

# SPACE

*SURREAL ESTATE & DESIGN*

## MODERN NOMAD

AMIDST A RAGTAG COLLECTION OF FURNISHINGS AND OBJECTS, ARTIST **STEVE MILLER** CREATES AN ODE TO NATURE IN HIS STUDIO AND LIVING SPACE IN AN OLD POTATO BARN IN SAGAPONACK.

BY JEAN NAYAR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY COSTAS PICADAS

If left to his own devices, artist Steve Miller's live/work space in Sagaponack might look much as it did when he purchased it from two other high-profile American artists—Frank Stella and Neil Williams—in 1986. “Various girlfriends have called it a ‘frat house,’” says Miller of the expansive former potato barn he now calls home. ➤

Artist Steve Miller peers through one of his ecological works, based on an X-ray of a female sloth holding her infant, taken on a trip to the Amazon.



## SPACE *BEACH RETREAT*



Miller's Sagaponack studio and living space, recently renovated by architect Carlos Brillembourg and his wife, Karin Waisman. BELOW: Miller also produces silk-screened surfboards and other objects to help stimulate a global dialogue on the fragility of aspects of nature. "They're eco-friendly trophy objects," he says.

"The studio takes up the majority of the space; that I have any living space at all is a concession to past relationships," admits the peripatetic artist.

Yet thanks in part to the influence of his former sweethearts, along with the help of a pair of creative friends, a recent redo of a section of the 5,000-square-foot space has transformed the living area into a comfort zone that even a globe-trotting adventurer like Miller has learned to value. "I needed an upgrade," he says, "so I worked with architect Carlos Brillembourg to recarve the space and bring in some light." As the modest renovation

plans unfolded, Brillembourg's wife, Karin Waisman, who is also an artist, got into the act to provide some finishing touches.

Ultimately, the scheme involved opening up the upper-level bedroom area, enhancing the staircase that leads to it, improving a couple of bathrooms and the kitchen/dining area, and adding oculus skylights, which now flood the space with natural light.

As they went along, the creative trio left intact many of the structure's original elements—exposed ceiling beams, scuffed wood floorboards, and white-painted slatted wood >



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walls—and repurposed or improved others. Original barn doors from the front porch, for example, were painted charcoal black and brought inside to add character to the dining area, while a new floating wall—also painted black—was inserted along one side of the living space to separate it from the studio.

The eclectic décor, however, is a pure reflection of its worldly owner. Amid various works of Miller's own

spectacular art, many of them based on X-ray images of flora and fauna he recorded with scientists in the Amazon rainforest (they will appear in a book called *Radiographic*, to be published by Glitterati in July), is an offbeat collection of furnishings and objects acquired over a lifetime of travels. Setting off an orange reupholstered sofa (a castoff from Stella and Williams) are pieces of Neolithic Chinese pottery, which Miller

picked up while teaching in Hong Kong; a copper screen from Mexico, for which he traded a painting; and a coffee table he had made from a forklift pallet left behind from the studio's potato-barn days.

In contrast to the crazy-quilt mix of curios on the main floor, the bedroom upstairs is "very simple, generous, and clean," says Miller. The spare space serves as a crisp backdrop for a sculpture- and parachute-topped sofa—both made

by his friend and fellow artist John Chamberlain before he died—as well as a selection of his own mostly black-and-white works peppered with others sparked with vibrant colors. "I like the cleanliness of black and white," says Miller, "but I also love the possibilities of color. I love to blast it out and let the color sing." Either way, the awe-inspiring visual melody that emanates from his art is one that anyone would be happy to share a home with. [stevemiller.com](http://stevemiller.com) ■

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The living space features a reupholstered orange sofa (formerly owned by Frank Stella and Neil Williams), a copper screen from Mexico, and a coffee table made from a forklift pallet; Neolithic Chinese pottery and some of Miller's own artworks add shots of appealing energy to his serene bedroom; more of his art (much of it headed to an exhibition at Washington's National Academy of Sciences in July) enlivens the updated dining room, now painted black and enhanced with the structure's original barn doors.