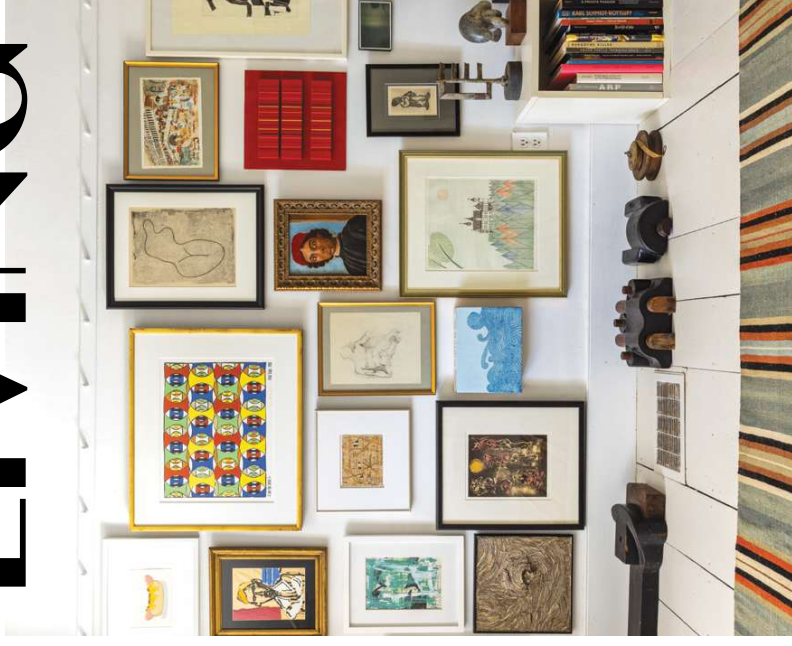


The Art of LIVING



For artists **Daniel Anselmi** and **Marc Leavitt**, an antique cape in Belfast makes the perfect canvas for their art and life.

written by **ALLISON PAIGE** photographs by **MAURA MCEVOY**



In the primary bedroom, an antique rug, pottery, and early 20th century landscape ground a cozy reading nook. (Opposite) The guest bedroom features an eclectic gallery wall of various favored artists beneath a Shaker peg rail.

A view from the library, where a 20th century bust and antique Chinese bowl complement artworks by Leavitt.

