

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AUTHORITY

JUNE 2015

Summer Bliss

GIORGIO
ARMANI'S
SAINT-TROPEZ
PARADISE



PLUS: SENSATIONAL GETAWAYS
IN ASPEN, THE HAMPTONS,
MARTHA'S VINEYARD, AND MORE ...

FIELD OF VISION

ON A BUCOLIC HAMPTONS PROPERTY, ARCHITECT
DEBORAH BERKE AND DESIGNER THOMAS O'BRIEN
INGENIOUSLY REIMAGINE AN INVITING FAMILY GETAWAY

TEXT BY WILLIAM L. HAMILTON PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAURA RESEN
PRODUCED BY ANITA SARSIDI

A Bridgehampton, New York, house devised by the architecture firm Deborah Berke Partners, with interior designer Thomas O'Brien of Aero Studios, nestles into serene gardens by Gunn Landscape Architecture. For details see Sources.



Few things are simpler than the pleasures of a summer day: golden sun, rustling breezes, kaleidoscopes of shade. When the location is the South Fork of New York's Long Island, add ocean-salted air to those attractions. But that atmosphere can be as elusive as a butterfly to capture and enjoy to the fullest. What one requires is a well-designed net, such as the seven-acre compound in Bridgehampton that was created a few years ago for a Manhattan psychologist, her investor husband, and their two daughters. It's a getaway that the couple says "lives the way we like to live," meaning easily but with loads of style.

Alternating pale-gray brick walls with weathered tongue-and-groove cedar siding, the single-story, 4,500-square-foot main house seems to rest quietly amid tall grasses, as attuned to the natural world as it is respectful of it. (The building has been certified LEED Gold.) Its understated beauty comes as no surprise considering that the homeowners worked with a team of professionals who are masters of low-key elegance: architect Deborah Berke, interior designer Thomas O'Brien of Aero Studios, and landscape architect Alec Gunn, all based in New York City.

"Early in the process with the clients, we did a significant amount of site planning," Berke recalls, noting that a primary

concern was, "How do we nestle the house into this property so that it feels completely right?" The clients had been vacationing here for nearly 20 years, in a 1970s dwelling by Norman Jaffe, the late East End modernist, and though they loved the home—they were married there—it could no longer accommodate them and the multitude of relatives who make frequent visits. "I'm one of five siblings, and my wife is one of four," the husband explains. "So in the summer, it's all about family."

Thus was born the idea of a compound, an inviting assortment of buildings of varying sizes, shapes, and uses, all spread out and strategically placed. Berke thought a bigger house should be built

Above, from left: A large Richard Prince artwork surveys the living room, which also includes a pair of club chairs (clad in a Great Plains fabric) and a Jonas sofa facing a George Nakashima cocktail table; the rug is a Thomas O'Brien design for Safavieh. In a corner of the room, a Louise Bourgeois work hangs next to a Carlo Mollino table hosting an O'Brien lamp from Aero and an Isamu Noguchi standing sculpture.

where the Jaffe structure had long stood, close to the property's largest tree, a towering maple estimated to be up to 125 years old. Shifted and repositioned, the Jaffe is now used for visitors, joining a Berke-designed greenhouse, pool pavilion, and two guest cottages.

Responding to the couple's desire for an indoor-outdoor lifestyle, Berke made the new main house open in every direction,



with mahogany-framed glass doors and sliding walls taking in curving beds of ornamental grasses, flowering shrubs, and perennials that give way to a clipped lawn, a fescue meadow, and thick woodlands. The master bedroom faces east so the rising sun can be the couple's alarm clock. Bluestone floors extend outside to become terraces and in-between places—a screened porch and exterior dining areas—while clerestory windows provide air circulation without buffeting winds. "It's almost like the house breathes," observes the wife.

Just as Berke incorporated summer pleasures into the building's elements, O'Brien translated the experience into furnishings. The decorator had worked with the clients on previous residences and has guided their aesthetic evolution. In the beginning they were committed to French modernism and the work of

Charlotte Perriand and Jean Prouvé. O'Brien introduced them to other midcentury Europeans, namely Italians Paolo Buffa and Carlo Mollino, and roughly contemporary Americans like Harry Bertoia, several of whose sound sculptures are on display, and George Nakashima. Significant pieces are paired with lively but less dear companions (the study's Luisa and Ico Parisi executive desk topped by a driftwood lamp, for example), in the manner of disparate guests seated next to each other to encourage unexpected conversation. "I like rooms to be weighted with important stuff, but it's really about what's good and what's handsome," the designer says.

Gestures familiar to anyone who has spent summers by the sea bring additional depth to the interiors: Walls are covered in hemp or in woven silk that recalls grass cloth, and kitchen stools



Clockwise from above: The dining room's circa-1963 Arteluce pendant light is from Bernd Goeckler Antiques, and the table and chairs are vintage Hans J. Wegner; atop the midcentury sideboard from Aero is a Harry Bertoia sculpture. Aero Studios created the oak cabinetry in the kitchen; the billiard light is a Thomas O'Brien design from Aero, the range and hood are by Wolf, and the barstools are by Soane Britain. A Laura Resen photograph is propped next to the kitchen's wall clock, both from Aero.

Kantan lounge chairs are positioned alongside the pool. **Opposite, from top:** A table is set for alfresco dining. Astilbe, peonies, and salvia bloom in the garden.





Thomas O'Brien pendant lights from Aero join an Alexandre Noll sculpture (far end) and a Donald Baechler painting (right) in the entrance hall; an Alexander Calder lithograph is mounted at the bottom of the staircase.

resemble seats on sport-fishing boats. Collected over decades by the clients, the art follows tonal and textural suit, from sepia-tone Louise Bourgeois engravings in the living room to the entrance hall's chunky mahogany Alexandre Noll sculpture.

The grounds have a similarly casual attitude. "Not too precious," Gunn, the landscape architect, says, noting that the clients wanted the property to have a generous spirit and be low maintenance. The site meanders, with only gentle directives to encourage what Gunn calls "a sense of wonder." The plantings were carefully considered, in part to satisfy the LEED requirements, and they include drought-resistant wildflowers and meadow grasses; a purple-flowered wild bermagot grows close to the house, its citrus scent wafting in through the open windows.

"Soulful" is how the wife describes this familial getaway, and she points out that though the new house is only three summers old, its rooms and the land they reach out to seem to have matured together over generations. Given today's culture of impatience, O'Brien observes, "It's more common that someone just wants a house done quickly"—but as proved so appealingly here, a contemplative approach can result in a family retreat of rare distinction. □

Right: Antique Japanese stencils are displayed with a vintage stool and chest in a guest room; all are from Aero. **Below:** The master bath's vanity was custom made by Aero Studios.



Right: Thomas O'Brien designed the bed in the master suite, upholstering the headboard in a Donghia fabric and using a Christopher Farr Cloth textile for the coverlet. At the foot of the bed is a vintage André Borderie table, while the circa-1945 armchair is attributed to Mogens Lassen; the '60s French floor lamp is from ReGeneration, and the carpet is by Crosby Street Studios.

