

HOME

FOR THE PRODUCER OF BROADWAY'S *HAMILTON*,

THEATER

JAMES HUNIFORD TRANSFORMS A WESTCHESTER COUNTY, NEW YORK, COTTAGE INTO A LAID-BACK FAMILY RETREAT.

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The living room of Jeffrey Sellar and Josh Lehrer's country house in northern Westchester County, New York, which was designed by James Huniford. The custom sofas are in fabrics by Highland Court and Bennison, the leather armchairs are vintage, and the tray and sculpture are from the Huniford Vintage Collection. The Stark rug and brass fireplace screen are custom. The artworks are by Henri Matisse.



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WHEN JEFFREY SELLER, THE PRODUCER OF *HAMILTON*, looks at the colorful Matisse *Jazz* cutout series from 1947 in his living room, it makes him smile and think about the creative process. “It speaks to my sense of childlike wonder and appreciation for the everyday simplicity of taking scissors to paper to create art from cutouts,” Seller says. “It was just completely revolutionary.”

One could say the same about the historic hip-hop musical by Lin-Manuel Miranda that—almost five years after its Broadway debut—will be available to stream online this July on Disney+ in a filmed stage version featuring its original cast. But then Seller’s radical producer’s eye also brought to Broadway *Rent* and *Avenue Q*, along with Miranda’s first rap musical, *In the Heights*. Clearly, the discovery and nurturing of a groundbreaking production based on an academic biography of founding father Alexander Hamilton is no more unlikely than anything else in Seller’s career. Likewise, the narrative of the quirky lakeside house he shares with his partner, the advertising, lifestyle, and portrait photographer Josh Lehrer, is anything but typical.

When they bought their weekend home, they initially didn’t plan on living in it, but rather using it as a guesthouse adjacent to a new statement-making modernist home they envisioned building on the 70-acre property in a remote pocket of northern Westchester County, New York. But a visit from their friend James Huniford, the convivial decorator with a flair for relaxed design, turned them around. He persuaded them that the 50-year-old traditional American house could become a comfortable family retreat just over an hour from Manhattan, where the couple’s two teenagers attend school.

“I showed them how I could use the structure that was already there to give them a house based on how they live,” Huniford says. “They are very present with their kids and friends and love to engage, and that’s not possible in a house with big, open formal spaces.”

And so the existing traditional dining room had to go, and the newly expanded living room now has a long refectory table for casual dinner parties. A master bedroom upstairs that was too big for its own good got downsized to make way for a larger bathroom and closet. And a relaxed study, where the family plays *Catan* on a felt-topped vintage Italian games table, replaced an unfriendly office. “They’re all about being grounded, not at all theatrical,” Huniford says.

But if the house, with its whimsical mix-and-match palette and patterns inspired by Bloomsbury-era florals,



ABOVE: Lehrer (left) and Seller in the living room; the silhouette is by Kara Walker. **BELOW:** In the sitting area of the master bedroom, the tufted-leather sofa is from Jayson Home, the stools are from Carlton Hobbs, and the round table is from Eerdmans Fine Art. The vintage brass lamp is from Lorforfs, and the curtain is of a Pindler fabric.



The study’s vintage games table and chairs, with seats in a Knoll fabric, are all Italian. A gooseneck sconce from Obsolete hangs over a custom steel-and-brass *étagère* with fabric-wrapped shelves. The vase on the table is from the Huniford Vintage Collection, and the painting is by Lisa Yuskavage.





ABOVE: A custom table in the study is topped with a vintage chess set purchased at the Brimfield antiques market, in Massachusetts. The wingback chairs are upholstered in a Tulu Textiles print, and the artwork is by Jonathan Meese.



The stair hall is anchored by a center table from Andrew Spindler Antiques & Design, made from a fallen California redwood tree trunk. The benches are from the Huniford Vintage Collection, the circa-1910 Italian majolica vases are from InCollect, the Venetian glass vase used as a planter is from Stella, and the vintage chandelier by Luigi Caccia Dominioni is from Glo.



ABOVE, FROM LEFT: In the guest bedroom, the Gustavian bed has panels in a Peter Dunham Textiles stripe. The powder room's vanity was converted from a vintage table and has Newport Brass fittings; the Veca mirror is vintage, and the wallpaper is by House of Hackney. **OPPOSITE:** The cast-iron tub in the master bath is by Signature Hardware, and the stone side table is from the Huniford Vintage Collection. The 19th-century étagère is English, the vintage pendant is by Sergio Mazza, and the circa-1880s hooked rug is from Laura Fisher. For details, see Resources.

conveys intimacy and ease, the woods and meadows outside are about something else. "I didn't know I'd fall so in love with the land that my hands are now in the dirt all day long instead of on my cameras," says Lehrer, whose book *Hamilton: Portraits of the Revolution* was published in April and features black-and-white portraits of the original cast and passages from the historic figures they played. "Being a steward of such a large piece of property gives you a sense of responsibility."

"It's an impressive piece of land," adds Seller about the property, where Lehrer has been clearing a network of pathways among the trees, ferns, and rocks. "It's like a park that's a work of art."

The art in the house breaks its own ground, too. With the assistance of art adviser Yvonne Force Villareal, the couple acquired a framed Kara Walker silhouette and positioned it

playfully near the Matisse cutouts. A Lisa Yuskavage painting of a baby reminds them of the adoption of their own kids, and an artwork by the Bruce High Quality Foundation of a sylvan landscape covered with graffiti speaks to the integrated city and country lifestyle they enjoy.

The place is so bright and welcoming that even the kids don't miss the city when there. Their 17-year-old daughter (they also have a 16-year-old son) said she had always wanted a screened-in porch, and so Huniford redid the patio kitchen to create one. It overlooks a secret lake and the lush surrounding scenery, and there isn't a day when Seller doesn't remember he'd always dreamed about having an unpretentious retreat not much more than an hour's drive from the city.

"I mean," he says with a sigh, "I just can't believe we get to live this way." ■