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THE HAMPTONS





# Something Old, Something New

In the Lanes, a family getaway bridges nostalgic charm with plush, contemporary comfort.

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**Architecture:** James Merrell, James Merrell Architects, P.C. **Interior Design:** Elizabeth McNellis and Alexis Litman, Flatiron 27  
**Home Builder:** Peter Cardel, Cardel Development



"There's a minimal, modern simplicity to using oak to wrap this stair," says architect James Merrell of this dramatic wood-and-glass design. To complement it, designers Elizabeth McNellis and Alexis Litman selected an equally streamlined furnishing: Blu Dot's Daybench, which combines a powder-coated-steel base with a leather cushion in a subtle gray-green hue.

**I**t's tempting, when first encountering this new home tucked between Amagansett's village and beach, to default to making stylistic assessments. Does its humble gabled roof make it a cottage? Does its glass-walled southern façade make it modern? Or do the mullioned windows on its cedar-shingled guest house make it traditional?

Architect James Merrell wishes we wouldn't ask those questions. "As soon as we name it, in a sense we own it, and we are no longer engaged with it," he explains. "The works of art that persist are the ones that people go back to because they haven't quite figured them out."

That's why, for this getaway for a Manhattan-based family of five, Merrell and colleagues Steve Soule and Garrett Wineinger set out to craft a structure that "purposefully messes with stylistic expectations," Merrell says; one that would honor the young family's needs and the historical modesty of the neighborhood, whose streets were once lined with small summer cottages.

Like most properties in the Lanes, this one is long and narrow, running perpendicular to the street. Unlike most, it is nearly two lots deep, with an existing barn and pool on the back half-acre. Rather than presenting the bulk of the house to the street, the architects turned the ridge of the structure to run east to west down the length of the lot, maximizing privacy and natural light. On the main level, floor-to-ceiling windows comprise the south-facing wall. Above them is a row of dormers separated by fixed windows hidden behind cedar louvers. By day, the rhythmic detail fills the second floor with light. By night, it transforms the house into a glowing lantern.

By Hamptons standards, the interiors are compact, with an open-plan living and dining area that connects to the kitchen, the only double-height room in the house. "Having everything built around the kitchen was important to us," the husband says. "We didn't want a scenario in which everyone has their own space to entertain themselves away from each other."

The challenge with such a layout, Merrell says, is that the functional aspects of the kitchen "can interrupt the calmness desired in a living room." To prevent such a conflict, the architects hid those messier elements in a pantry and imagined the kitchen as a library-like space, "with elegant woodwork that's visually quiet," Merrell says. "It's not about making cabinets that look like kitchen cabinets; we hope they disappear."

Key to that magic was a concise materials palette dominated by white oak, which general contractor Peter Cardel and his master carpenters coaxed into a wood-wrapped breakfast nook, a marble-inset island and millwork that merges with creamy plaster walls. "When we start a project with Jim, we have the set of plans, but rarely do we have things like interior finishes," Cardel says of the deceptively simple details. "Those evolve over the course of the project. The designs are like living beings."

Designers Elizabeth McNellis and Alexis Litman took that evolution several steps further, first honing the finish palette, then "really warming it up with lots of textiles and organic materials that keep the house sophisticated but approachable for a young family at the beach," McNellis says. "We didn't want an intimidating house. We wanted it to be welcoming and warm," the wife adds.

In the bedrooms, textured wallcoverings and roomy upholstered window seats set that mood, "creating comfy, cozy spaces where you want to sit down and read a book," Litman says. In the living areas, leathers, wool bouclés and kilims soften clean-lined furnishings that occasionally lean modern. "Amagansett has this fresh, modern vibe about it, which we tried to honor," McNellis says. "Take that vintage travertine coffee table in the living room: It lends a bit more of a cool factor to the space." As do architectural lighting fixtures—which "break up the white oak ceiling planes," Litman says—and colorful modern art. "We wanted pieces that are less serious, more fun," the husband says. "And for people to know this a home where they can let their guard down." ■

Walls of floor-to-ceiling windows provide the backdrop for living room furnishings in a mix of natural materials, including a vintage travertine coffee table from 1stdibs, a custom linen sofa, Lawson-Fenning's white oak Dillon chairs in Zak & Fox's Noos wool bouclé, and swivel chairs, also by Lawson-Fenning, in Lee Jofa's indoor/outdoor Constellate weave.







**Above:** "The oak does the talking for the entire design," Litman says of the kitchen's floors, custom cabinetry by Green Leaf Cabinet Company and island, into which the design team inset a work space of Danby marble from ABC Stone. Mater's oak and leather High Stools complement the warm tones, while Brendan Ravenhill's industrial Double Church Chandelier provides a striking contrast.

**Opposite:** White oak similarly envelops the breakfast nook, for which the designers devised a built-in banquette with a cushion in Holly Hunt vegan leather and a custom I-beam table in bleached white ash from Verellen. Carl Hansen & Son's CH23 chairs continue the warm-wood theme, while a printed-linen Roman shade and Allied Maker's Dome pendant add softness and light.









**Above:** A soaking tub takes center stage in the main bathroom, which is finished with a quiet palette of gray Mosa floor tiles, white oak cabinetry by Green Leaf Cabinet Company and Caesarstone countertops in Pure White. Soft, simple accents include a wooden stool from Serena & Lily, a Moroccan-style flatweave rug from Clic and a Roman shade in Lee Jofa's Hixson linen.

**Opposite:** By incorporating dormer windows, Merrell gave the main bedroom two roomy window seats, which are upholstered in an inviting Holly Hunt fabric. Additional layers of texture come courtesy of Phillip Jeffries' Handira Cloth wallcovering, an upholstered bed topped with a Comerford Collection throw, Circa Lighting's Phoebe Stacked Lamp and a rug from Stark.

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—ELIZABETH MCNELLIS





The house's west end opens to the outdoors on two levels: the main bedroom's balcony provides a view of the pool, while the main floor's covered terrace offers places for lounging and dining. The teak sofas and dining table are from RH's Paloma collection, the concrete coffee table is from Sunpan and the Catalina dining chairs are by Serena & Lily. Renner Landscaping Inc, installed the grounds.