

TEENS WHO FLY BEFORE DRIVING  
SHE'S GIVING THE LAND A REST

YELLOW BOWLS OF INTERNMENT  
GARAGE MÉNAGE: A RETREAT

# Berkshire

MAGAZINE

## Unleashed

*Photographing Freedom*

SPRING



[berkshiremag.com](http://berkshiremag.com)



BY GINA HYAMS // PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOANNA CHATTMAN



# GARAGE MÉNAGE

FAMILY MEMBERS COLLABORATE ON A MODERN COUNTRY RETREAT





### **PILOT-AUTHOR MARK VANHOENACKER AND BANKER-PHOTOGRAPHER MARK JONES**

weren't looking to buy a home in the Berkshires. They were in the area visiting family for Thanksgiving a few years back when they took a scenic drive around Lenox. Vanhoenacker spotted a for-sale sign on a one-car garage with a small apartment above it that faced a stunning vista.

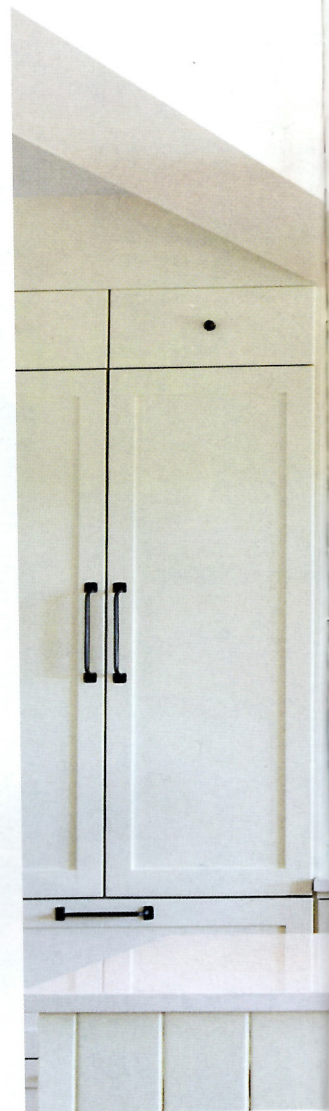
"It was just this perfect red color sitting in the middle of a snowy landscape," recalls Vanhoenacker. "I thought: Oh, my God. You couldn't make it up."

It was a place he knew well from his childhood growing up in Pittsfield and going to nature camp at nearby Mass Audubon's Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary. The setting was a stark contrast to the rental apartment the couple share in a Midtown Manhattan skyscraper. Jones, who grew up in Southampton, England, wasn't entirely enthusiastic at first.

"I kind of got convinced," says Jones. "It seemed as though it would be a really nice kind of mixture to have. Manhattan is nonstop—it's a lot to take—and it's very, very good to have a break from the craziness pretty frequently."

The first thing Vanhoenacker did was contact Elizabeth Morgan of Morgan Studio Architecture & Interiors in Shelburne





**A MIX OF AESTHETICS** Mark Jones, left, is a modernist, while his husband, Mark Vanhoenacker, right, is partial to traditional New England design. Their dear friend architect-interior designer Elizabeth Morgan created a country retreat they both could love. The furnishings are a mix of high and low end, ranging from a striped Dash & Albert stair runner to a chic dining table surrounded by Industry West chairs to a rustic West Elm coffee table on the porch. Throw blankets on page 34, on rocking chair and on ottoman, from MacKimmie Co. in Lenox.







Falls. He describes her as a dear friend, “sort of a cousin”—their families have spent holidays together for years. He asked Morgan if she thought buying the property was a good idea. “I saw the view and looked at the map and realized how close it was to town, and I was like: yes!” she says.

Vanhoenacker and Jones enlisted Morgan and builder Lou Boxer from West Stockbridge to transform the modest structure into a comfortable country retreat that would accommodate the collection of friends and extended family they have amassed during their 14 years together. The property underwent a major renovation. The former garage became a three-bedroom house, and a garage with a spacious guest suite was added by builder Luczynski Brothers from Williamstown. Morgan advised the couple on everything from purchasing the property to dealing with contractors to choosing appliances, furnishings, and even bath towels.

“Besides my personal connection to Elizabeth, she’s from the area and has this degree from Yale architecture, so it’s a combination of world-class expertise but also a love for the area,” says Vanhoenacker. “She was tremendously straightforward, and we knew throughout the process that she had our best interest at heart.”

Jones quips, “We also knew that she would be doing Thanksgiving here, so she would suffer if she screwed it up!”

It was a dream project for Morgan. “I love the Berkshires. It’s not only home, but it’s also one of the most beautiful places in the world. Architecturally, you see 200-year-old houses that fit aesthetically within the landscape in such a quiet and powerful way. As an architect, I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the visual tradition of this area, but through a modern lens,” she says.

Morgan set out to make the house a true blend of the two men’s tastes, combining the traditional New England feel of Vanhoenacker’s childhood home with bold graphic touches that please Jones, an ardent modernist.

“My instinct was to go for a glass box in the woods, but I actually now feel that perhaps that is a little too cold,” says Jones. “I didn’t





**ALL ABOUT THE VIEW** Both the main house and guest suite above the new garage feature picture windows facing a Lenox view of a meadow, woods, mountains in the distance, and lots of sky. The airy rooms are painted Benjamin Moore linen white. "It's my favorite," says architect-interior designer Elizabeth Morgan. "It has some warmth to it with some yellow-brown tones in it, but it feels like it's glowing and you read it as a pure white."

realize the kind of aesthetic we ended up here would be one I really like. It feels warm and welcoming. This place has become much more important to me than I guess I realized it would."

Jones loves cooking in the open kitchen while chatting with guests over the island countertop. "Our kitchen in New York is tiny, and it doesn't encourage one to experiment," he says. "Here, it's just a real pleasure."

The home takes full advantage of its bucolic locale, with floor-to-ceiling windows, a screened porch, and decks. There's a sense that the house extends outside. "I couldn't fathom the idea that we could have this seasonality of the house," says Vanhoenacker. "I grew up in Pittsfield in a suburban, standard house. We were kind of inside in the winter and outside in the summer." The couple eat most meals on the porch from May through October, and in winter they gather in the living room by the wood stove. Baskets filled with throw blankets make the house cozy.

Vanhoenacker is a pilot for British Airways and author of a critically acclaimed memoir about aviation titled *Skyfaring*. He often flies over the Berkshires en route from London to Mexico City. While there's not much to distinguish the region from the surrounding forested lands, he takes a certain comfort in identifying it even when most everyone else onboard sees only trees.

"I do have this childhood attraction to snow," Vanhoenacker says. "Sometimes we have friends over and there's a snowstorm. Just being here with the fire going and looking out at the snow feels like a welcome home in some way."

Jones, an avid amateur photographer, finds that the Berkshire landscape inspires his creativity. "There's a lot of sky. The view is endlessly changing and the light in the early evening is amazing," he says.

"Quite often before we go to bed, we just kind of move out to the balcony to have a look at what the night is doing. In particular, at some point in the summer, the whole field out here is lit up with fireflies. It's a very magical thing to see." ■



