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MODERN LOVE

A protracted search for an East End getaway leads to a contemporary affair

BY MICHAEL LASSELL | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIN DERBY

Contemporary Cool

A pair of Sago palms in square pots from Planter Resource flank the entry to Paul Davis and Julio Hernandez's 1970s weekend house in East Hampton. See *Resources*.

IN 2002, AFTER A FRENZIED period of house-hunting in the Hamptons, Manhattan-based interior designer Paul Davis and his partner, Julio Hernandez, a colorist at the Stephen Knoll Salon, were ready to give up and rent again. Davis recalls that they had seen “50 to 60 houses, including farmhouses, but nothing contemporary,” and hadn’t felt at home in any of them.

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Then one day their real estate broker took them to see a nondescript cedar-shingled home in the Northwest Woods, outside East Hampton. It wasn't officially on the market, but the women who owned it were looking to downsize. “We went over in the morning and bought it that afternoon,” Davis says. “We didn't think that we would ever buy a modern house, but the minute we walked through the door, we just knew that this was the right place for us.”

Built in the mid-1970s and featuring a whimsical porthole window beside the front door, the 2,200-square-foot home centers on an airy great room, which separates a master suite on one side and two guest rooms on the other. “The house was in fine condition,” says Davis. “We did very little to the outside, although we took down a ‘nude sunbathing porch’ off the master bedroom, which meant redoing the windows.” Although the designer regrets not refinishing the floors before moving in, he hasn't given up: “Right now they're standard oak floors, which are fine, but I definitely intend to replace them someday.”



Bright And White
 The zebrawood table in the dining room (OPPOSITE) is from Cite; the vintage Saarinen executive chairs from Knoll are covered in a hopsack linen from Donghia. (NEAR LEFT) Paul Davis (at left) designed the kitchen's cabinetry and pulls; his partner, Julio Hernandez, sits at a white onyx-topped island. The countertops are Silestone; the wood and steel bar stools are by Palo Samko. (BELOW) Davis designed the living room's chaise and the sofa's throw pillows, all covered in Donghia fabrics. The three cocktail tables are vintage pieces from Knoll. See Resources.



Restful Retreats

The pièce de résistance in the bathroom (THIS PAGE) is a two-person Philippe Starck tub from Duravit, with Dornbracht's Tara Classic fittings. The floor tiles are from Bisazza. A study in serenity, the master bedroom (OPPOSITE) features a chinchilla fur throw from Distant Origin draped over an Argentinean-made bed from Eugenio Aguirre. The Matteo linens are from ABC Carpet & Home; the floor-to-ceiling drapes are from Rogers & Goffigon. The armchairs are vintage pieces by Hans Eichenberger. See Resources.



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Although the couple did not reconfigure any of the living areas, they gutted the bathrooms and kitchen and doubled the size of a screened porch that looks out on the pool. Additionally, Davis says, “there was no landscaping at all. The house was just sitting in the middle of the woods, so we took down some trees to open it up, though we still have total privacy here.” (That includes the outdoor shower, which is sheltered by a redbud tree.) While the men cover peace and quiet, they also love to cook and frequently entertain. “We live on the porch in the summer,” adds Davis, who points out that an outdoor fireplace means they can actually entertain friends in the backyard year-round.

The chef’s kitchen, with a Gaggenau cooktop and Wolf wall ovens, combines custom lacquered wood cabinetry by Davis with hand-crafted aluminum pulls by metal artisan Paul Benson. Most of the counters are Silestone, but the dramatic prep island is wrapped in slabs of onyx. “You wouldn’t normally use onyx in a kitchen,” Davis says, “but somehow it works for us. You can’t cut on it because it’s too soft, though it has held up well.”

The walls of the house are painted throughout in Benjamin Moore’s Decorator’s White, and furnishings include a mix of modern, vintage, and antique pieces, including chairs designed by Hans Eichenberger and Knoll.

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Letting Nature In
(OPPOSITE) The outdoor shower mounted to the side of the house is from Waterworks; a vintage Burmese stone monk serves as a towel holder. On the screened porch (ABOVE), a sofa and pair of chairs from Kingsley-Bate are covered in a Sunbrella fabric; the cashmere throw is by Loro Piana. The suspended stainless-steel fireplace is from Fireorb. The suite of chaises alongside the pool (NEAR LEFT) is also from Kingsley-Bate. See [Resources](#).

Some are remnants from the days when the couple co-owned Distant Origin, the SoHo home furnishings shop that Hernandez founded in 1987. “Julio and I used to travel a few times a year for the store, which represented Fortuny, so we often went to Italy and found the most amazing glass artists, such as Luigi Benzoni,” says Davis. “Our shopping rule was that we would never buy anything to sell that we wouldn’t want to live with. But despite our best intentions, quite a few of the things we bought eventually found their way into our home.” 🌿