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MAY 2014

Old meets new in a contemporary abode on the water in Southampton, thanks to a masterful melding of minds and materials

M O D E R N

A G I C



By Brielle M. Ferreira Photographs by Laura Moss Styling by Anna Molvik



New York-based architect Paul Masi updated this 1970s kit house for contemporary living. Opposite: The sofas in the living room are by B&B Italia; the tie-dyed rug is from Grand Bazaar Istanbul.



FROM HIS OUTPOST IN MANHATTAN, EVENT designer Frank Alexander spends his days planning exclusive parties for luxury brands in some of the most sought-after spots around the city. But his favorite place to enjoy, and relish the view, is the 1970s kit house he fell in love with a few years ago after a tireless search for the perfect vacation pad in Southampton. "It needed to be close enough where I could take off after a long week of work," says Alexander. "Location was key, but there wasn't a lot of inventory available in the area I wanted."

When he finally spotted his future home while scouring the Internet, he was struck first by its prime waterfront lot—serenely situated on wetlands that lead out to an estuary, the bay, and the ocean—and second by what he describes as its "crazy roofline." It was obvious that the house would need some serious cosmetic improvements, but Alexander was undeterred. "I could see that it had good bones," he explains. "I thought that I would move in and slowly start tearing stuff out, building it back up the way I wanted." When the scope of the project started to feel a little daunting, however, he knew he had no choice but to call in the reinforcements. Hoping to maintain the home's retro-modern feel, he reached out to a few local design firms before settling into a happy partnership with esteemed architect Paul Masi.

"He just came up with the most brilliant ideas," says Alexander. "As a designer, it was sometimes a little tough for me to step back and let go of the reins, but I learned to trust Paul completely." And that trust definitely came in handy when the time arrived for building an addition onto the existing kit structure. Alexander had his heart set on mimicking the home's original post-and-beam construction and adding stacked-stone accent walls throughout, while Masi's vision hinged on a risky aesthetic move that would require a bit of steely resolve—literally.

"When you're building in high-wind zones, like those along the coast, you'll often use these short, corrugated metal sheets during framing to strengthen the walls," says Masi. "Our idea was to expose them, but we wanted to have a little fun with them, too." To give the oft-hidden



"I LOVE THE KITCHEN. I CAN SEE THE SPARKLING WATER THROUGH THE WINDOW—IT FEELS LIKE HEAVEN TO ME"

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The Designer White kitchen island and countertops are by Corian. The teak-and-iron stools are from Homenature in Southampton. Opposite, top: The dining table is secondhand, and the chairs are from 1stdibs. The steel light fixture is custom.



The walls are painted White Dove by Benjamin Moore. The desk is custom, and the chair is by Paul McCobb.

“WHEN I FIRST MOVED IN, I SLEPT IN EVERY BEDROOM. I WANTED TO GET A SENSE OF HOW EACH FELT IN THE MORNING LIGHT”

building supplies a sophisticated, artistic look, Masi researched CNC (computer numerical control) machines to find a way to crease the metal panels into their unique, sculptural forms. “Creating those walls was my favorite part of the project. It was liberating to be able to design whatever we wanted. Folding the metal became as simple as folding a piece of fabric.”

Alexander’s favorite part of the process, however, came long after the construction was over—when it was just him and an empty house with wide expanses of glass, plenty of architectural interest, and unlimited promise. After countless trips to consignment shops, he began to fill each space with carefully curated furnishings and accessories, like the master bedroom’s handsome Giacometti-style bed, which once belonged to Jennifer Lopez, and the beautiful tie-dyed rug in the living room.

But as the consummate party professional, he wasn’t content to design with only himself in mind. “When I first moved in, I slept in every single bedroom,” Alexander says. “I wanted to get a sense of how each one felt in the morning light and to figure out what pieces were missing to make them comfortable for guests.” He couldn’t plan for everything, though: For example, he was pleasantly surprised to find just how happy he was to be in the house, even after all the visitors had gone. “I love the kitchen. I don’t cook in the city. Sometimes, there’s nothing better than standing at the sink here and doing the dishes. I can see the sparkling water through the window—it feels like heaven to me.” **For more information, see Sources, page 118.**

Brielle M. Ferreira is a freelance design and decorating writer based in Fort Lauderdale.



Clockwise from left: The bedding in the master bedroom is from Scandia Home. The natural cane chaise is from an estate sale. The guest room bed is from Crate and Barrel. The tripod chair is from Anthropologie.

