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In the living room of Mona Nerenberg and Lisa Bynon's Hamptons home, which they designed with Mark Cunningham, the sofa and armchairs are by Ralph Lauren Home, the cocktail table is by D miurge New York, and the apple-matting rug is from Nerenberg's shop, Bloom, in Sag Harbor, New York; the mantel is original to the house.
FACING PAGE: Behind the house, the fern garden is framed by dwarf English boxwood and backed with clipped privet. For details, see Resources.



SPREADING
their
WINGS

Seeking to expand
their territory, a Hamptons shop owner and
a garden designer embrace an
abandoned property and turn it into
the perfect canvas for
their creativity

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A QUESTION THAT MONA NERENBERG hears often at her chic home-design shop, Bloom, in Sag Harbor, New York, is: "Does your house look like this?" After all, her boutique—a favorite of such Hamptons regulars as Martha Stewart and Gwyneth Paltrow—is in a former house that still retains its front garden and white picket fence. "People have this fantasy that a home should look as perfect as a store," Nerenberg says. "But my actual home is a lot more messy. It's filled with friends and family and cats."

Even so, the Hamptons house that she shares with her partner, Lisa Bynon, is imbued with the same clean and refined aesthetic that one finds at her shop. In fact, the decorator who helped her with the look of Bloom—ELLE DECOR A-List member Mark Cunningham, a close friend—also collaborated on the interior design of her home.

She and Bynon, a landscape designer, had lived for several years in a tiny two-bedroom home in the village of Sag Harbor, not far from Bloom and a second shop where Nerenberg sells ceramics from the Paris-based brand Astier de Villatte. They craved more space and noticed an online real estate listing for a home on three acres in the nearby hamlet of North Sea. Before they even called the number on

FACING PAGE: The living room's 18th-century Swedish table and vintage Pierre Jeanneret chair are from Bloom, and the circa-1940 lamp by Marolles is from Magen H Gallery. **THIS PAGE, FROM TOP:** The library's sofa is by Ralph Lauren Home and the curtains are of a Rogers & Goffigon linen; the artwork is by Michael Dweck. The front-hall bench from France is covered in a C&C Milano stripe, the antique pendant light is from Ann-Morris, Inc., the flooring is original to the house, and the drawing is by Donald Sultan; the front door is painted in Black enamel and the walls are in Super White, both by Benjamin Moore. For details, see Resources.

In the dining room, the 19th-century French table, 18th-century Swedish chairs, and English breakfront are from Bloom; the chandelier by Stephen Antonson is from Dessin Fournir, and the artwork in the pantry beyond is by Mats Gustafson. **FACING PAGE, FROM TOP:** On the terrace, a pergola covered in white wisteria shades an outdoor dining area with a reclaimed teak table, a French iron chair, and rattan chairs with Sunbrella cushions, all from Bloom; the paving tile is natural cleft bluestone. A vintage French artist's table serves as the kitchen island; the stove is by Wolf, the sink and fittings are by Waterworks, and the dishwasher is by GE; the sign on the ceiling beams is original to the house. For details, see Resources.



the advertisement, they drove by to take a peek and immediately fell in love with the picturesque property. "It was a sleeping beauty covered in vines," Nerenberg says.

The four-bedroom cottage, known as Redbrook, had been built in the 19th century and continuously owned by a single family, the Geers, who had operated a fish market on the property. There were sweeping views and not a single neighbor in sight. "The gardens were completely wild," Bynon says. "But there was space, there were great views, and the house was charming and had original details."

Other buyers might have been deterred by the shingled home's run-down bathrooms and kitchen—not to mention the fact that there were hundreds of bats living in the attic—but not this pair. They dealt with the bats, sanded and painted many of the floors, and moved in with their two Bengal cats, Charlie and Sam, a brother-and-sister duo they got as kittens.

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With her pared-down taste, Nerenberg was determined to keep the renovation to a minimum. "I wanted to do as little as possible," she says. "I like the way places feel when they are empty. I just wanted to clean things up." With Cunningham's help, she freshened up the bathrooms, keeping an old claw-foot tub but adding gleaming new fittings and pristine white penny-tile floors. The "dark and depressing" kitchen was transformed with new windows, a beamed ceiling, and a floor made out of paint-spattered wood planks reclaimed from the attic, which a former resident had once used as an art studio.

Cunningham had already been helping Nerenberg to source wares for her shop, where she sells home accessories, art, and a curated mix of vintage furniture from the south of France and northern Europe, so it made sense for him to contribute ideas for the house. "While we were shopping, we would purchase objects for our home as well," she says. "Having said that, some of my favorite things in the house he bought without my even knowing it!"

If it were up to her, there would have been no electric lighting at Redbrook—only candlelight or logs burning in the fireplace. Bynon largely left the decorating decisions to her partner and focused on the garden, but she admits that the lack of lighting is where she drew the line. Cunningham came to the rescue, convincing Nerenberg to install a spectacular pair of plaster chandeliers by Stephen Antonson in the dining room. "Mona could probably live in a monastery," Cunningham notes, "but she does appreciate simple, beautifully made things that have integrity."

Today the interiors, while certainly spare, are hardly ascetic. The atmosphere is at once elegant and beachy, with a mix of soft upholstered chairs and sofas in white linen, antiques, and such





natural touches as baskets and apple-matting rugs. Quite a few of the furnishings were found at none other than Bloom, including the Michael Dweck artworks and the living room's vintage caned lounge chair by Pierre Jeanneret. "That's the life of a shop owner," Nerenberg muses. "Sometimes you end up with things that you love but wouldn't normally be able to afford."

The expansive garden is equally considered. Bynon immediately began ripping out trees and wild bushes, finding that "the more I took away, the better it looked." Today, the home is surrounded by a manicured lawn punctuated by hedge-framed sections filled with ferns and flowers. There is a massive vegetable garden and a chicken coop, and a new orchard of fruit trees is in the works.

At Redbrook, the process of subtraction and addition continues apace. "It's definitely a work in progress," says Nerenberg. "We want our home to feel modern and to reflect our style, without removing the quirkiness that gives it character." Meanwhile, the Bengals pounce on the furniture, and the three guest rooms are constantly filled with an array of family members and friends. The perfectionist in Nerenberg realizes that her house may not ever be truly finished or immaculate, but never mind: It already feels like home. ■

FACING PAGE: In the master bedroom, the vintage bed is from Ted Meyers Harbor Antiques, and the antique Swedish chest is from Bloom; the curtains are of a Dominique Kieffer linen from Rubelli, and the floor is painted in a high-gloss enamel in White by Benjamin Moore. **THIS PAGE, FROM TOP:** Bynon designed the chicken coop; a bench by Smith & Hawken sits beside a Japanese dogwood tree. A guest bath's claw-foot tub, original to the house, has fittings from Waterworks; the stool is from Bloom, and the artwork is by Michael Dweck. For details, see Resources.