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ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST VISITS
**MICHAEL J. FOX
 AND TRACY POLLAN**
 THE ACTORS' COUNTRY RETREAT IN THE
 ROLLING HILLS OF NEW ENGLAND



When Michael J. Fox was ten years old—the age of his own son, Sam—he fell madly in love with a house on an island in British Columbia. Instead of the usual series of rooms, the structure's main floor consisted of one huge room surrounded by a second-floor gallery. "I'd never seen anything like it," Fox recalls. "When I asked the lady who lived there why they'd built it that way, she said, 'I wanted to stand in the middle of the room, call out my children's names and have

them be able to hear—and answer—me from any room in the house.' Something about that struck me as a great idea. I never forgot it."

More than twenty-five years later, memory became matter. In 1997, on eighty acres of lush New England farmland, Fox and his wife, actress Tracy Pollan, created their own version of Fox's childhood fantasy with the help of architect Charles Myer and interior designers Marc Charbonnet, who had put together the couple's Fifth Avenue apartment (see *Architectural Digest*, Octo-

"They're hearth-and-home types," designer Marc Charbonnet says of Michael J. Fox and Tracy Pollan, who built a house in New England on land adjacent to Pollan's parents' farm. **OPPOSITE:** Landscape designer Jean Brooks planted a perennial garden outside the kitchen.

ABOVE: Architect Charles Myer, who designed the house, defined the living area at the end of the great room with a fieldstone fireplace. Osborne & Little red sofa fabric; Stroheim & Romann yellow sofa and ottoman fabrics; Decorators Walk cord on chairs.

*Architecture by Charles R. Myer & Company/Interior Design by Marc Charbonnet and Ewa Olsen of MECA Productions
 Landscape Design by Jean Brooks/Text by Nancy Collins/Photography by Peter Aaron/Esto*

"The great room was Michael's earliest request," notes Myer, who built a gallery on three sides to provide circulation for the upper levels. A 37-by-15-foot needlepoint carpet designed by Charbonnet covers the entire floor "and unifies the space," the designer says. Osborne & Little daybed fabric.









ber 1997), and his colleague Ewa Olsen.

"We loved what Marc had done with our New York apartment, that Fifth Avenue feel," says Fox. "But this was definitely country. We wanted to see what he would do with something out of his forte, since we knew he had the intrinsic talent to do whatever he wanted. We were curious to see what he'd come up with."

Fox stops. "There's a real New Orleans thing with Marc," he continues, referring to Charbonnet's hometown. "It's like working with Emeril Lagasse, who cooks on TV and keeps saying, 'Let's kick it up a notch.' Marc is a big man with an almost laconic feeling about him. But at the same time, he's going a hundred miles an hour in his head. When he shows you a Polaroid and you say, 'No,' it's no big deal. Marc says, 'I anticipated that you might not like that, so I've already gone here.' And the next Polaroid makes you go, 'Yeah.'"

Armed with their creative team, Fox and his wife proceeded to build the house on land abutting property owned by Pollan's parents, Stephen and Corky Pollan. "This house was a real passion for me," admits Fox. "When it was completed, the architect sent me sketches that I had done on napkins of how I wanted it laid out—without, of course, any architectural understanding of the complexities. And Charlie had captured that feeling. Then Marc and Ewa came in and tied it all together."

"What Michael originally wanted was a very primitive, Adirondack, woodsy-feeling place," explains Charbonnet, "but because of the needs of the children and the extended family, it became a much more refined home."

Without, happily, sacrificing Fox's Canadian paradigm. "This is not a formal home per se, where you have a living room, a dining room, et cetera," Charbonnet says. "It consists of one huge, open space—a 'great room'—into which all the smaller rooms flow, like Michael's office/library and the family room. The master bedroom and children's bedrooms are upstairs, reached from either the front or back stairwell.

"A lot of living is done in the kitchen," says Charbonnet, who worked closely with his colleague Ewa Olsen on the interiors. Rafael Pimentel, formerly with Peter Marino, designed and painted the stenciled frieze. The drapery fabric is from Osborne & Little.





LEFT: In the master bedroom, a Charbonnet-designed copy of an American blanket chest hides a television. "The room is very cozy; a television would have interrupted that." Chelsea Editions embroidered floral stripe; Clarence House red-and-pink plaid; Frette bedding.

BELOW: Pedestal sinks retain the country feeling in the master bath. Decorators Walk drapery fabric. **BOTTOM:** The pond house—"one of Michael's favorite places to hang out," says Myer—is an old shed that was relocated to the property. Scalamandré cushion fabric.



"The great room—a very New England notion—is the public room, used for entertaining, visiting, dining and playing games," continues Charbonnet. "The other rooms are private, just for the family. Intentionally, there's not even a guest room in the house—it's over the carriage house—because this is a family home. It's not some movie star, shindig house, but a quiet place for people constantly in the spotlight. It's here,

in the middle of nowhere, that the Foxes can let their hair down, be with people they love, ride horseback, fish and boat in their own pond, walk around without anyone bothering them. In short, it's a place to be themselves and feel safe."

Not to mention hang out with their extended family. Pollan's brother and two sisters own property nearby, and "all of the cousins, my children's peers,

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The 80-acre parcel of land, surrounded by dairy and horse farms, "begins on the valley floor and stretches up to the top of a small mountain," says Myer, who built a terrace along the west façade to take in the views. Apple trees Brooks planted line a path to the pond.



