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# Primary Concerns

When it's time to leave work behind, Joe and Victoria Klein happily head home to their Pelham residence, filled with distinctive pieces—and plenty of books.

BY: SUSAN HODARA PUBLISHED DECEMBER 30, 2008 AT 01:47 PM



He is one of this country's top political commentators, a man who has covered presidential campaigns for decades and gained international renown when he was identified as the anonymous author of the roman à clef, Primary Colors. She is an interior designer with a master's degree in architecture and a lifelong love of color, textiles, and historic preservation. Whenever they get a well-deserved work break, Joe and Victoria Klein bask in their stucco-and-stone Pelham house, built in 1902 and stamped with their personal possessions and passions.

In addition to the distinctive pieces that reside in this house with the Kleins and their two children, Sophie, 22, and Teddy, 18, books hold a place of prominence. "We're both addicted readers," says Joe, whose regular Time magazine column, "In the Arena," covers national and

international affairs. He reads three at once: "one on American politics, one on the Middle East, and the third a good novel." Victoria prefers fiction, some selections chosen by her husband.

They also share an appreciation for their home, which was designed and decorated by Victoria (owner of an eight-year-old eponymous design firm) and is treasured by Joe, whose coverage of the presidential election kept him on the road for much of 2008. "There are so many things in this house that I love," he says. Here, they select a few of their favorites.

## festivals and guests

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This 18th-century English Sheraton dining table and the eight George Hepplewhite chairs that surround it once belonged to Joe’s parents. “My parents were great party givers,” recalls the writer. “They frequently invited guests from other countries. I think that’s part of what led me to what I do today.” The mahogany table has set the scene for many celebratory meals. “Like my parents,” Joe says, “we also invite people from overseas.”



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- Guest Wishes »**
- Guest Intentions »**
- Make Room for the Kids »**
- Design Destination »**
- Room to Grow »**

**Departments**

- Throw Together »
- Masterpiece Master Bath »
- Creature Comforts »
- Shop »
- Primary Concerns »
- The Bed Remade »
- The Quick Comeback of the Slow Cooker »
- Cruise Control »
- Buy »



**the light stuff**

During a 2001 trip to Rome, when the Kleins were celebrating their 20th wedding anniversary, this circa 1950 lamp seemed to follow them wherever they went. “It was in the window of a shop, and we kept passing it, spotting it from buses and cabs,” Victoria says of the purple Murano glass piece, which now illuminates the couple’s bedroom. “Before we left, Joe bought it for me as an anniversary gift.”

**comfy couch**

Victoria purchased a pair of George Smith sofas, upholstered in coral damask patterned with birds and flowers, in 1996, shortly after the family moved to Pelham. “This is the most unbelievably comfortable sofa,” she says. “It’s frumpy looking—not stylish—but invites you to relax. There’s no way you can be uptight while sitting on it.”





### reserved seating

“I always dreamed of having a plush leather reading chair,” Joe explains, pointing to the hand-colored George Smith armchair that Victoria chose for his office. The piece came with a matching ottoman, now piled high with books. “At the end of the day, no matter how late it is, I spend one or two hours here,” he says.

### the past preserved

The summertime portrait of Sophie and Teddy that hangs in the Kleins’ bedroom was painted by Victoria’s good friend, artist Donald White. The painting captures the children, then 9 and 5, resting on the porch behind the Indian swing. “I can see them now as they were then,” says Joe.



### in full swing

In India, wooden swings—like this hand-carved piece sporting an inlaid image of a Raja—are common. “My friend took me to a shop in Delhi the size of a football field,” Victoria says. “It was like ABC Carpet magnified 100 times. I fell in love with this swing and had it crated and shipped home.”

### stem the tide

Victoria collects flower frogs, objects designed to sit at the



bottom of a water container to hold the stems of a flower arrangement. “Usually you don’t see the flower frog because it’s underwater.” But this piece from the 1920s, discovered in a Pelham shop, is different: it features a Chinese peasant, his foot propped on a rock dotted with holes to hold flowers.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN O'DONNELL

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