

## THE HOME FRONT

## Searching for Serenity in the Hamptons

A Manhattan couple create a spare, modern home designed to handle their busy work lives while allowing for peaceful nights



BY CANDACE JACKSON

Bridgehampton, N.Y. **AUSON BROOK**, whose eponymous public-relations firm represents beauty, luxury lifestyle and fashion firms like L'Oréal, Mercedes-Benz and Jil Sander, works out of an office decked with framed pink Pucci scarves and jars of pink candy. Her 60 employees, all of them women, hand out bright-pink business cards.

In contrast, Ms. Brook's 4,500-square-foot, eight-bedroom, nine-bathroom beach retreat in the Hamptons is spare and modern, even masculine. The open space has a warm, muted color palette, with a terracotta bronze chair-and-chaise set for the dining-room table and a mahogany bar with dark leather loop handles. There are almost no family photos—just a few pieces of contemporary art and decor from the children's rooms are spotted, with very little out of place.

The personalized nature of the space was intentional. Ms. Brook, 42, said her work bleeds so much into her personal life—she is often checking emails at home or entertaining clients—that she has trouble unclenching at home. The only place she sleeps well is in hotel rooms, so she wanted her weekend space to have that same unclenching, on-hammer-fall.

"I like everything to march and be in spirit," said Ms. Brook, as a housekeeper swept up behind her. Plus, she said, she has enough pink at work.

On a street filled with mostly traditional shingle-style homes, the house of Ms. Brook and her husband, Andy, a 48-year-old investment manager, is highly contemporary, made up of its adjoining glass boxes of various sizes that are arranged in a mahogany wood-plank and shingle-stripe film. The home was designed to accommodate the couple's numerous weekend guests—and Ms. Brook's constant intermingling of work and home life. The set-up also allows for quiet spaces for their sons, now 5 and 6, while their parents are entertaining.

The center box houses the living room and dining room, which open to the kitchen, creating a "two and be seen" corridor for social events, said the owner's architect, Paul Mast of Burnt Blue Architects. A large bronze fireplace doubles as a structural beam, while also hiding a coat closet and bringing a dose of drama to the visitors immediately upon entering the house. "In 70, my life is all about that



**NO RESERVATIONS** The home, top, is intended to have the same undisturbed, on-hammer-fall as a hotel. Clockwise from above: the living room; the large bronze fireplace adds drama; *Auson and Andy Brook*

initial effect," Ms. Brook said.

There's at least one exception to the masculine palette: A large painting of butterflies, by New York artist Bart Stinson, hangs over the 14-foot-long wood slab and metal dining-room table.

On one side of the living and dining cube is the box that houses the guest rooms, another that houses the children's rooms is on the other side, followed by the cube housing the master suite. All of the bedrooms have big glass windows and are decorated with minimal furniture, except for simple side tables and beds with zigzag-patterned Mies van der Rohe bedding.

Tucked toward the back, the master suite overlooks the pool and has a large bathroom with a white soaking tub. As the often-strewn and hosts multiple social events in one weekend, Ms. Brook's closet has a skylight so she can see how her outfit shines will look in outdoor light. The space is filled with dresses, designer pants and high-heeled shoes and wedges (the never-worn pants or flats).

Outside, the backyard pool is surrounded by a built-in bar and stone steps with pillows, so they can double as a lounge. Bamboo trees line the perimeter of yard, which is also planted with a hydrangea garden and

a tall patch of switch grass. A separate wood-and-glass cube next to the pool holds a guest cottage with a kitchenette. Ms. Brook said she likes to see that space for working on her laptop and monitoring the markets on a TV on the wall.

Mr. and Ms. Brook met 20 years ago, four days after Ms. Brook moved to Manhattan after graduating from Tulane University. At 23, she married Mr. Brook and founded her PR firm in 1996.

In 1999 the Brooks purchased a 5,000-square-foot "Norman Jaffe-style" contemporary. Ten years and two kids later, they decided to tear it down and build Mr. Brook to design a home that would also incorporate the styles of their favorite architects, Richard Meier and Frank Lloyd Wright. They also were inspired by their favorite band chain, Amusements, a collection of boutique hotels known for their modern design and incorporation of local surroundings.

After more than two years in construction, the house was completed in 2011. The entire project, including outdoor areas, cost roughly \$725 per square foot to build, according to Mr. Mast. A similar-size modern six-bedroom, 11-bathroom house near the



beach in Bridgehampton is currently on the market for \$3.3 million.

Alan Friedman, Ms. Brook's father, designed a 4-inch-thick Plexiglas and Lucite coffee table with a bronze base for the living room, he said. His Brook grew up in a house decorated with mostly Renaissance-era antiques. "She wanted to make a statement and she certainly did that," said Mr. Friedman, who now runs a company that makes sculptural bronze designs.

On a recent humid late-summer afternoon, Mr. and Ms. Brook sat on the outdoor patio. Ms. Brook ex-

plained that the following day she'd be hosting a last-minute pizza party for clients and a few celebrities, with a local pizza chef coming by to make pies in her outdoor pizza oven. Ms. Brook said her inclusive nature—and her habit of frequently posting photos and updates on Twitter and Facebook—has meant that small gatherings at the home often become big parties, with everyone bringing friends and family.

"There's no hiding," she said. "I'm a publicist who lives in a glass house." But, she said, she does sleep very well in it.