HOMEBOOK

THE EAST HAMPTON STAR
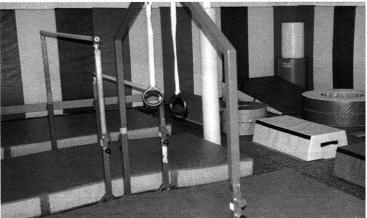
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Workouts can be fun

A trainer takes the home gym in hand.
By **Amanda Angel**

Photos Morgan McGivern

As a personal trainer, Christof Prus was dismayed to find homeowners who installed gyms but avoided using them. The reason, he said, was that their gyms resembled dungeons or torture chambers. Installed as afterthoughts, with poor lighting and poorer planning, gyms often wind up in cement-enclosed rooms underneath meticulously decorated upper stories.

To add injury to insult, homeowners often buy equipment that doesn't suit their needs. ". . .You look at a house and see that the bathrooms, kitchens, and the entire house in general looks so complete and thoughtfully put together, and then you see the gym, which almost always is in this dark and unappealing part of the house with some questionable equipment choices," he said.

Though he will probably not be able to elevate the treadmills and weights from basements to upper levels, Mr. Prus's company, 3D Fitness Design, has been invigorating allotted spaces. He hopes the people who use them will be reinvigorated as well.

Having been trained in strength and conditioning at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, Hunter College, and the American College of Sports Medicine, and having worked as a coach and physical education teacher, Mr. Prus is familiar with how hard it can be to stay motivated. His goal in designing a gym is to create a space that encourages a person to work out.

"There's a lot of psychology in sports and exercise," he said. "I have to find out what is their motivation. Is it top-of-the-line equipment, or is it having a highly aesthetic gym?"

Budgets and space constraints limit what a homeowner can do, of course, and, although commercial equipment is much better than equipment advertised for personal use, it costs a lot more and takes up a greater amount of space. After the budget is set, Mr. Prus uses three criteria to choose equipment for his clients: the

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clients' sports history, injuries, and fitness goals.

"If someone had knee replacement surgery and has ongoing problems with joints, he probably should consider an elliptical," he said, referring to a machine that doesn't put impact on the joints. "You also want the choices of equipment to reflect what appears to be attractive to them."

Unlike his extensive background in physical fitness, Mr. Prus has no formal design training, but he calls design a lifelong passion.

In planning a gym, Mr. Prus looks for furniture and fixtures he considers dynamic. He likes to put fans in gyms, even ones that circulate on low settings, because of their constant motion. And he usually chooses cool colors as a backdrop. "As you exercise, your body temperature goes up, that's why I choose minty colors, light blue, glacier, silver. Anything that consciously or subconsciously cools the body," he said.

He also prefers metal structures to wood. "I don't really use any wood. It's something that is natural and soft and is better in a library."

Lately, he has designed gyms for children. His first children's gym was for a Further Lane, East Hampton, family that wanted to keep their 3 and 5-year-old children active while indoors. Because he was forced to veer from his self-described "Bauhaus aesthetic," it was a challenge, but one he embraced, he said.

He used large geometric pillows, just firm enough to hold the weight of an 8-year-old but soft enough to catch a falling 3-year-old, .

"Anything that deprives children of play, and forces them to learn instructions, they're not going to want to do," he said. "If the children enter the gym and all they do is start playing, it's a sign that I've done it right."

The movable shapes can also serve as large building blocks, which Mr. Prus said engage the muscles as well as the imagination. His thinking about adult gyms parallels those for children: Incorporate a variety of activities and equipment so exercise remains fun. It's just the size of the toys that differs. ✦

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