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# Metropolitan Home

January/February 1983

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## House of Dreams A Renovator's Love Story



Lopez Island, Washington

# Met Home *of the* Month

*SAN FRANCISCO fashion designers  
Jeanne Allen and Marc Grant were still  
planning their getaway home when a 75  
m.p.h. storm savaged its cliff-top site on  
Lopez Island, 90 miles north of Seattle.  
Taking a cue from pioneers, the pair built*

**by Dylan Landis**

*a home from logs—20 stormproof tons.  
But a pioneering attitude makes this house  
anything but rustic. Glassed-in gables  
drench the home with sunlight; its vibrant  
palette thrusts it toward the future. Unex-  
pectedly airy, its lines clean and strong,  
their home is an American icon reborn.*





### A Cabin on the Edge

▲ Grant and Allen can step down toward the sea from a tiered deck that links their gabled log cabin (top) to its rugged cliff-top site.

GRANT AND ALLEN, husband-and-wife designers of Jeanne-Marc clothes, looked at countless photos of the archetypal cabin while interviewing 13 builders. Ultimately they rejected the cozy cliché, with logs typically cut pencil-straight, then chinked with white mortar. “We wanted no part of ‘Ye Olde Precious Cabin,’” says Grant. For this year-round Washington retreat, they settled on “a structure that looked natural,” says Grant, “but very clean, almost strict”—inspired by the spare and dramatic aesthetic of Shinto shrines, witnessed on trips to Japan, where their fabric designs are printed.

Builder Dallas Bower of Smokey Point Log Homes left his logs huge and tapered like trees, not lathed into the usual perfect symmetry. Architect Dennison Cook designed a simple, 2,200-square-foot house with open living spaces arranged around a two-story atrium. Then Grant and Allen took the innovative and graphic step of having their rafters made of

## Key to the Style

**The look:** *Rustic Refined.* Natural materials that evoke softness and warmth coexist with color and pattern rich in nuance and variety.

**The open plan:** *Sweeping interior views offer an antidote to cabin fever, caused partly by the visibly crushing weight of 20 tons of logs. The home’s two floors are loftlike, pierced by a central atrium.*

**Divide and color:** *In an open space with no interior walls, backdrops of color delineate zones for cooking, conversation, work and sleep. These hues, dazzling even on rainy days, are from Parker Paints—periwinkle (opposite) around the fireplace (Blue Lady, #2864D); red in the studio (Cherry, #6355R); turquoise in the kitchen (Key Largo, #4885A). For contrast, trim was painted dark gray (Charcoal, #5435N).*

**Lightening up:** *To funnel in sunlight, 10 French doors substitute for windows on the first floor. Upstairs, extra sunlight steals in through triangular windows under the eaves.*

**Going upscale:** *Logs will overwhelm small furnishings—pieces have to be overscaled. A lone rug would have the impact of a postage stamp, but an unmatched flock of four (right), including one of braided leather, anchors the seating. Black paint amplifies a 1930s rattan sofa.*

**Pattern play:** *A symphony of bold and sophisticated prints, from rugs to upholstery, appear to the eye to command more space than solid colors. They animate a house where solidity asserts itself in every niche. Hint: Fabrics are grounded in black or white for unity.*





**Command Space With a Jumping Mix of Prints**

▲ Living room sofas and pillows are emboldened by Jeanne-Marc fabrics, de-

signed by Grant and Allen for their own line of dresses. Their feel for strong colors

and intrepid prints took off two decades ago in Finland, where Grant was hired to print fabrics for Marimekko.



### Warmth in the Workplace

▲ To keep wallboard in their home studio from looking “suburban,” Grant and Allen painted it cherry. Two hot-hued rag rugs are paired for impact.

### Gaze out or stare straight up: All you see is nature

bare logs, rather than typical lumber. Looking up through the atrium, the view is part cabin, part cathedral—a lacework of logs, notched into rafters, pillars and beams. Downstairs, the living area (previous page) and kitchen (following page) meet over a 16-foot-long work island of butcher block. The open second floor, with areas for sleep (right) and work (above), encircles the atrium like a balcony.

