





Glenn Place

## The House of Many Hands

*The Kalogris home in Malvern is a feast for the eye and ears thanks to the owner's belief that everything comes out better when we work together*

*by Stefanie Claypoole*

Arrive at the Kalogris home in Malvern at dusk, but surprisingly, my diminished view of the landscape does not hinder my first impression of the property: Heaven on Earth (or perhaps, Middle Earth, but more on that later). "Throughout the property, we wanted the sense of water, whether real or just in feeling," says the home's owner, Lis Kalogris. That sense abounds as soon as you exit your car, with a large double-tiered pond with waterfalls and abundant hardscaping providing aural delight. The feeling is repeated in other unique ways around the home's three acres, whether actual copper spouts that recirculate water or stone and cast-glass pieces that emanate the spirit of water. But it would be hard to single out water as the most interesting aspect of the Kalogris home when the architecture, gardens, interior design, and especially the art collection are also all vying for your attention.



*Art, both inside and outside the Kalogris home can easily serve as an appreciation course in area artists. Railings by blacksmith Ray Matthis figure prominently. Here, a railing in the backyard seamlessly blends into the Japanese-inspired landscaping; the main house at sunset, and another view of the metal tree that flanks the home's entrance by Greg Leavitt.*



*The home features many windows to bring in light and the three acres of woods. Top, the Great Room beyond the foyer abounds with interesting art. On the wall, Slovenian artist Elena Fajt did an installation using live human hair. Left, a sculpture by Adrian Arleo integrates birds into the figure's body. A worm-eaten table by Jack Laramour, a well-known Philadelphia woodworker, is also featured. Below, the home's foyer features one of Lis's favorite artists and the least contemporary, Max Bohm. The family English bulldog, Buddha, poses on the stairs. Throughout the interior and exterior of the home, local materials are used, such as the Mountain Mary stones from Rolling Rock Quarry for the fireplace.*



Lis Kalogris, originally from Long Island, New York, has approximately 50 or so index cards, organized by room or exterior area, that list names of art and artisans, architects, contractors and interior designers who collaborated on her home. She does not refer to these until the very end of our meeting, however, since she already has an uncanny grasp on the information. She and her husband, Mike, are eager to open up their home to others, whether on home tours or more recently, as part of art-focused collaborative events.

“Sticks and Stones,” a sale of more than 20 local artists work held twice at the Kalogris home thus far, drew more than 1,000 attendees and “Aghast and Agog,” a salon-style event featuring music, drama, costume, art, and food, was another great success. In addition to collaborative cultural interests, Lis, a retired stay-at-home mom who has served on many area nonprofit boards, now devotes much of her time to her family’s Katherine Alexandra Foundation, named for her two daughters and dedicated to the healing arts, as well as a newer endeavor, “End of the Beginning Productions.” The company she started with friend Debi Dunn recently put out its first DVD, “Qigong for Everyone,” and another meditation CD is currently in the works.

Lis has been married to Mike, the owner of a small investment company, for nearly forty years. They purchased the lot in Malvern twenty years ago and immediately enlisted German-born architect Helena van Vliet of Kim-



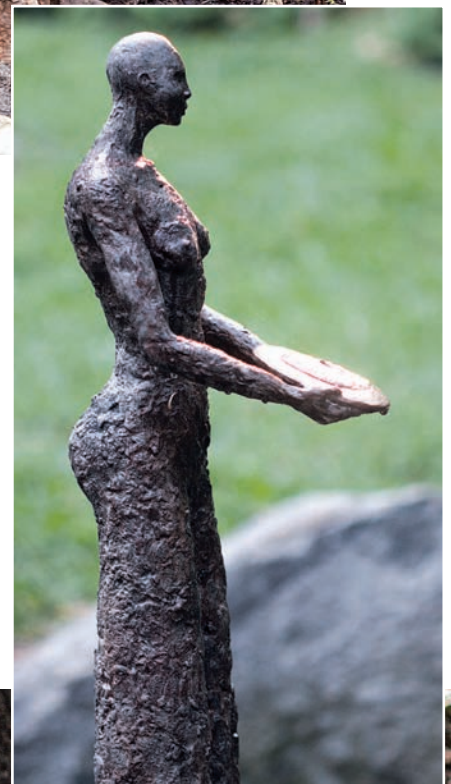
*The Lower Level houses a self-portrait by artist Kim Kamens, done with tiny nails and black thread; a mirror with real branches painted white by Rick Pratt; a quilt by clothing pattern designer Ellen Kochansky; and a fun lamp by Ellen Sall called “Double Tall Nonfat Latte with Fur.” A view of the second floor hallway, where the light fixture by Warren Muller descends from a pulley into the kitchen. The totem pole by Shelly Spector of Philadelphia was commissioned to cover up an existing column.*

berton to create their dream home. “She was 27 when she started with us, and we have used her many more times over the years, so in a way, our home is a retrospective of her work,” Lis says. Helena was a pioneer of environmental architecture before there were many materials available to suit that architectural style.

