

# WINNING COMBINATION



In the dunes of Long Island, Robert A.M. Stern Architects and designer Steven Gambrel join forces to craft a Shingle Style stunner that melds traditional warmth with contemporary elegance

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**R**eferring to shingled beach houses as cottages is an American tradition that often seems as affected as it is inaccurate, given the extravagant scale of many such residences found in East Coast summer enclaves. Yet the term is decidedly apt for a Shingle Style retreat that Gary Brewer of Robert A.M. Stern Architects designed in East Quogue, New York, for Manhattan-based clients. Working within the Long Island town's height restrictions, on a 2.2-acre lot with 200 feet of ocean frontage, the architect created a handsomely detailed home that still manages to present a surprisingly low profile and snug ambience—despite clocking in at 9,500 square feet.

Stern, the dean of the Yale School of Architecture, famously revived the late 19th century's romantic Shingle Style in the 1970s. "And then spec builders picked up on it," says Brewer, lamenting the pallid imitations that now abound along the Eastern Seaboard. But the East Quogue dwelling, which was influenced by the work of McKim, Mead & White, the celebrated American firm that enriched the Victorian age with inventive houses clad in split cedar, has a truly authentic spirit.

Although the clients—a financier, his real-estate-developer wife, and their two college-age children—wanted a place with historic character, the atmosphere of the house had to be what the wife calls "traditional with an edge." So she enlisted New York interior designer Steven Gambrel, a man known for his bold color sense and invigorating yet well-tailored eclecticism, to collaborate with Brewer.

It was an inspired pairing. Take, for example, the Dutch front door, which Brewer situated beneath

**Above:** Porches and balconies lend a summery look to an East Quogue, New York, house devised by Robert A.M. Stern Architects and decorated by the design firm S.R. Gambrel; Edmund Hollander Landscape Architects handled the gardens. **Left:** The living room features Charles Edwards lanterns, sconces by the Urban Electric Co., and, near the fireplace, a vintage cocktail table from JF Chen; the silk wall covering is by Phillip Jeffries, and the rug is by Beauvais Carpets. The windows, made by Reilly Windows & Doors and trimmed in a Benjamin Moore blue, are framed by curtains of a Schumacher linen. For details see Sources.

The dining room's chairs and three-part table were designed by S. R. Gambrel; the vintage Murano-glass chandeliers are from Tom Thomas Gallery.



a barrel-vaulted portico and flanked with custom-made sidelights incorporating sprightly stained-glass roundels that recall a window at the Isaac Bell House, an 1883 McKim, Mead & White shingled masterpiece in Newport, Rhode Island. Gambrel painted the door's stiles and panels three shades of blue that are carried throughout the two-story home, from window frames to the silk used on the walls of the master bedroom to tiles around a fireplace.

From an architectural standpoint, the site posed challenges, since a goal was to keep the interiors as bright as possible while maintaining privacy. In the family room, Brewer says, "we positioned the fireplace to obscure the view of the neighbors while still offering ocean and garden views and access to the pool from glass doors on either side of it." Spun, seeded, and colored glass—often light blue—was another solution, set not only around the front door but also into the windows of the library and upstairs sitting room.

Arched picture windows assure that the Atlantic Ocean is a constant presence in the living and dining rooms. "That is not a period detail," Brewer concedes of the expanses of glass, "but they are masked a bit by the porches." He also trimmed those windows, and others throughout the house, with small panes that give them a late-19th-century appearance.

Sofas, armchairs, and dining chairs upholstered in pale blues, creams, and soft grays harmonize with the landscape, as do the Murano-glass chandeliers that are suspended over the butternut table in the dining room, their soft amber color echoing the sandy beach. The room's walls are covered with an ivory Japanese paper whose woven texture brings to mind the rattan paneling at the Bell house; above the sideboard hangs a Ross Bleckner painting with abstracted circle motifs that subtly reference the front door's sidelights.

The beamed family room features the interiors' boldest dose of modernity—a huge round chandelier designed in the 1960s for a public building. "The decorating has a nice ambiguity," Gambrel observes. "You're not sure if the house is contemporary or traditional." A bath is lined with mosaic tiles that evoke a Moroccan hammam, for instance, and one of the bedrooms is equipped with a window seat/box bed that, Brewer notes, is straight out of the paintings of Swedish Arts and Crafts artist Carl Larsson. →

**Right, from top:** The kitchen is appointed with a RangeCraft hood, a Lacanche range, Waterworks sink fittings, and cabinet hardware by Sun Valley Bronze; the vintage lanterns are from Olde Good Things, and the chairs are by TK Collections. Steven Gambrel found the room's vintage chandelier in Paris, and the reclaimed-oak table was made by the Groundwork Group.





