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Architect Thomas Kligerman and decorator Elissa Cullman compose a Long Island beachfront hideaway in tune with its halcyon setting

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Building a home can sometimes be like going on an extended journey without an itinerary—

scary perhaps, but filled with the promise of great rewards. Such was the case for one Boston-based couple when they planned their ideal seaside residence. The pair envisioned a house somewhere along that storied strip of New York coastline known as the Hamptons, a place they'd summered many years before and where they could avoid the nonstop social commitments they'd encounter in Nantucket or Martha's Vineyard. The dwelling needed to be large enough to accommodate them and their three grown children, and they wanted it to have the look of an English-style cottage on the outside but with easygoing rooms inside—"a place where my kids could just arrive, kick off their shoes, and run into the ocean," says the wife.

The light-flooded foyer welcomes with its warm, neutral palette and natural finishes; the bespoke door hardware is by the Nanz Co., and the steps are made of reclaimed oak. Reilly Windows & Doors white-oak doors and painted-mahogany-framed windows are used throughout the home.

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Wood-frame settees by Anthony Lawrence-Belfair; anthonylawrence.com.

Curved sofa by Kimberly Denman for Jean de Merry (T); jeandemerry.com.

Rug by Beauvais Carpets (T); beauvaiscarpets.com.

Fragmented Crack cocktail table by Based Upon; basedupon.com.

Bronze side table by C. J. Peters; cjpeters.net.

(T) means item available only to the trade.



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When they spied an acre and a quarter of oceanfront property for sale in the village of Sagaponack, whose open stretches of farmland and near-deserted beaches make it one of the Hamptons’ most desirable addresses, they knew they’d found the right setting. To help refine and realize their idyllic vision, the couple enlisted Elissa Cullman of the Manhattan interior design firm Cullman & Kravis to spearhead the project. It was a role she’d played for their other much-loved (but more formal) residences: their principal home in Boston and a Fifth Avenue pied-à-terre. “I wanted to feel like I was at the beach. I didn’t want a big, fancy house—I wanted it to be laid-back, breezy, and simple,” says the wife. “And I trust Ellie implicitly.”

Cullman’s first order of business was identifying an architect who seemed suited to the task, and she recommended Thomas Kligerman, a partner at the firm Ike

The kitchen has vintage ceiling lights and cabinet fronts of painted glass; the range is by Wolf, and the stool is by Hollywood at Home.

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Kligerman Barkley, which has offices in New York and San Francisco. Although Cullman had never worked with Kligerman before, she'd known him for 20 years and felt that his comfort with both modern and traditional design, as well as his talent for creating houses that coexist harmoniously with their natural surroundings, made him a good fit. A few sketches and one meeting later, the clients agreed. "The most important part of my job is going on the journey together," Cullman says. "If I knew what the house was going to look like from the minute we started, I would be bored to tears—I wouldn't want to come to work."

The adventure that followed involved a year of design work punctuated by complex negotiations with the local architectural review board over such issues as the height of the house (restricted to two stories) and how close to the ocean it could sit. "The variances easily added almost nine months to the process," Kligerman recalls. The continued

Peak-capped windows and fieldstone chimneys lend distinctive character to the house's asymmetrical profile.





delays were frustrating, but in the end they got a lucky break. “The regulations were changed and all of the maps of the coastline were revised, so the house could be moved back and up from where it was originally stipulated to be,” says the architect. More square footage between the house and the ocean produced a sizable expanse that was perfect for a 50-foot swimming pool.

For the exterior, Kligerman employed a variety of traditional Shingle Style touches—fieldstone chimneys, fanciful variations in shingle pattern, rounded pilasters—inspired by such classicists as Bruce Price and John Calvin Stevens. Inside, meanwhile, he created a floor plan tailored to 21st-century living, with large communal spaces (the bedrooms are pushed to the corners of the house) and an absence of hallways. Finishes, too, are refined and fresh: custom

In a guest room, an artwork by Uta Barth is mounted over the bed while a Zak Prekop painting hangs above a vintage George Nakashima desk and chair.





polished-plaster walls, distinct knife-edged moldings, and a steel staircase with reclaimed-white-oak steps. “We all wanted something that felt like a good indigenous neighbor,” says Kligerman. “But when you walk in the door, there’s a shift to a modern sensibility, one that manages to incorporate the clients’ contemporary art collection.”

The tone for the furnishings was set by Cullman when she and her colleague, Alyssa Urban, began shopping with the wife—a process that took them from Los Angeles to London to Paris. “We visited midcentury dealers, where she found a vocabulary that resonated with her,” Cullman says. Though the client hadn’t known it at the start, it was exactly what she’d been looking for, explaining, “Once you have your footing, finding the vision is simple.”

Waterworks shower and sink fittings complement the master bath’s oak cabinetry and reclaimed-oak floor.

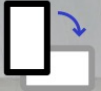
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A key moment on those trips was the discovery in London of the fragmented bronze cocktail table by Based Upon that anchors the living room—a piece Cullman had customized. To complement the table, they introduced a circa-1960 Jules Leleu armchair, a bespoke Beauvais carpet, and a range of contemporary works by female art stars, including Teresita Fernández and Ghada Amer, lending the room an atmosphere that is at once soothing and sumptuous. But it's the master bath, with its glass-walled shower offering an unobstructed view out to the Atlantic, that best captures the home's spirit—one that embraces luxury as much as it celebrates nature.

So pleased are the clients with the residence that they're now expanding it. After jumping at the chance to acquire an adjacent lot, with the goal of building a four-bedroom guesthouse, they took little time deciding on the architect and designer. The best adventures, after all, are worth repeating. □

The master bedroom enjoys uninterrupted views of the ocean.



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