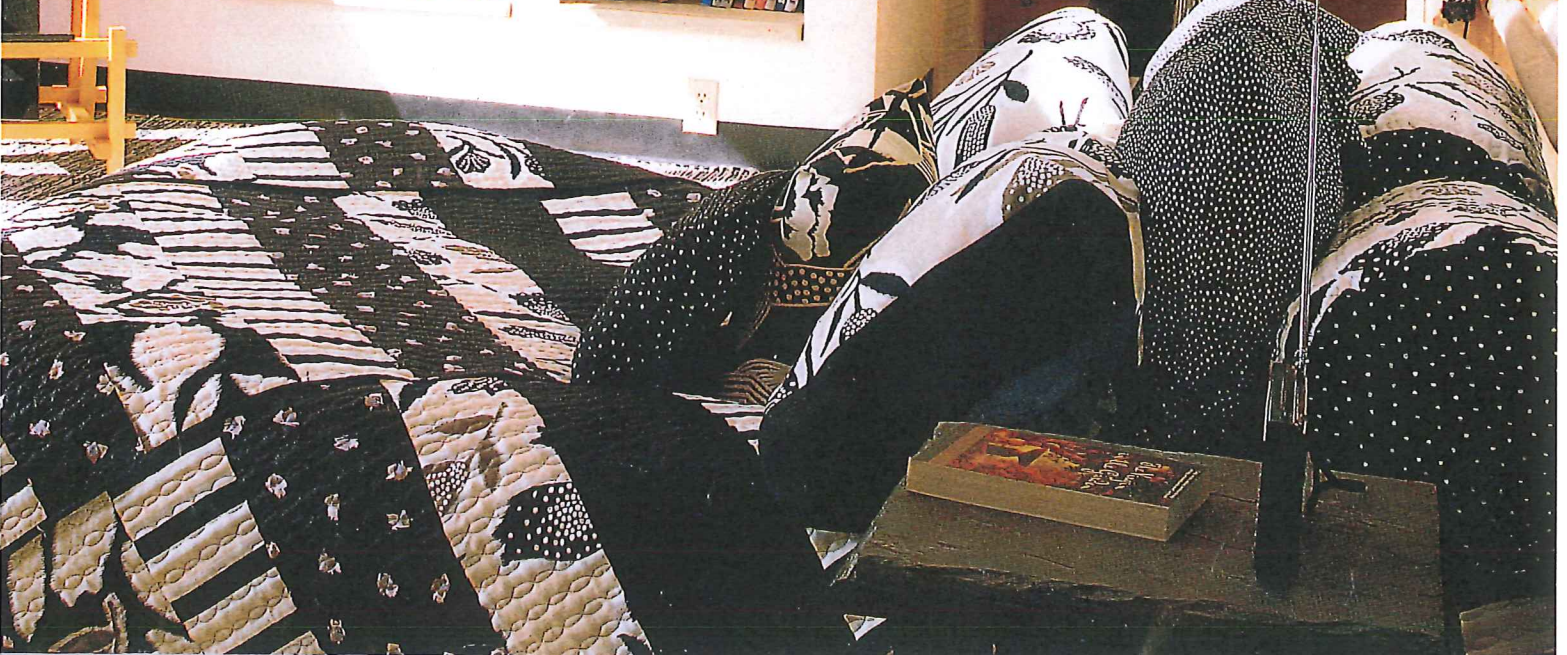
Married for 10 years and partners for twice that, Allen and Grant met at the legendary Design Research store in San Francisco in 1969 (she ran the Marimekko dress department, he created displays) and later developed their own clothing line in England, where they lived while Grant studied printmaking. They design not in tandem, but in turns. At Jeanne-Marc, Grant designs bold, multiethnic fabrics; Allen picks the zinging colors. The cabin was a typical collaboration. Grant bought the furniture; Allen chose paints—ready-mixed at the island’s one hardware store—and used Jeanne-Marc dress fabrics for upholstery. (A new Jeanne-Marc store in Walnut Creek, California, sells fabrics for the home.)

“I couldn’t put anything small in this house,” says Grant. “The logs overwhelmed it.” Sofa pillows had to be two-feet-square to



### The Intimacy of a Gable

For privacy at night, Allen and Grant unfurl a canvas shade from a roof beam behind their futon, blocking the view into the atrium. Cubbies reclaim storage space typically lost to the eaves. SEE RESOURCES



## An Escape From Cabin Fever

► On an island that grays from October to May, architect Dennison Cook planted five pairs of French doors downstairs (windows framed by massive logs can look compressed).

## Tranquility Through Texture

▼ In a reading niche the owners suggest privacy through a harmonious layering of textures: an armchair's leather patchwork, furrows of bamboo in the antique Chinese chicken coop.



register. Twig tables looked transparent until Allen painted them teal. "We filled the space with color, not just objects," she explains. Butter-colored logs course into walls of teal, red and periwinkle, each hue anchoring a niche for reading, conversation or work. "In an open space, people need these spots of privacy," says Allen.

Burly logs ruled every design decision. Craftsmanship, not mortar, holds them fast. Each is grooved from end to end so it embraces the log below, with insulation stapled in between, and the house is skewered from roof to foundation with 20 steel pins. The logs are sealed with oil; the metal roof can be ignored for years. But the cabin does demand fine-tuning. As logs lose moisture, the house will settle by six inches over three years, and pillars, raised off the floor by metal jacks, must be inched down every month.

