

# New England HOME

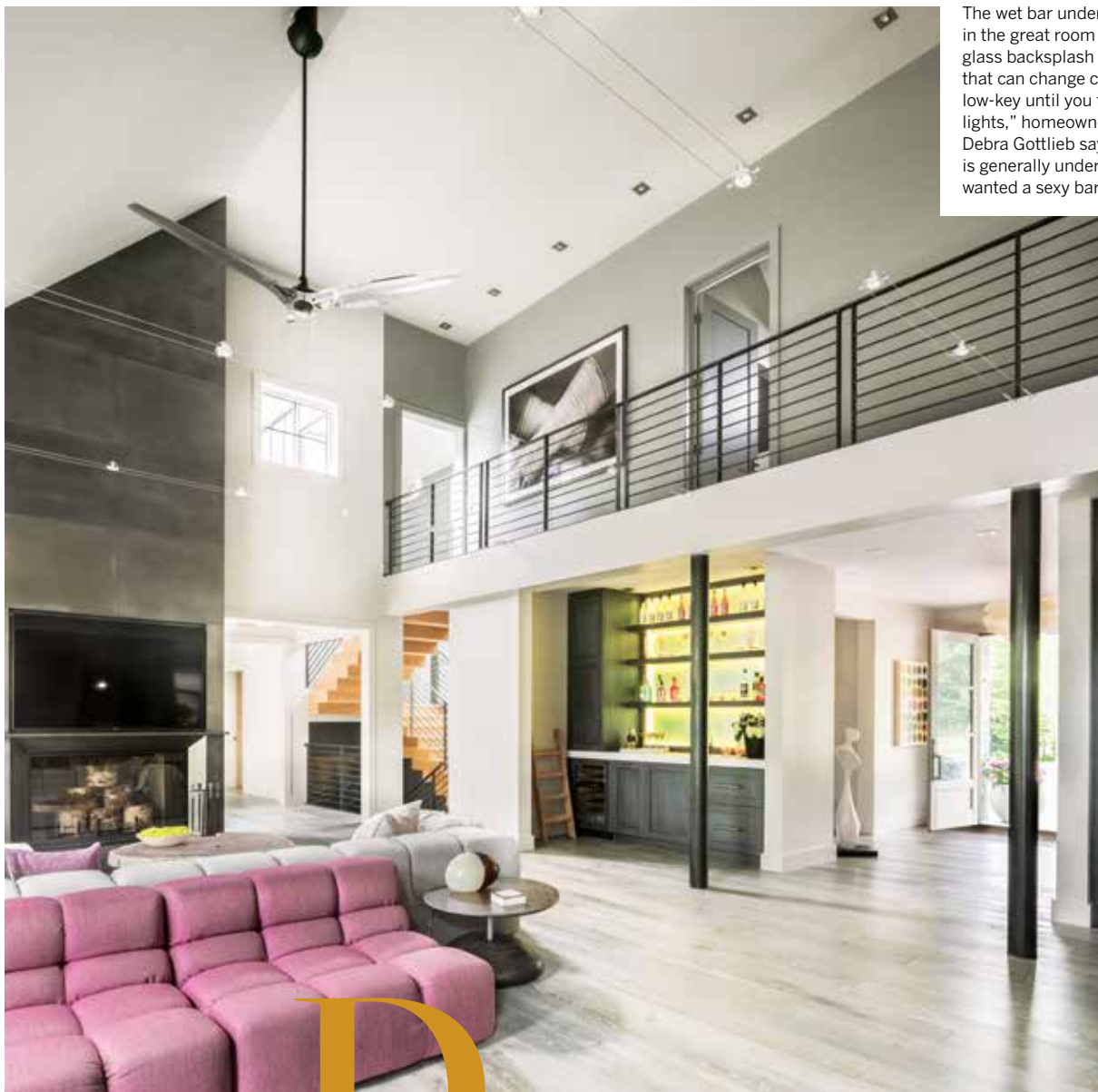
Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

*IN HARMONY*  
Summer's Poetry of Place

# Organic Compound

Wood, metal, and pops of pink make magic in a designer's Berkshires retreat.

