

SEPT. 7, 2003

AtHOME

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Dinner At
A North Fork
Vineyard

Picking
A Countertop

Packing Up
The Backyard
For Winter

Signature Homes

The houses architects design for themselves



The living room / dining room area of the Masi home in Amagansett invites the seasons inside.

Spare And Serene

BY JAN TYLER



AtHOME

When architect Paul Masi designed an

Amagansett house for himself and his wife, Elizabeth, the two agreed it would be crucial to experience the seasons beyond the home's walls.

And so among the house's innovative features is a "disappearing wall." Masi used three commercial garage doors, paneled entirely in glass, to separate the living area from the outdoor deck.

When the doors roll upward, the deck and house flow together. The Brazilian mahogany deck, with a sunken outdoor fireplace, allows the Masis to enjoy the natural landscape year-round.

When architects design their own homes, they have the ultimate control. They can micro-manage every detail, creating the exact atmosphere and mood they desire. Masi wanted to design the simple-modern house for Elizabeth, as an ode to her. "I wanted the house to reflect what she enjoys in life, what makes it better for her, how the space would enhance her well-being," he said of the home he dubbed "Elizabeth H." (Healy is Elizabeth's maiden name.)

"Just being out here was a good start for both of us," Elizabeth said. The couple — he's 31, she's 32 — was eager to slow the pace of their past lives: The homes in Garden City and Hicksville where they

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Spare And Serene

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grew up, their college years and their career-building jobs in Manhattan. She was in financial accounting and is now a commercial leasing agent in East Hampton. He earned a master's degree in architecture at Harvard University and is now a partner of veteran Sag Harbor architect Harry Bates. They live in Amagansett full time.

Initially, the architect in Paul focused on Elizabeth as a client with a personal “want list” — what professionals call the architectural program. “Usually that boils down to the client asking for x number of bedrooms and baths and the requisite living spaces,” said Paul, “but with Elizabeth, it translated into the aesthetics. We found much common ground on that score, things like simplicity and serenity, a need for a connection to the outdoors, a way to experience the seasons beyond the walls, that sense of change.”

After a series of intensive, think-tank-a-deux sessions, they agreed on style. “Very spare, with nothing in plain sight that didn’t have to be there, not even wood for the fireplace.”

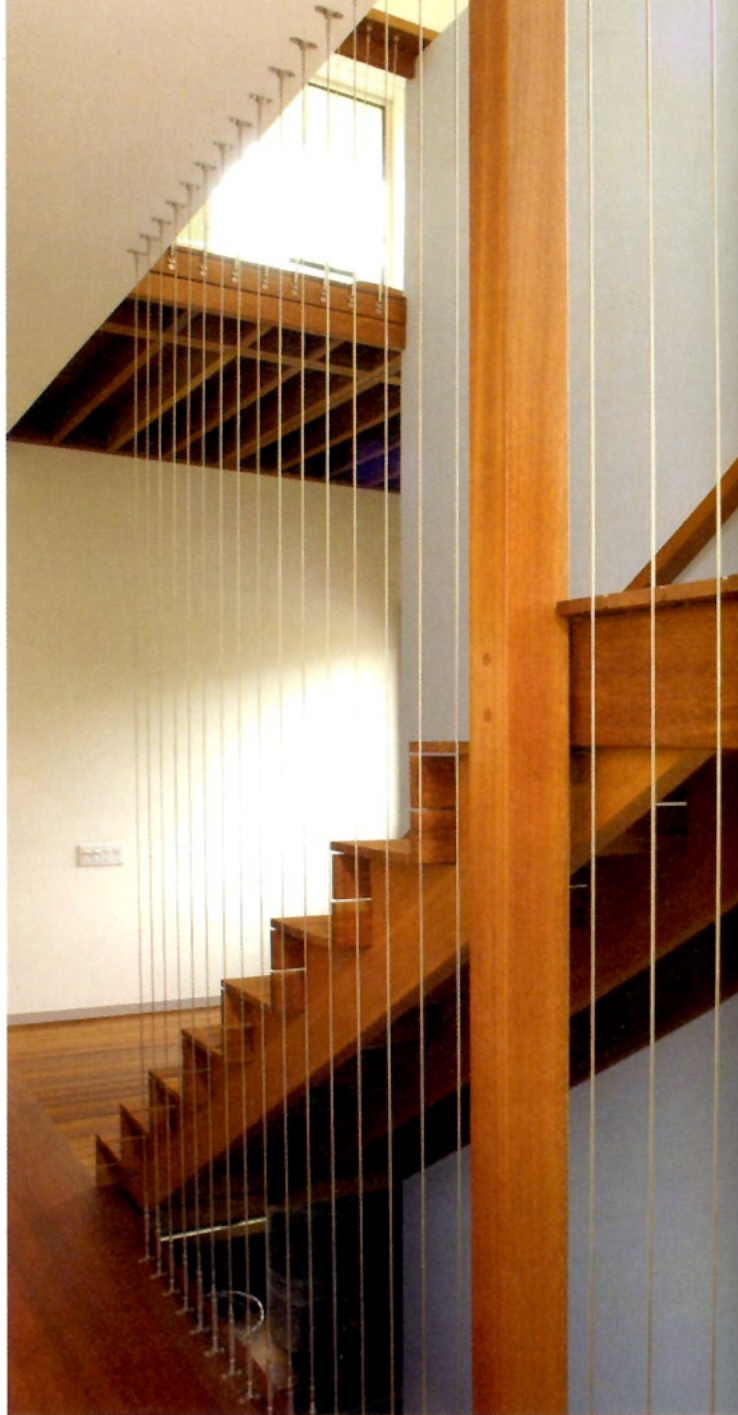
The end result is a house that reflects the tastes and talents of both its occupants on the half-acre site. The 1,800-square-foot structure has three bedrooms and two baths distributed on two floors. A den and 36-foot-long dining, kitchen and living area complete the layout.