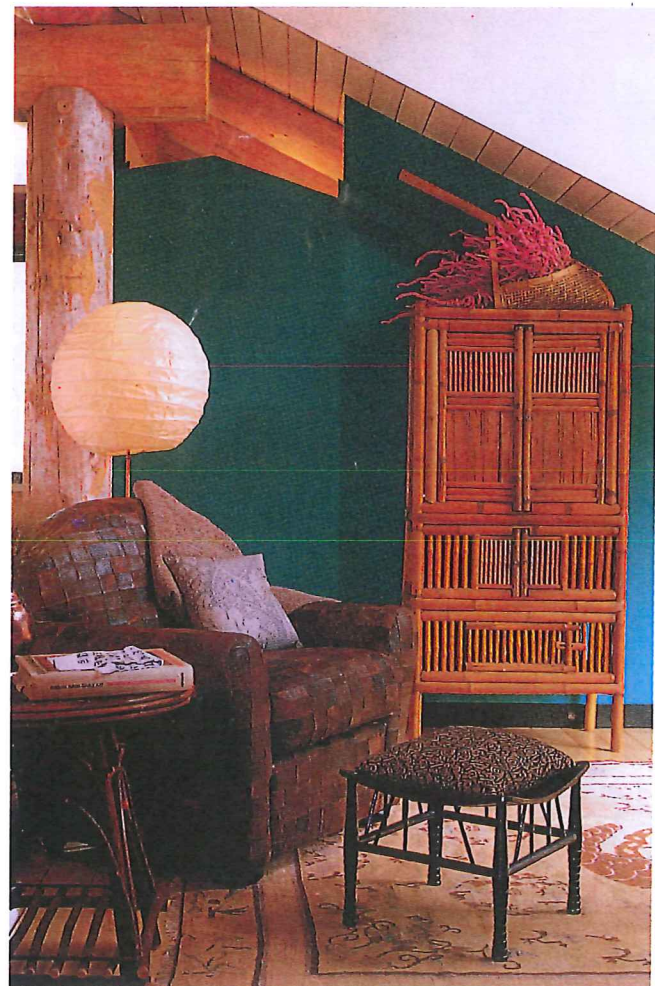
Grant and Allen planned a \$100,000 house, then learned that log cabins are hard to enlarge. Looking to the future, they doubled their budget to accommodate two decks and exposed log rafters. "The cabin is about the lightness of wood, and the crudeness, too," says Allen. "We chose logs for their strength and they gave us back the feeling of a shrine."