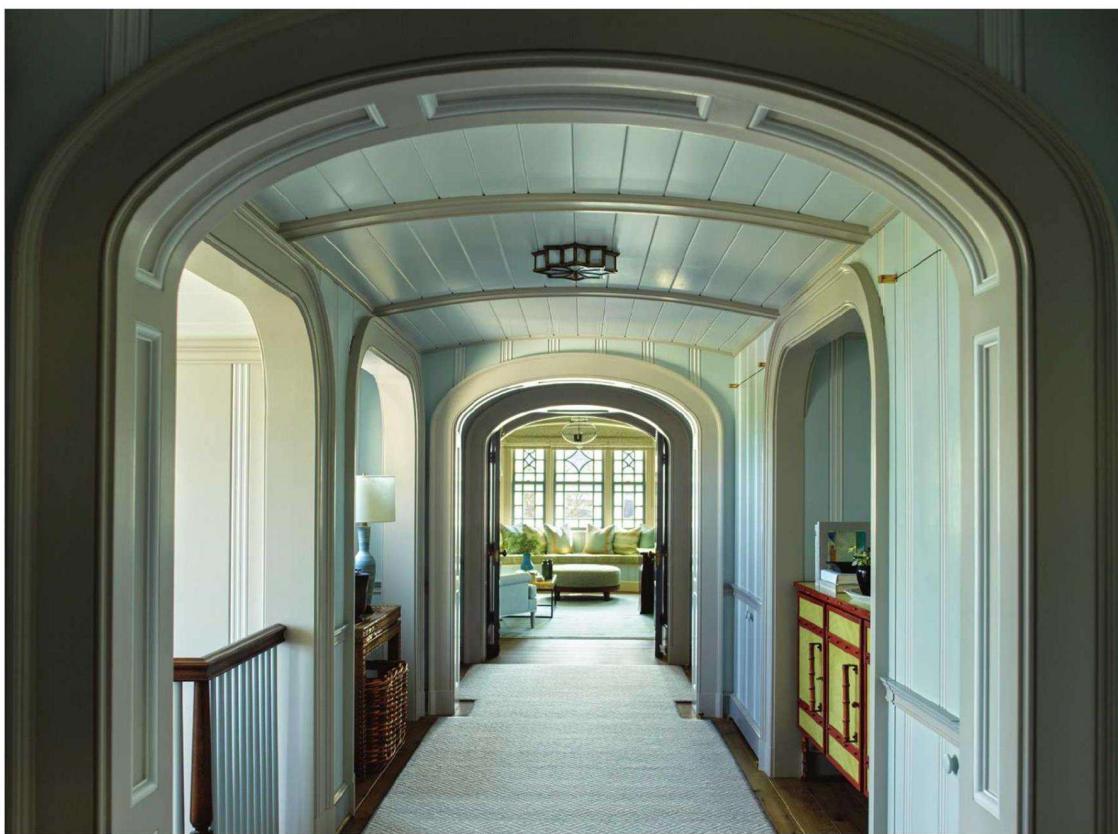
Multiple alcoves, pert dormers, and deeply vaulted ceilings made of painted wood are the second floor's most arresting aspects, many reflected in the picturesque shape of the roofline. "The details of the exterior were as important as the interiors," says Brewer, pointing out the grayed shingles that are laid in diamond and fish-scale patterns, a copper pinecone roof finial, and the nautical-knot latticework that accents the porches (as well as the dining room's cabinets). "This place is built like a great piece of furniture."

The lowest level of the house—which, nestled into a dune, drops below grade—was difficult to make welcoming. "It's basically a basement," the wife explains, adding that thanks to Brewer and Gambrel, "it doesn't feel like one." The media/billiard room (which houses a Ping-Pong table that is often rolled outside) and two guest rooms all open onto a garden populated with hydrangeas and buddleias. This mini-Arcadia is just one portion of the landscape devised by Edmund Hollander, who says it emphasizes a "symphony of flowers designed to move through the seasons."

Work now complete, the clients' desire for a summer house that doesn't look or feel like a mansion has been answered. "It's expansive," the wife admits with an appreciative smile, "but cozy." A cottage it is. □



**Above:** In the library, a Louise Nevelson sculpture is displayed above an S. R. Gambrel sofa clad in a Fabricut stripe; on the cocktail table is a Steven Gambrel-designed tray for the Lacquer Co. **Left:** Stark made the runner in the upper hall; the ceiling fixture is a Robert A.M. Stern design produced by Ball and Ball, and the cabinet at right is vintage Jacques Adnet. **Opposite:** The family room's 1962 chandelier is from Blackman Cruz, and the artwork is by Manolo Valdés; '30s Danish chairs from 1stdibs surround a '40s French table from Monc XIII; club chairs by S. R. Gambrel are covered in a Clarence House fabric, and the custom-made ottoman/cocktail table is clad in a Global Leathers hide.



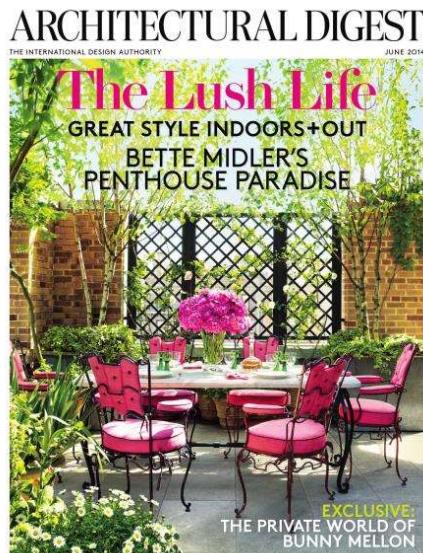




A 1950s Italian chandelier brightens the master bedroom; the platform bed is an S. R. Gambrel design upholstered in a Calvin Fabrics stripe, the solid-blue coverlet is by RH, and the walls are sheathed in a Phillip Jeffries silk. **Opposite, from top:** In the master bath, the tub and its fittings are by Waterworks. A pendant light and sconces, all by Jamb, accent the same room; Waterworks made the sink fittings and stool.

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ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST | JUNE 2014



Reprinted from the Architectural Digest Archive

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