

package deal

A couple makes a scenic spread
their own, livestock and all.

photography by Brian Droege



home of the month



During G. L. and Susan Hoffman's first visit to their sixteen-acre home in Orono last May, the house was the last thing to win them over.

"We fell in love with the llamas first," says Susan, referring to the previous owner's sixty llamas, six of whom still inhabit the white barn on the property. "Then we fell in love with the pool. And then we said, 'Who cares what the house is like?'"

Thankfully, the five-level white-stucco home with its impressive bank of vertical windows on the north side didn't disappoint. But with only two bedrooms, the twelve-year-old house couldn't accommodate the Hoffmans' college-aged son and daughter—despite its 5,000 square feet.

It was time for Susan to go to work. As owner of Susan Hoffman Designs in Wayzata, she regarded the project as an artist would a blank canvas. This was her opportunity to remake a house in her own eclectic style. "Being in the business that I'm in, I love to remodel, and I love to change things—to take something and create something new out of it," Susan says.

The deck above the media room became a bedroom and bath. In an effort to reclaim space, a portion of



Left: One side of the Hoffman house boasts an impressive bank of windows. Inset: Llamas make their home on sixteen acres. Above: Double-cane-backed chairs flank the metal-topped dining-room table.



A characteristically exotic leopard-print ottoman joins a black chenille chair on the hearth room's Tibetan rug from Endless Knot. The tufted chair by the window is upholstered in the same fabric as the dining-room chairs, creating a sense of continuity that's essential with an open floor plan.

Below, left: The Hoffmans' master-bedroom suite, as well as most of the home, includes items from P.O.S.H., Susan's home-accent and furniture boutique, in Wayzata. She plans to move the store in May to a warehouse space in downtown Minneapolis.



the master-bedroom suite—which once overlooked a rec room three stories below, adjacent to the outdoor pool—was filled in with a floor to create an office.

A Steinway piano anchors the spacious hearth room, where most families might have a TV. A half-wall replaced a railing in the loft, serving as an attractive backdrop for prints of the Roman alphabet.

Exotic items appear throughout the house, including a zebra-skin rug and two patina-finished, hammered-metal-topped tables on bases of elk horns and antlers. Leather-covered suitcases from Maitland Smith serve as a stylish storage area for piano music.

Every piece illustrates Susan's adventurous tastes. "We certainly have a lot of clients who aren't daring," she says. "I feel like I can be with my home."

The Hoffmans have lived in seven



houses during their twenty-three-year marriage. This one is her husband's favorite. As cofounder of Varitronics, a lettering-machine manufacturer, and the signage company Insignia Systems, G. L. enjoys the knotty-pine-paneled office in the barn, just a few steps from the llamas.

Even though the animals made a winning first impression, the Hoffmans found the whole package perfect from the get-go. "I knew before we even got in the house that we were going to buy it," Susan says. "We were just moved by the property."

—I. S.

A black-granite wood-burning fireplace, paisley flannel cushions on the wooden armchairs, and a red sofa bed backed by an antique trough make for comfortable lounging in the family room. During the warm months, the room opens onto a patio with a pastoral view.