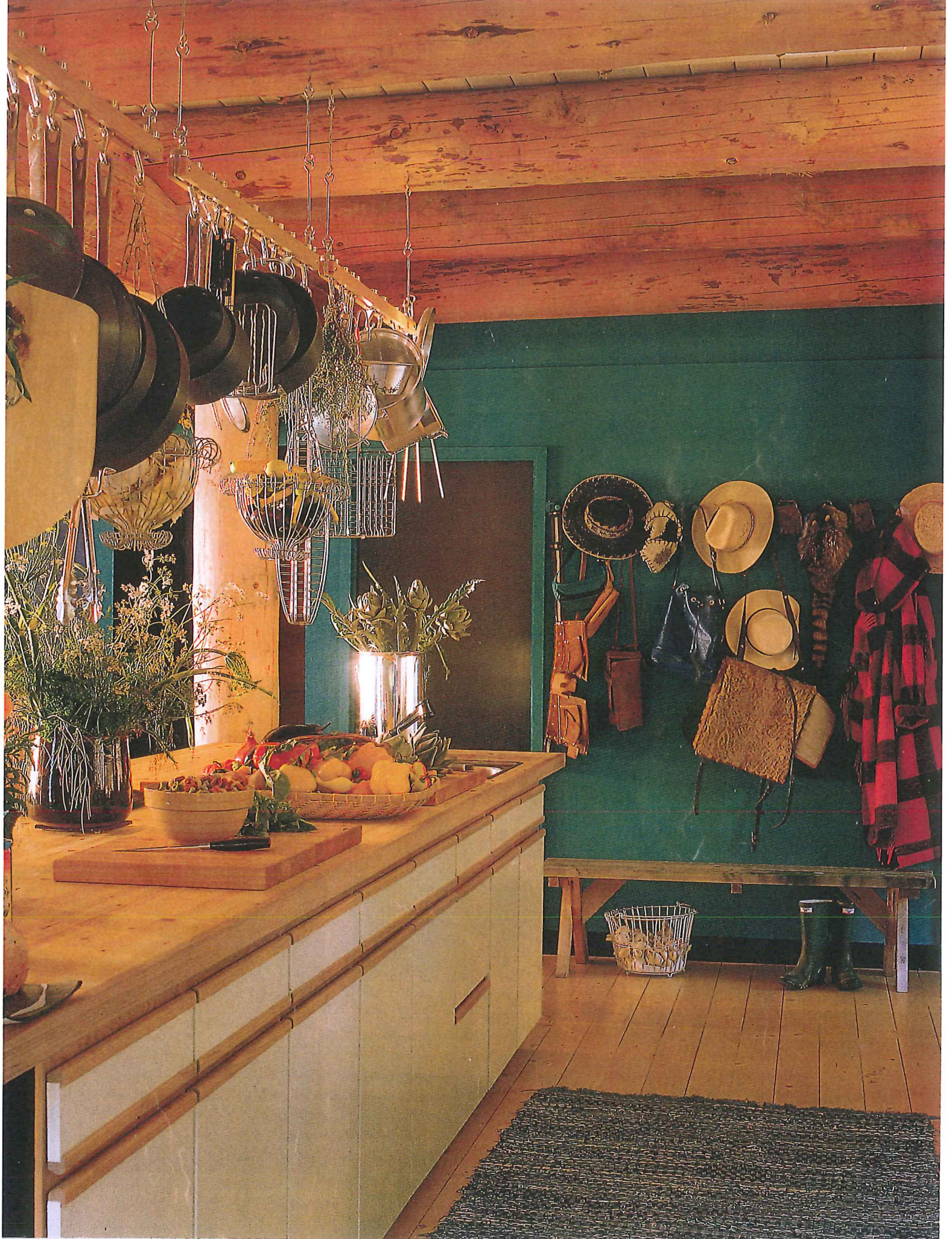
Produced by Diane Dorrans Saeks

Photographs by Jack Winston

## Making Space in A Log Kitchen

► No overhead cupboards can be mounted on the logs, which settle over time, so the kitchen island runs 16 feet long with cabinets end to end. Outlets, hidden under the counter's edge, appear every 12 inches on all four sides. Stools can pull up at the overhangs, and three pot racks combine for nine feet of storage on the hooks.







# Telephotos

## Architectural Camouflage

▼ When a pipe over the stove hood interrupted the kitchen's log walls, Grant integrated it into his design. He boxed it in with wallboard, then painted it charcoal to match the cabin's trim. Butcher-block countertops are butter-colored, a natural extension of the logs.

## Bedding Down With Color

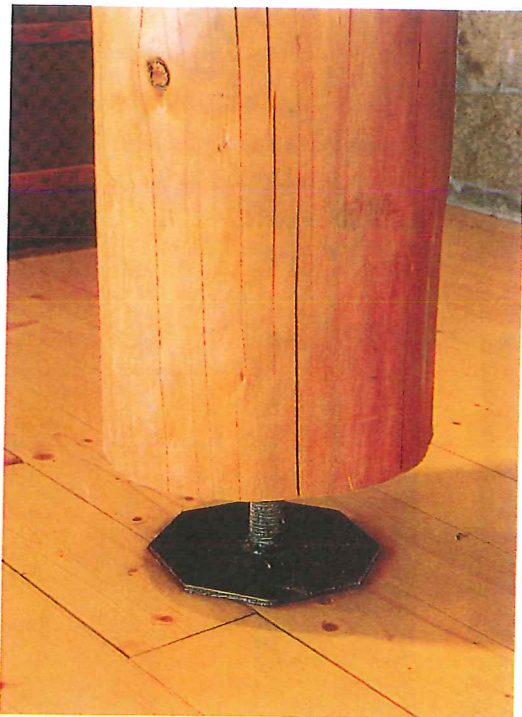
► Traveling to Japan for custom-made fabric, Allen and Grant bring home an Eastern influence that appears in their cabin, and in their new line of bedding for Martex. Windfish, a new Jeanne-Marc design for sheets, is styled after the fish-patterned kites flown on Boy Day in Japan. It retails in May.



## Flexing Points of Light

▼ Two dozen lamps would clutter the cabin, but these 24 halogen snake lights coiling out of the beams are adjustable and nearly invisible. Wires ride the tops of the beams. SEE RESOURCES





### Lowering the Roof Beams

▲ To ease pressure on the pillars as the settling log cabin bears down, a screw jack under each one gets loosened periodically with a wrench until the pillar meets the floor.



### A Refuge for Guests

▲ Because visitors like a sense of escape, guest futons are nestled into a corner upstairs—not canted into the space like other furnishings—and wrapped in a muted brown-and-white checked Marimekko print. Painted bamboo tables echo the logs; the cabin's one traditional lamp suggests a room, not an open zone.

### Elegance Among the Logs

◀ Curvy, modernist furnishings against the linear horizon of logs create dramatic tension—and also bring out the logs' gently rounded shape. In a first-floor reading spot, the owners chose an amoeboid 1950s mirror ("it's so graphic it can stand up to logs") and Le Corbusier's sinuous 1920s chaise.

