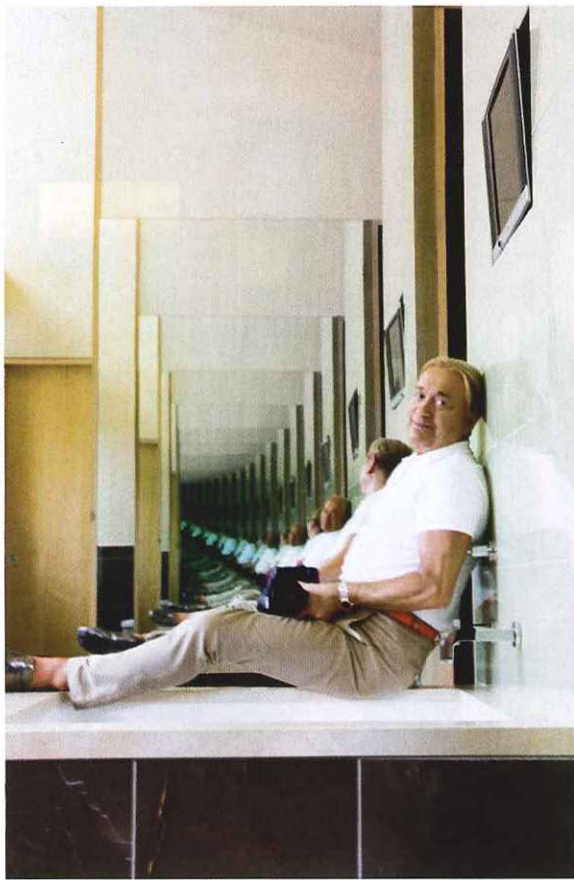
Instead of a coffee table (which people don't want to put their feet on, he notes), Laslo designed a leather ottoman that, thanks to its large wooden tray, can also serve as a table.

The kitchen, which is separated from the living/dining room by a partial wall made of wenge, features custom wenge cabinetry with Hafele pulls that echo the stainless-steel tiles used for a backsplash behind the Wolf range. To light the room, with its two counters (one for prep, one for informal meals), Laslo chose *Imperial* fixtures, by Doyle Crosby from Boyd, in polished copper.

||| This page: Karen Lord sits in the kitchen, which she wanted to be practical as well as glamorous. For materials, Laslo chose wenge, marble, stainless steel and copper. Opposite: In the den, Laslo used a shag rug—they've lost their Age of Aquarius associations, he says—and a sofa of his own design. The "bench table," by Harush Shlomo, is made of hammered soda cans. Outside are terrace furniture by Richard Shultz and a sculpture by Bruno Romeda.







“Bathrooms,” pronounces designer Larry Laslo, “should be one of two things. Either

very old-world, romantic and nostalgic or very clean and efficient. This one, obviously, is very efficient,” he says. But it hardly lacks luxury. It is clad in two types of marble—travertine and suede-finish—as well as back-painted glass tiles. Fixtures are chrome (*Citterio* from Hansgrohe), but elsewhere in the house, he used copper, bronze and stainless steel. “Saying you can use only one metal is like saying you’ll wear only one metal,” says the veteran designer. “It’s ludicrous.”

Clearly, Laslo isn’t wed to just a few materials. Most of the floors in the house are beech, although those in the hallway are poured concrete. And in the master bedroom, he went with wall-to-wall carpeting because it “is cozy to wake up to.” The carpet complements dark-stained wenge walls and a pebbled-leather headboard. The bed and the night tables (his own designs) are cantilevered and lit from below, so “you won’t stub your toes at night,” he says.

For all the work that went into the house, Courtney’s favorite spot may be outside, in an award-winning Japanese-inspired garden adjacent to the master bedroom and his office. From his perch on a rock, he can look back at the house. “It’s interesting, but it doesn’t scream, ‘Look at me,’” he says with satisfaction.

||||| This page (clockwise from top left): Designer Larry Laslo in the “very Busby Berkeley” master bath; in the bedroom, a leather *Paris Archive* club chair from Nienkämper and a table made of materials left over from the dining table; Courtney Lord in the Zen-inspired backyard. Opposite: The master bath, with its freestanding tub and a double shower, has clerestory windows made of Kalwall, a lightweight, translucent fiberglass favored by environmentalists.



DETAILS

(1) Landscape designers Bluegreen dyed the concrete patio to match the building's rammed-earth walls. On the wall, Courtney Lord hung an artwork that seems to show a wheat field at sunset, but is actually the corroded interior of a metal drum (it's by Aspen artist Mark Cesark). The cat is called Oliver.

