

MA SHEREE AMOUR

EMBRACING GLAMOROUS ASPECTS OF LIFE IN THE FISHBOWL OF THE CONTEMPORARY ART WORLD ALONGSIDE HER RURAL OHIO ROOTS, ARTIST **SHEREE HOVSEPIAN** FINDS THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS IN BUCOLIC BRIDGEHAMPTON.

BY ALLISON BERG

PHOTOGRAPHY BY COSTAS PICADAS

The Iranian-born, American contemporary artist is installing her first Hamptons solo show at Halsey McKay Gallery. Having barely returned from two months in Bruton, England, where her husband, celebrated artist Rashid Johnson, completed a residency at Hauser & Wirth Somerset, Sheree Hovsepian anticipates a simultaneously exhilarating and tranquil summer. She takes a pause in the middle of overseeing the final touches on a tree house for the couple's young son, Julius, rehanging art they have acquired through savvy trades with friends, and awaiting a flurry of summer houseguests. The imminent onset of "the season" is palpable.

When searching for their Hamptons home, the pair craved open floor plans, high ceilings, acreage, and extra bedrooms for friends and family. Initially, their now beloved residence seemed unsuitably conventional with its shingled exterior, paneled walls, and golfer-print wallpaper in the powder room. With the help of interior designers Ashe + Leandro, they looked beyond the previous owner's French country style to make the sprawling, woody >



Sheree Hovsepian, in a Balmain caftan, with her ink and walnut oil work *Artificial Selection* (2015) in the upstairs gallery.

STYLING BY ALYSSA DINEEN



Rashid Johnson's *Untitled* (2015) walnut and aluminum dining table has become the nucleus of the home, with Apparatus light pendants suspended above. Johnson's *Untitled Anxious Man* (2015) hangs on the back wall, and a vintage Scarpa chair is perched in the corner.



Hovsepian's *Untitled #29* (2013) photogram sits atop a hand-carved African stool. The concrete coat rack is by Misha Kahn; a Jon Pestoni hangs above.

enclave their own. “The mission was to give a traditional house an edge with art, furniture, and fixtures,” says Ariel Ashe. A little Benjamin Moore Superwhite paint, world-class art, Moroccan rugs, and collectable design later—and voilà: The traditional architecture now thrives harmoniously with an eclectic mix of modern and contemporary interiors. An airy,

art-infused entrance unfolds into a light-flooded living room spotlighting an elevated conversation between sophisticates like a 1963 Sergio Rodrigues sofa, a dreamy 1965 Sam Gilliam painting, a 1970s Milo Baughman brass bench, and a 2013 Campana Brothers sofa. After that, comfort is king on the journey through the kitchen and spacious family areas.

“Art is a part of who we are, but it doesn’t define the space,” Hovsepian asserts. The clear exception is a 20-seat walnut dining table, designed by Johnson, bearing his characteristic hot-branded crosshair symbols. Overlooking the tennis court and pool in the distance, this piece places the dining room as the heart of the household. The pulse remains steady

throughout the remainder of this sanctuary with wall works and sculptures by artists including Hank Willis Thomas, Heidi Norton, Chris Martin, and Oscar Murillo. It is apparent, from the ample driveway, bordered on either side by a trampoline and basketball court, to the elaborate backyard playground and the centrally located pool table, that fun, friends, and family

take center stage here.

As a multidisciplinary artist, Sheree Hovsepian’s practice includes photograms, drawing, sculpture, assemblage, and collage. Though having formally studied photography, she is not interested in recapturing scenes in a traditional photographic sense. Like Sophie Calle, Annette Messenger, Lorna Simpson, and Christian Boltanski, her interests lie in >

Johnson's Room (2012), made of mirrored tile, black soap, wax, vinyl, and shea butter, watches over a custom sofa in the master bedroom.



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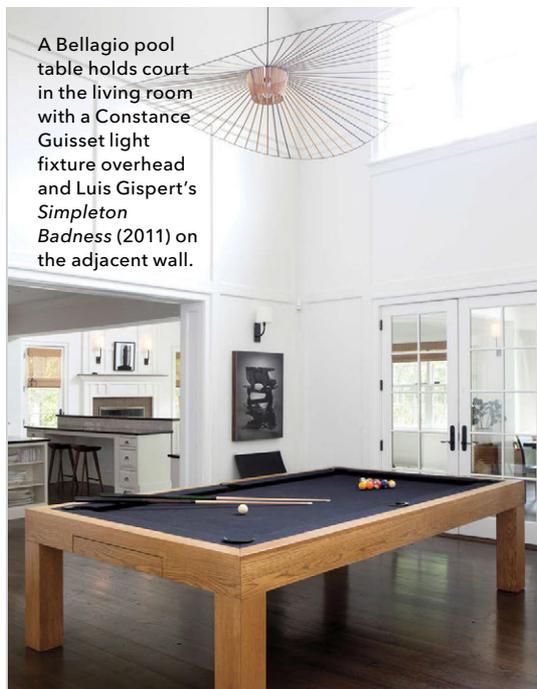
—SHEREE HOVSEPIAN

utilizing photography's materiality and gestures—the actual paper, the romance of the darkroom, and how a camera can monumentalize something and empower the person holding it. “I think of it as almost a performance,” she says. Using a vocabulary filled with materials the cerebral creative has in her studio, she is thinking about how to formulate a new language. The freedom that comes with trying something new and not knowing the rules is intriguing and produces a duality of chaos and control. The boundary pushing is evident in her newest assemblages and drawings at Halsey McKay.

A bare-bones basement studio allows Hovsepian to experiment with local resources. Nevertheless, summers are mostly about reading, writing, and researching. The Hamptons is a restorative respite that simultaneously provides the family with access to culture and activities. Decompressing lets her focus, but a perfect summer also includes entertaining and being entertained. Giggling, Hovsepian confides that, between fitness classes, gardening, and tennis, she finds herself constantly in grocery stores. Another secret indulgence is T.J. Maxx. “There is something strangely therapeutic about meandering through that store.”

Being a flourishing artist, supporting her husband's career, and being a great mom requires superior time management skills—admittedly, Hovsepian can take on too much. Bridgehampton has become her happy place where she carves out time for herself. Exercising daily, going into the studio a bit, and sharing quality time with family feeds on itself. “It makes me a whole person—a better mother, a better wife, and a better artist.” ■

A Bellagio pool table holds court in the living room with a Constance Guisset light fixture overhead and Luis Gispert's Simpleton Badness (2011) on the adjacent wall.



Hovsepian's Untitled #39 (2013), from the Haptic Wonders series, hangs above Heidi Norton's Medicine Plant (2010) sculpture. The artist's Untitled #94 (2013), also from Haptic Wonders, rests under the console.