**H**elena compensated, Lis says, by integrating the house into the landscape. The two structures on the property, the main home and the guesthouse, were mostly fashioned from Mountain Mary stones from the local Rolling Rock Quarry and cedar wood. Of course, Lis and Mike’s life style twenty years ago isn’t the same as it is today, so they have reenlisted Helena’s expertise multiple times for add-ons and renovations, most notably a master bathroom addition, the year-old guest house and a new garage to house Mike’s cars and, to her lament, part of Lis’s art collection.

Art is the true focus of the Kalogris home, inside and out. You cannot walk one step without finding something new to catch your eye—be it a bronze garden sculpture, a Japanese wood basket or even a nest made of human hair. “I’ve been collecting since I was very young,” Lis says, “but nothing like since I’ve lived in Pennsylvania.” She has an affinity for locally produced art, with most purchases from the Wexler and Snyderman galleries in Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Museum of Art Craft Show, the Clay Studio in Old City Philadelphia, and Eileen Tognini’s Gallery in the Garden. “I guess I do lean toward contemporary art,





Opposite, from top, the kitchen's focal point is the light sculpture by Warren Muller that descends from the second-floor hallway. The floors are alternating slats of American and Brazilian cherry wood. The kitchen also features a watercolor by the late John Lear; a large painting on the back wall by Jason Spivak of Philadelphia, and wall squares of zinc by Debra Werblud. The dining room between the kitchen and foyer includes the same flooring as the kitchen. The right wall contains a wax photograph by Leah Macdonald of Waxworks. The table was designed by R. J. Thornbury with different artisans contributing the glass top and metal pedestals. This page, from above, throughout the property the Kalogrises wanted to convey real water or a sense of water. Right, bronze sculpture by Steve Olszewski, a Midwestern artist that Lis is fond of. Below, the sculpture "Sleeping Beauty" by Debra Rosenblum of South Philadelphia was originally cast in forton, but will be recast in bronze as it is decaying for inexplicable reasons. Lis says the piece is a favorite among male visitors to the home. "The model Debra uses is really lovely."





even if just in feeling, but I typically just buy anything that I fall in love with and can afford, even if I don't necessarily have a place for it!" Lis says.

The art experience begins at the top of the driveway, where cast-plaster hands by Susan Benarcik, a Rosemont College alumna, reach playfully out from the ground. Past the pond, created by Juan Romo and Outerspaces Landscaping of Glen Mills, the home's entryway provides another opportunity for joyful bewilderment in the form of two ornate copper and steel trees by Greg Leavitt, a renowned blacksmith from Boyertown. "They are very Middle Earth," Lis admits. Romo, while helping with the pond, recommended Leavitt to the Kalogrises, who were struggling with trying to make their front door more pronounced. Leavitt was originally commissioned to create one tree, but over time, it became two. He brought the trees to the home in pieces, and then spent two months on-site creating the leaves and adding faces into the trees.

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*The guest house was designed by Helena van Vliet, with Lis and Mike's son-in-law Chris McCloud assisting with interior design. The English burl elm bed in the bedroom was designed by Chris with local woodcrafter Dave Thal of The Wood Shop in Malvern. Above the bed is a piece by artist Tula Telfair. In the living area, the chairs, by Michael Littlewood-Biddison of Glenmoore, are made of recycled wood; the outside installation of chairs by Lis has become a favorite with guests. Another view of the metal tree by Greg Leavitt, with a view of the guest house in the distance. The hardscaping in the back of the guest house was done by Juan Romo, formerly of Outerspaces in Glen Mills, and the sculpture by Joseph Sedeski is entitled "From Qi to Eternity."*





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Levitt's daughter, Camille, fashioned metal poison ivy vines to wrap around the trunks.

The interior of the home is a collaboration between Lis, her son-in-law Chris McCloud and R.J. Thornbury of Bahdeebahdu in Philadelphia. The foyer is one of the only places where you will find art that predates the 20th-century, a portrait by Max Bohm of his mother. The foyer features stone floors and a double-sided stone fireplace (one of Helena's signatures) that leads into the Great Room. The entrance to the Great Room houses built-in cabinetry that showcases Japanese baskets by Honda Syorgu and Morigami Jin, a 24-hour walnut clock by James Borden of Minnesota that "is beautiful both moving and still," a wood sculpture by Chester County native Etta Winograd and an Emily Dickinson second edition.