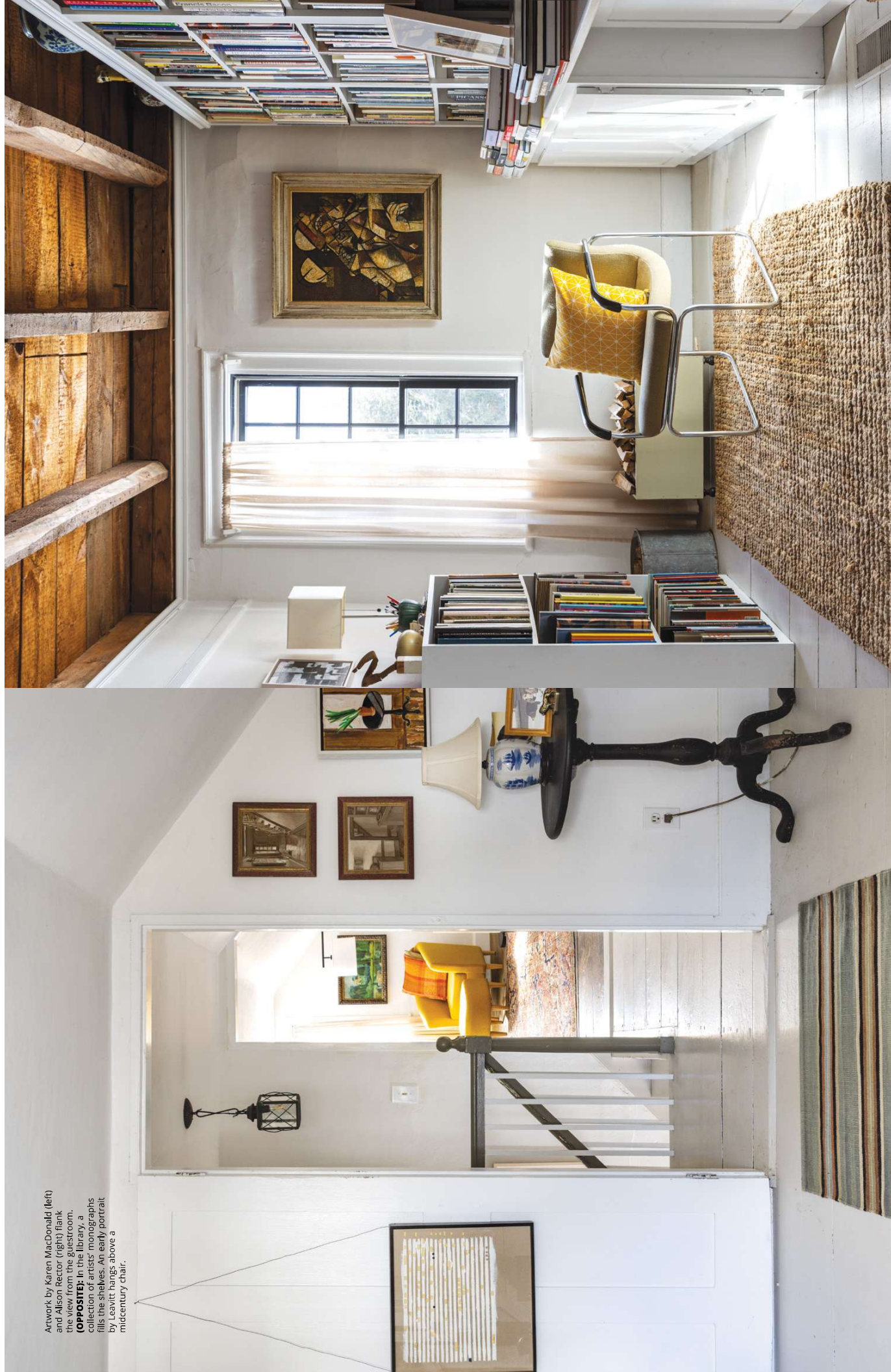


ust two miles from downtown Belfast is the 1790s-era home of artists Daniel Anselmi and Marc Leavitt. With its clapboard painted a sooty black, it all but recedes into the pastoral surroundings and likely appears much the way it has for the last two and a half centuries. The inside is another story. Or perhaps I should say, picture.

The humble 3-bedroom cape, nearly as old as America itself, was brought to its current, inspired multi-use through creative thinking and what the couple calls old-fashioned "blood, sweat, and tears." While living in Boston, they had searched over the years for an antique home and were cautiously optimistic, in 2001, to spy one online in midcoast Maine that fit their criteria. When the two urbanites made the trip up to view it with a realtor, an actual country mouse was perched at the top of the staircase, ready to greet them. The home had been abandoned for years, a liability for some, an absolute asset for the couple, who admired its uncompromised character and period detail.

In the art studio viewing room, a paper stack sculpture by Anselmi comprised of vintage blueprints stands alongside a pair of antique wooden pins. The paintings on the wall are by Anselmi and Leavitt.

Artwork by Karen MacDonald (left) and Allison Rector (right) flank the view from the guestroom. **(OPPOSITE):** In the library, a collection of artists' monographs fills the shelves. An early portrait by Leavitt hangs above a midcentury chair.



Daniel, who once worked as a visual design coordinator at Bloomingdale's, compared it to finding the perfect apparel. "You know how when you get a piece of clothing, it's like, yep, that works. You try it on, and it fits. That's how it was when we came to first look at the house. We looked at each other and said, 'I think this is it.'"

Still, the home had been left to the mercy of the elements and whims of time and there was lots to do. The pair commuted the four hours from Boston every weekend and put in the labor. "We worked like dogs for a year to get it ready," remembers Daniel. But the good bones of the house were there. After a thoughtful rehabilitation, which included insulating with spray foam and installing period-friendly windows from Andersen, they and their art moved in.

Self-professed minimalists, they honor the home's colonial roots by maintaining an interior that radiates simplicity. "We do not have a blender," Daniel says. "We do not have a microwave." The absence of creature comforts only heightens the feeling of timelessness, particularly in the kitchen, with a fire blazing in the hearth, earthenware pottery lining the shelves, and rustic baskets hanging from hand-hewn beams. "I say we're kind of like modern day Shakers," he adds with a laugh. Despite their cheerful Luddite leanings, country living was an adjustment.

Marc admits, "We were initially quite nervous and anxious of these very, very strange noises coming out at dusk, wondering what kind of scary animal it was." He pauses. "It was the cows."

They experimented with period colors for the interior but found it too fussy and dark; instead, they repainted it entirely with Benjamin Moore's crisp Decorator's White. The result is spare and elegant, like a canvas prepped with gesso. With little to compete, the airy, white-washed space acts as a welcoming triffecta of gallery, studio, and home, where their practice and art collection remain at the fore.

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The primary bedroom contains nods to the home's colonial past, with a 19th-century blanket box and early 19th-century folk portrait. Vintage linens top the bed.





A vintage sign, painted wood box, and mix of vintage and modern pottery grace the simple kitchen. All artwork is by Anselmi.