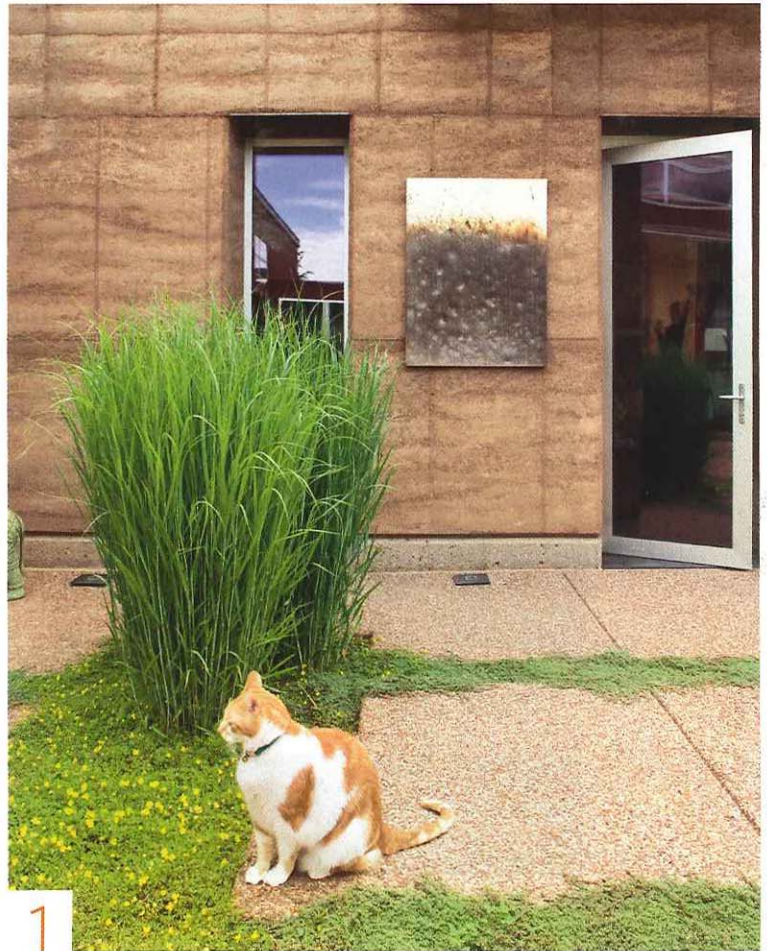
(2) Interior hallways have bare concrete floors. In one of them, the Lords hung a series of photos of Washington, D.C., taken in the 1950s by artist Peter Costas.

(3) Designer Larry Laslo created this centerpiece using the "largest succulents I could find." While impressive, it's low enough to permit cross-table conversation under a vintage mid-century chandelier.

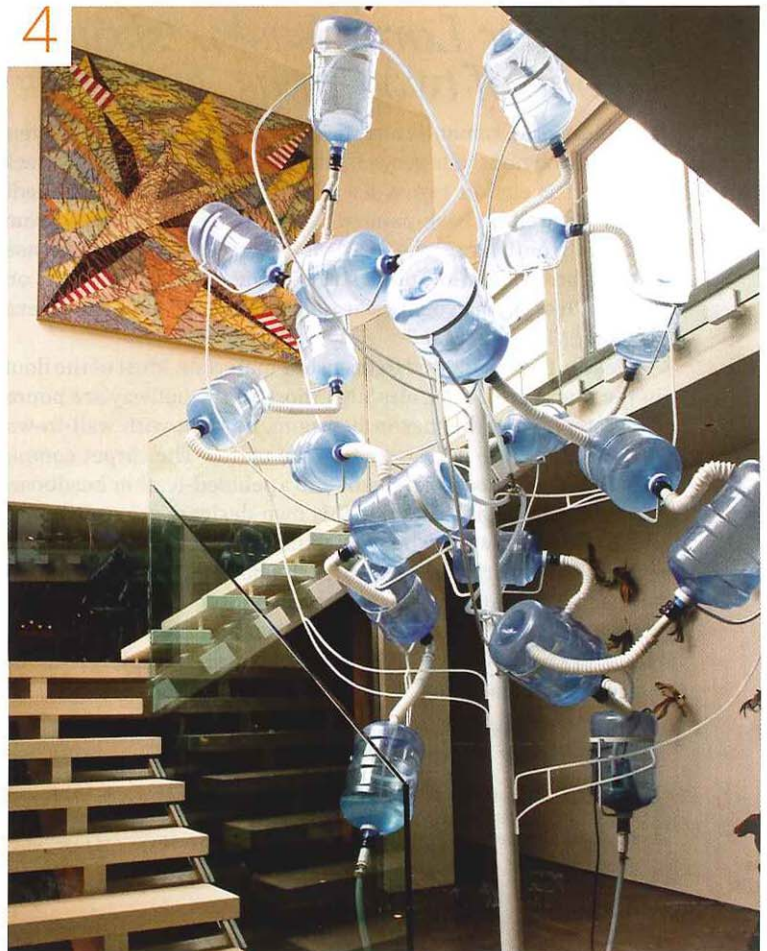
(4) Architect Scott Lindenau designed the stairway to the basement with thick treads of Botticino marble—the same material used on the house's three fireplaces. The kaleidoscope painting is by Chip Richardson; the water-bottle artwork (through which liquid actually flows) is by Thomas Glassford.

(5) A black granite fountain in the backyard was designed by Bluegreen. Its infinity edge makes its surface extraordinarily smooth, the better to reflect the Aspen highlands. The views are also framed by a sculpture by Bruno Romeda.

(6) For the powder room, Laslo set a plain mirror into a wall of mirrored mosaic tile. The concrete sink and mahogany base read as simple horizontal stripes. Laslo even picked the guest towels, which are a middle ground between paper and terry. ▣
See Resources, last pages.



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A pair of tailored *Odeon* sofas designed by Paola Navone for Molteni & C anchor Eric and Pascaline Steiner's expansive Georgetown living room. Vintage Louis Vuitton trunks speak of the couple's international lifestyle, while a Maurice Denis painting (at left) and a Jurgen Ostarhild photograph (to the right of Pallucco's *Fortuny* floor lamp) address their passion for art. Lightweight sliding panels can separate the living and dining rooms.