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THE HAMPTONS





Architecture: Paul Masi, Bates Masi + Architects Interior Design: Brooke Abrams, Brooke Abrams Design
Home Builder: Keith Romeo, K. Romeo Builders

GOOD NEIGHBOR

A Montauk hideaway steals the show while blending with its laid-back environs.

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Guests enter this Montauk residence on the lower level, before ascending to the main living spaces upstairs. To foster a welcoming, warm and beachy vibe, designer Brooke Abrams appointed the space with a bleached oak From Chef to Table console and a lamp from Lulu & Georgia, the latter contrasting with the bleached oak paneling architect Paul Masi chose for the walls.

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oco Chanel once famously advised looking in the mirror and removing one item before leaving the house. Architect Paul Masi hews to a similarly less-is-more philosophy when it comes to building houses. “The most successful

architecture makes the biggest impact with the most minimal means,” he contends—and this residence bears out his thesis. Situated among modestly scaled postwar dwellings, and just across the road from the pristine shores of Hither Hills beach, the structure captures the relaxed mood of Montauk and refrains from overpowering its neighbors either by scale or aesthetics.

Achieving that balance, however, required a complex design program. “The property didn’t have a flat side,” Masi explains, and the soil ranged from sandy to rocky. Terracing the house into the landscape and using a series of bluestone retaining walls created the level ground plane. The move also facilitated a floor plan that placed the living spaces and main bedroom upstairs to capture the ocean views, and the guest bedrooms below to directly flow into the landscape. “We had to cut into the hill pretty deep—18 feet for the foundation on the back,” recalls general contractor Keith Romeo, who oversaw the home’s construction.

Besides the bluestone used for the retaining walls, Masi opted for just a handful of materials. He chose a warm mahogany decking material for the upper level, using it to wrap the sides of the house in a cohesive blanket. White oak is a similarly unifying force, beginning at the lower-level entry where it covers one wall and serves as the foundation of a built-in bench and screen that draws visitors in and up the stairs. It then envelops the primary living area: on the floors, walls and louvers beneath the kitchen skylight. “Each one is on a fabric hinge and when those big doors are pocketed, the wind comes through and begins to move the louvers, casting different patterns and shadows,” Masi says.

Realizing the house’s interiors for its new owners had particular resonance, both personally and professionally, for designer Brooke Abrams.

The wife happens to be Abrams’ best friend, and the designer has long admired Masi’s work. “The architecture shaped a lot of my visualization,” she says. “The wife and I have a mutual love for neutral and modern, and here, a neutral palette and the finishes worked extremely well together.”

Approaching the open upstairs layout with an intimate understanding of her clients’ lifestyle, Abrams designed a floor plan that caters to carefree evenings in the company of friends. The homeowners love to cook and entertain, so naturally, she positioned the dining area right alongside the kitchen. She collaborated with woodworker Ben Rioux on the cerused oak table, choosing an inky finish that plays off the black metal of the nearby windows. “The clients love this piece,” says Abrams. “It already has so much soul since they use it all the time.” From the louvered skylight above, she hung an Apparatus fixture whose leather sheathing similarly picks up on the dark hardware of the windows.

In the adjacent living room, Abrams crafted two separate conversation areas that reflect her passion for mixing neutrals and textures. One space reads more casual with a low-slung sectional in soft linen. “It feels lived-in and works well with the paneled wood wall behind,” she says. While still approachable, the other zone leans slightly more formal with a loveseat covered in a finer, off-white linen. “I love a light sofa and then mixing in an organic-shaped chair,” she says, pointing to the adjacently situated club chairs upholstered in bouclé. A chunky, braided rug and silk-covered pillows add additional plush, textural flourishes, while details like the surfboard-shaped coffee table keep the vibe at the beach.

For Abrams, the project was a particularly edifying one. “It’s satisfying to know the spaces I create are enjoyed by the clients,” says Abrams, who has had a front-row seat to watching the couple fall in love with their new home. (She happens to live down the street and was part of their quarantine bubble.) And she counts herself as fortunate to have worked within Masi’s framework. “It was an honor to design this project,” she says. “When you put things into the universe, it’s amazing how they come back to you.” ■



Abrams crafted a pair of seating areas in the living room. One features a pair of Verellen chairs in an oatmeal-hued bouclé and a surfboard-form coffee table from Design Within Reach that plays to the seaside locale. An Apparatus light fixture hovers above a custom table by From Chef to Table in the adjacent dining area.

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—BROOKE ABRAMS



Floor-to-ceiling doors from Westhampton Glass pocket to open the main living spaces to the deck. Masi designed the cabinetry and topped the perimeter counters with Corian and the waterfall island with quartzite. The barstools are from Design Within Reach; the outdoor furnishings are RH.



Right: In the daughter's bedroom, a West Elm floor mirror reflects artwork by Summer Strauch and an alabaster McGee & Co. light resting on a Serena & Lily night table. Abrams selected a Lulu & Georgia chair with sinuous curves for an organic accent.

Opposite: Matouk linens dress the bed from Design Within Reach in the main bedroom. Nearby suspends a swooping brass-and-glass Apparatus fixture. Vertical courses of Ann Sacks tile maintain the neutral palette in the bathroom, which is flooded with light from a clerestory.