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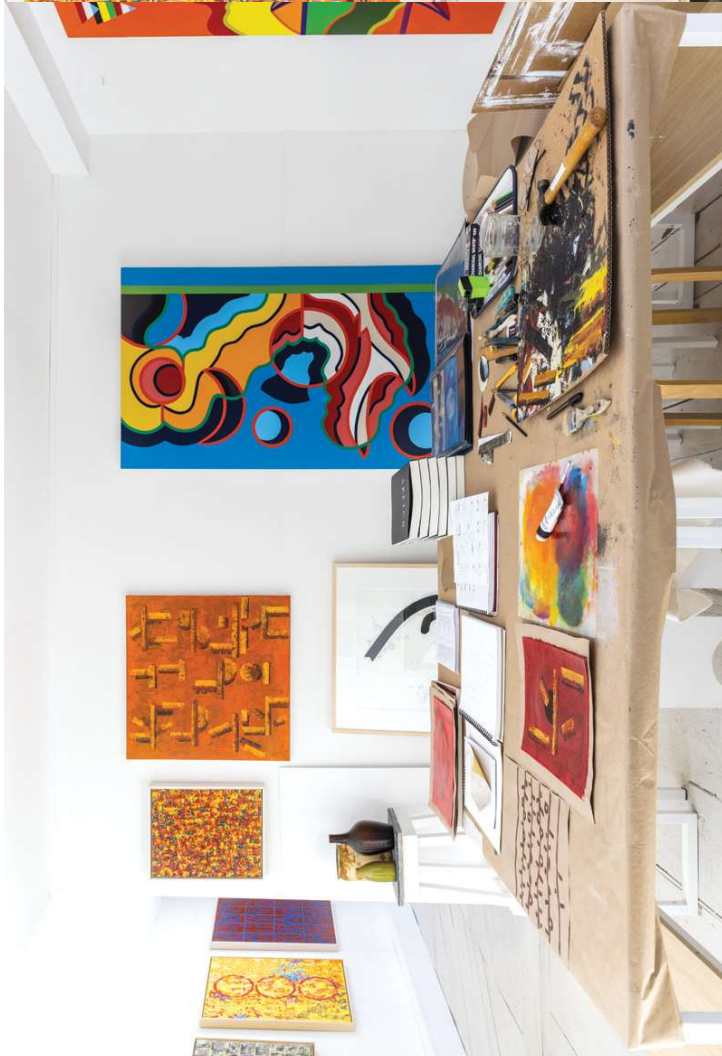
—ALISON PAIGE

"We only hang each other's artwork down on the main floor," explains Marc. "And then things that we collect, we'll have upstairs in the bedrooms. The downstairs is like an extension of our studios. So that when we're not at work, we're still in that art environment."

Both self-taught, Daniel centers his work on collage-like paintings and sculpture and Marc, on text-inspired abstract painting, often in series. "We're abstract artists and we're both different, which is always good for two artists living in the same home," Daniel adds. Their work, which they rotate seasonally, feels complementary, even conversant.

A vertical sculpture of Daniel's, created from found blueprints, stands sentinel beside the staircase, where a vivid painting of Marc's adorns the landing. Upstairs, in the primary bedroom, an eclectic gallery wall of favored artwork hangs beneath a Shaker-style peg rail.

A snug first-floor room now acts as a library for Marc's extensive collection of artists' monographs, while the ell to the former barn has been transformed into his neatly organized studio. An adjacent "viewing" room is flooded with natural light, where the couple discuss and photograph their work. "When I go into the studio, I really do not come back into the house during the day," Marc notes. "It really is a separate entity."



The art studio worktable provides a glimpse of the artistic process. Paintings by Leavitt. **BELOW:** In the gallery-like art studio, vintage objects are juxtaposed with modern abstract paintings by Leavitt.

Daniel prefers to keep a studio in town. "I actually like that idea of getting up in the morning, having breakfast, and then going—like you're going to work."

The staircase may be steep, and the floors uneven, where, over decades, the foundation settled, but it is all part of the perfectly imperfect home they envisioned. "I like stuff that has issues," Daniel declares happily. And while the house has its quirks, it provides shelter and space to create, and is, itself, an embodiment of their creativity.

"Both of us, as artists, treat our home the same as our studio," Marc reflects. He recalls the *Flower Series* he made, inspired by their own garden. "They're abstractions, but whether it's daylilies or bee balm or black-eyed Susans, I created all those abstract paintings based on the flower beds that Daniel created around the home. The home environment is part of our art practice. I really do feel like we're in a 24/7 kind of mentality about our creativity."

"It is our world," Daniel agrees. "It's all connected." ■



A closet beside the hearth, stocked with firewood, retains its vintage wallpaper. Leavitt's *Day Lily* hangs over the mantel.