“A lot of input came from Harry Bates, especially the shower in the master bath,” Paul said. A Bates signature, it’s an indoor shower that opens to an outdoor deck enclosed by a frosted glass privacy screen. It “makes the experience of showering into a fantastic, sensual experience,” Paul said.

Even the nifty way Elizabeth and Paul show off their beach glass collection is clutter-free. They drop the jewel-like globules into a slot atop the glazed panels in their front door, and the beach glass is displayed in the gap between the panels.

Paul Masi spent hours working with a silent partner:

Stainless-steel sailboat cables define the open stairway.



Newsday Photo / Ken Spencer

the Internet. By researching the seemingly endless array of sources scattered around the country, yet only a mouse click away, he was able to locate building materials suited to his tastes while saving serious money, even factoring in shipping costs. The aluminum windows were a coup: they’d priced at \$30,000 for the whole job at an area residential window supplier, but the bill from a Midwest manufacturer of school windows came to only \$9,000, including delivery to the site.

Masi hired a framing crew to build the basic structure

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Above, glass-panel garage doors lead to a Brazilian mahogany deck. **At left,** the main entry, and a small den with a hidden fireplace.

Newsday Photos / Ken Spencer

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and a professional to do the roof. And, of course, he hired professionals to do any jobs that required licenses, such as plumbing and electrical work.

“But Elizabeth and I began to notice that there were a lot of things we could do ourselves. So we spent all our weekends for over 18 months putting up interior walls and exterior siding, laying floors and building vanities.”

Teetering on borrowed scaffolding, they wrestled 90-pound concrete panels onto the front facade and nailed rough-sawn cedar boards on the other sides. They sheathed the 22-foot-high chimney with sheets of copper and used leftover pieces to fashion a headboard for the

master bedroom. The rustic charm of the packing crate wood the flooring had been shipped in caught Masi’s attention. He used it with an aluminum framework and an acid-etched-glass top to build a sturdy dining table that rolls on large casters onto the deck with little fuss, an unplanned bonus.

“I grew up with 10 brothers who were always working on projects, so I was no stranger to hammers and nails,” Elizabeth said.

“This kind of simple modern house is not for everyone,” Paul said. “But for us, the awareness of craft and the strong sense of accomplishment will stay with us. Besides, the whole experience was a lot of fun.”