In the Great Room, as in the rest of the house, expansive windows draw in light and the woods beyond them. Three columns of light created with metal beads were fashioned by Michael Biello of Old City. "When you push them, they spread light everywhere," Lis says. There is a painting by Keith Ragone of South Jersey, a sculpture by Adrian Arleo of a woman with birds (and bird droppings, Lis believes) integrated into her body, a wood table by Jack Larimore and on the wall, a new installation by Slovenian artist Elena Fajt. Last year, Fajt took advantage of the Kalogrises new "artist-in-residence" program, residing in their guest house for a week and contributing an interesting addition to the home. "She came with a suitcase full of live human hair, and that is what is on the wall," Lis says. "You really can't tell what it is until you get up close to it, and even then, you really have to think about it."

On the other side of the foyer are the kitchen and dining room, which both use flooring consisting of alternating slats of American and Brazilian cherry. Lis selected "third grade" wood for the variegations and character. The dining room includes a wax photograph by Leah Macdonald of Waxworks, an expansive glass-topped table by Thornbury and a painting by Jennings Tofel,

Lis's great-uncle. Above the entrance-way to the dining room is a wood and ceramic piece by Steve Dobbin. Next to the dining room is the large kitchen, where a watercolor by the artist John Lear, a painting by Mike's friend Jason Spivak, and zinc-plated wall squares by Debra Werblud reside. The centerpiece of the kitchen is an enormous light fixture sculpture by Warren Muller that descends from the second floor hallway into the kitchen via a small opening in the ceiling. "The opening is by design," Lis says. She said she had it done when the house was built so that the children, doing their homework at desks around the opening, could converse with their mother in the kitchen. With the children out of the house, Muller's work of recycled materials entitled "Symphony" was added.

One of the Kalogrises favorite renovations to their home began as a closet. Having decided that the deck off of the master bedroom was underused and their closet space lacking, they commissioned Helena to turn part of the deck into a new walk-in closet. Upon seeing the structure's beginnings, however, Lis and Mike decided it was way too interesting to serve as a closet, so they decided to turn it into a new master bath, and convert the existing bathroom into the closet. The interior design of the space was a collaboration between Lis and Thornbury, with interesting tiles and an open shower. The exterior is sculptural in itself, featuring copper shingles and a "river" of bronze by artisan Don Merget.

The lower level of the home houses a guest bedroom with a multi-dimensional piece by Kim Kamens, a mirror with real tree branches by Rick Pratt, a quilt by clothing pattern designer Ellen Kochansky and a unique lamp entitled "Double Tall Nonfat Latte with Fur" by Philadelphia artist Ellen Sall. But if you want to spend the night at the Kalogris home, the guest house is the place to do it. This new space is accessed via stone stairs by Juan Romo with an iron railing by Ray Matthis (with post by Dave Thal of The Wood Shop in Malvern). A cedar pergola runs the expanse of the house on one side, and the stone foundation features carved out niches that Lis can't wait to fill. Inside there is a gorgeous bed of English-burled elm by Thal with assis-

tance from Chris McCloud, a daybed designed by McCloud, recycled wood chairs by Michael Littlewood-Biddison of Glenmoore and a painting by Tula Telfair. Near the fireplace, there is a boulder that brings the outside in. Boulders contributed around the guest house by Romo were placed by design, but "seem as if they've been there for centuries," Lis says. "They really connect the house to the environment." At the back of the guesthouse is more hardscaping and an Asian-themed sculpture by former purse maker Joseph Sedeski named "From Qi to Eternity." Lis liked the sculpture's emblem so much she and her production partner Debi Dunn are using it as their company's logo.

A sculpture garden is named "End of the Beginning" for Lis' belief and desire for everything in her home to connect in some way. Highlights are a bronze sculpture of a woman by Steve Olszewski from the Midwest and "Sleeping Beauty," a Forton-cast sculpture of the woman of fairy tale by South Philadelphia artist Debra Rosenblum. "Every man who visits our home loves this piece. The model she uses is really lovely." Finally, an installation of chairs by Lis happened by accident. She had purchased the wood chairs as patio furniture, not realizing that they were meant for the indoors. Lis took advantage of the natural wear that befell them, even adding to the patina using paint and glued on moss. Although she has a fantastic eye for art, Lis admits she owes the splendor of her outdoor spaces to "Garden Angel" Cate Skindeleski. "I buy something and she figures out how to put nature around it to enhance it. She is such a creative and amazing gardener," Lis praises.

"Everything comes out better as a collaboration," Lis says. "It's probably easier to be a dictator, but if you get the artisans, designers, architects, and contractors together to brainstorm, I believe the result is much more creative. It's the only way to do it right." The Kalogrises Malvern home is an incredible testament to such a view. ❖

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