BY MARNI ELYSE KATZ



The wet bar under the mezzanine in the great room has a backlit glass backsplash featuring lights that can change colors. "It looks low-key until you turn on the lights," homeowner/designer Debra Gottlieb says. "My husband is generally understated, but he wanted a sexy bar."

**D**ebra and Robert Gottlieb had a fairly lengthy wish list to ensure their Berkshires dream home would be a welcoming retreat for family, an entertaining haven for friends, and a

showplace for Debra's design talents. The five-acre lakefront property could easily absorb a significant spread, but the couple felt strongly that the scale of their new house not overwhelm



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:** Architectural designer Ritch Holben applied exterior boards made from recycled materials on the triangular area of the upper wall for texture. Custom cerused-oak cabinets with a gray wire-brush finish add subtle drama to the kitchen, while rivet detailing on the hood lends an industrial vibe; the Grohe faucet heads have been known to double as microphones on ladies-only weekends. Oversized windows showcase the sculptural floating stair that is illuminated from within.

the neighborhood. To solve the competing directives, architectural designer Ritch Holben expanded on Gottlieb's vision for a modern barn by creating three distinct but connected gable-roofed buildings that evoke traditional barn forms. "The concept is based on the collected structures of typical New England farm compounds," the principal of RhDesign says.

To simultaneously stay true to the rustic locale and celebrate contemporary design, Gottlieb and Holben curated a medley of natural, low-maintenance materials as finishes. European oak floorboards with a taupe finish provide a refined, neutral ground for the expansive living space with its twenty-seven-and-



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—Architectural designer Ritch Holben

a-half-foot-high cathedral ceiling and twenty-six-foot-long mezzanine. A sculptural white oak stair that Holben describes as “Escher-like boxes with a zigzag stringer and underlit treads” infuses warmth and glows dramatically through the front and back windows at night. “The stainless Moooi pendant shines like the moon,” Gottlieb says. “It’s my favorite part of the house.”



**ABOVE:** A spa is tucked into a stone terrace beside the straight run of stairs on the back of the house. The curved stairs lead down from the deck that is shaped like the bow of a boat. “We take all our photos up there with the lake in the background,” Gottlieb says. **LEFT:** She used metallic paint on the cabinetry in the kitchen in the screened porch, along with a black granite countertop and backsplash.



The custom steel stair rails inside and out echo the raw steel structural posts flanking the entry hall. The rails also inspired the pair to wrap the soaring chimney that anchors the seating area with hot-rolled steel. Artisan-made pieces such as the ribbon stools by the stairs and the acacia wood-slice coffee table complement the hand-hewn-meets-industrial-modern vibe.

Initially, Gottlieb leaned into the monochromatic, masculine palette to conjure a sense of calm. But when she

was working on the kitchen scheme, Robert said, “Let’s have some fun with color!” So in came a rich plum-colored range. From there, Gottlieb added counter stools with faux leather fuchsia backs and seats; a B&B Italia Tufty-Time sofa in a tweedy hot pink performance fabric; and dining chairs upholstered in a striated velvet that pulls together all the rosy hues. “I live in a house with a husband and two sons. The dog and cat are boys, too,” Gottlieb says. “It’s nice to have a bit of pink power.”

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** For details, see Resources.



**ABOVE:** Porcelain tile that resembles wood offers a spa-like feel with zero maintenance in the primary bath, while the bamboo shade injects actual texture. **LEFT:** The guest bedroom has a custom house-shaped bed with sheer panels inspired by a bed that Gottlieb saw at a hotel in Costa Rica.

**INTERIOR DESIGN:** Debra Gottlieb, Finelines Interiors

**ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN:** Ritch Holben, RhDesign

**BUILDER:** Roman Montano, Alander Construction

**LANDSCAPE DESIGN:** Bruce Bennett, Darrell Cherniske, Kent Greenhouse & Gardens