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INTERIOR DESIGN / MICHAEL COX AND SHEILAH MCFADDEN, FOLEY&COX
HOME BUILDER / TOM ABRAHAM, ABRAHAM DEVELOPMENT GROUP
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / MARK MCATEER, THE LAUREL GROUP

48 PRIVATE PARTY

ON A SECLUDED BLUFF IN MONTAUK, THIS OPEN-DESIGN OASIS ABOUNDS WITH SPACE FOR ENTERTAINING.

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In the living area of this Montauk vacation home, designer Michael Cox mixed two pairs of vintage armchairs found in Europe with new pieces, such as a custom three-seat sofa covered in Perennials fabric. The vintage driftwood table, from Dos Gallos in Los Angeles via 1stdibs, adds a beachy element, while the low profile of the vintage Poul Kjærholm daybed, from Zitzo in the Netherlands, maximizes views of the ocean.

The house needed to be livable and instantly comfortable—inside and outside,” says interior designer Michael Cox, who imagined the spaces of this waterfront vacation home in Montauk for a fun couple who loves to cook and entertain. Originally tapped for the interior design of a house they’d planned to build in Newport, Rhode Island, he’d gotten to know their tastes well before they discovered this property, designed and constructed by builder Tom Abraham. The location switch from Rhode Island to the East End made for a slight veer in design direction. Says the wife, “The house we wanted to build was traditional on the outside and transitional on the inside. But Montauk is a different environment. We wanted this house to be laid-back.” Decidedly more relaxed than the Gilded Age mansions Newport is known for, their Montauk residence embraces an open-plan design with an emphasis on indoor-outdoor living and, of course, outstanding ocean views.

The shingled structure, overlooking treetops of scrub oak and pine, with its spacious decks, balconies and a pool, was nearly complete when the residents found it, so they were able to work with Abraham on a few customized tweaks, such as adding a wine room on the lower level. On the main floor is an office and the living-and-dining area, which opens onto a deck. Upstairs are three bedrooms, including the master, and two more are on the lower level (which opens to the pool). Landscape designer Mark McAteer reinforced the beach grass on the bluff and devised an entry procession with large limestone slabs. “It’s cool and comfortable in style, guiding guests to the front porch,” he says.





Because they'd already gotten to know their clients from working on the earlier concept, Cox and his project manager, Sheilah McFadden, fast-tracked the design—six months' time from initial meeting to final installation, sourcing from 1stdibs, European markets and retail for immediacy. "The initial and only client presentation was intense: We presented the entire home in one afternoon with only two reselection requests," Cox recalls. "What a dream!" The residents were decisive—and relieved.

For the organization of the interiors, Cox considered functionality in terms of entertaining. "We created different zones where people can gather," he explains. "We surrounded the pool with various seating, dining and lounging opportunities, creating plenty of room for large gatherings but also cozier spaces when the groups are more intimate." This set-up is well appreciated by the homeowners, who host guests every weekend of the

summer; the husband loves to cook, prepping food at the extra-wide island while guests mill about or pull up a woven-leather bar chair. "We do lunch by the pool," says the wife, "and then if it's a nice night, we'll have an alfresco dinner. Everyone has cocktails or rosé and watches the sunset."

Even indoors, clusters of seating fill the living area with a sense of intention and structure that's not too precious: A soft rectilinear sofa faces an unobtrusive wall-mounted flat-screen, while a pair of leather armchairs looks out to the water—so low-slung that their profile doesn't break up sight lines from the adjacent dining area's chairs, also leather.

Maintaining uninterrupted views was top of mind for Cox, in not only in furniture arrangements but also the choice of palette and texture. "We selected lighter fabrics and sheers as window treatments, creating a soft frame around the windows," he says, an effect he describes as "erasing the corners of the room." After all, the main

Above: Woven-leather chairs by Mark Albrecht Studio offer prime seating in the kitchen for when the husband—who loves to cook—puts on his chef's hat. The range is Thermador Pro Harmony. The pendant above the quartzite-covered island is from Rich Brilliant Willing.

Opposite: In the dining area, a rope chandelier by Bone Simple Design, painted Benjamin Moore's Sunrays yellow, provides a nautical touch above the custom white-ash dining table from Angela Adams in Portland, Maine. Classic Cassina chairs, in black leather, not only are durable but also maintain the material palette used in the adjacent areas of the open-plan residence.



Above: Sunsets are stunning in the master bedroom, especially when they feature shades of purple that complement the raffia-and-cotton rug by La Manufacture Cogolin, available from House of Tai Ping. Cox sourced his own Foley & Cox Home showroom for the vintage armchairs, covered in Loro Piana fabric, and the Martina bed in cerused oak.

Right: In the master bathroom, an Easton freestanding acrylic tub takes center stage under *Paperworks* by Gill Wilson. Minimal accents like the Zanzibar bench from Foley & Cox Home, covered in Holland & Sherry fabric, keep the space airy and neat.



living-dining space, the upstairs master, and the “VIP guest room” all overlook the ocean. Focal points include a glass-topped driftwood coffee table in the living area and the rope chandelier above the dining table—bold and sculptural yet organic in feel. Painted bright yellow, the chandelier “adds character and personality to the space without stealing the center of attention: the beautiful views just beyond it,” says the designer.

That sensibility continues in the master bedroom, where soft drapery frames the windows. “With the wraparound windows, it looks like the water is coming up around your feet,” the husband says. “It makes the

room feel really special.” A purple hand-finished raffia rug, custom-made in France, unifies the room. A favorite color of the husband’s, purple also pops from the pair of nightstands and on the trim of the bedding. And, at that perfect moment at the end of the day, the purple in the rug will match the violet tones of the sunset. “It’s really beautiful,” the wife says.

Small moments such as these speak to the big-picture thinking of the design team. “They did a great job of understanding us, how we wanted to use our house and our personalities,” the husband says. “They hit the nail on the head.” ■

The residents often host gatherings that spill out onto the deck off the living-dining area. At one of the several seating vignettes, directors chairs encircle a weathered concrete-and-teak table from RH. Says the wife, “We’ve used every single one of those outdoor dining tables multiple times.”