

HAMPTONS

FOURTH OF JULY ISSUE

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PLUS
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FUTURISTIC FARMHOUSE

INTERIOR DESIGNER **MARK ZEFF** AND HIS WIFE, KRISTEN, CREATE BLACK BARN, THEIR OWN SIMPLE GETAWAY ON THE SHORES OF EAST HAMPTON. **BY STEPHANIE MURG**

“There is a certain roughness to it, so it feels like you’re somewhere else—somewhere very special,” says Mark Zeff of his beloved bay beach in East Hampton’s Northwest Harbor. He could just as easily be describing the home that he designed for his family on a parcel of land around the corner from that preferred patch of waterfront. The “Black Barn,” as he and his wife, Kristen, call it, is a place apart: At once rustic and modern, warm and cool, expansive and compact, it suggests a farmhouse from the future that arrived fully formed on the East End.

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Interior designer Mark Zeff adds whimsical elements, like the vintage surfboard propped up in his living room, for pops of color.



The grand entry foyer combines industrial accents, like poured concrete floors, with personal elements. Expansive storefront windows (INSET BELOW) connect the interior with the large outdoor courtyard.

“IT LOOKS VERY FOREBODING AND BARNLIKE AT FIRST; THEN YOU OPEN THE FRONT DOOR, YOU HIT THE CONCRETE FLOOR, AND YOU REALLY DO FEEL LIKE YOU’VE ENTERED SOMETHING DIFFERENT.”—MARK ZEFF

The building process was rapid and also responsive to the unique surroundings. “We decided that we wanted to move in by the next summer, so the idea was [to] keep it simple and build it quickly,” says Zeff, principal of the eponymous Manhattan-based design firm that is behind the interiors of hotels, restaurants, and private residences around the world. “We situated the house so that some of it faced the bay and some of it faced the woodlands; then we spent time looking at local barns and local vernacular architecture.”



Constructed over the course of seven months, in time for the Zeffs to move in last summer with their two young daughters, the Black Barn greets guests from a blond gravel driveway. Two pitched-roof structures—the home and garage—have siding in matte charcoal, a striking choice for a Hamptons exterior. “It looks very foreboding and barnlike at first; then you open the front door, you hit the concrete floor, and enter into this huge expanse of the first floor,” says Zeff. “You really do feel like you’ve entered something different.”

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The design of the kitchen melds sleek modern and rustic elements; the study's décor incorporates groupings of unexpected objects; a collection of *National Geographic* magazines, stacked to reveal their yellow spines, makes a graphic statement in the TV room.



To arrive inside the house is to instantly realize its true scale. Spanning 6,200 square feet, with five bedrooms and five and a half bathrooms, it extends back from the sober entryway into a white-sided structure that is illuminated by a skylight as well as expansive storefront windows that provide views of the large outdoor landscaped courtyard that runs the length of the house, some 90 feet. “The courtyard makes the house very conducive to indoor-outdoor living, and you feel connected to nature—looking into huge trees that begin 40 or 50 feet away,” says Zeff, who added a long and narrow pool in the space between. It is strategically placed off to the side, “because I hate to look at pool covers in the winter,” he admits.

Inside, the long central hallway combines industrial accents with personal touches, including framed maps that nod to the couple’s birthplaces—his in South Africa, hers in North Carolina—and historical renderings of the eastern tip of Long Island. Baskets picked up on travels abroad sit alongside favorite pieces spirited from the family’s city home, including a pair of Jacques Adnet chairs. Linking these disparate elements is the polished concrete floor, a polyurethane-sealed swirl of driftwood hues that begs to be walked on barefoot (in winter, there is underfloor heating).

“I’ve always wanted a concrete floor, and every time I’ve presented a concrete floor to any of my clients, they’ve kind of shied away,” says Zeff, who had to give his nervous contractor a pep talk before

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“BLACK BARN IS A REFRESHING ALTERNATIVE TO THE TYPICAL HAMPTONS MCMANSION, AND IT IS THE ANTITHESIS OF SHOW-OFFY.”

—ROBERT DANKNER





The peaked roof, 1,200-square-foot master bedroom echoes the home's barnlike feel. INSET BELOW: A collection of Ernst Haeckel prints line one wall of the family room.

“THE MASTER BEDROOM FEELS VERY MUCH LIKE YOU’RE INSIDE A BARN WITH A BAY VIEW. IT HAS A REALLY INTERESTING FEELING ABOUT IT.”—MARK ZEFF

the big pour: “I told him, ‘I don’t want it to look like Home Depot!’” The resulting hybrid, both refined and organic, is topped by a faded red rug that sets the stage for unexpected flashes of color throughout, from the vibrantly hued vintage water skis propped against the wall to a library/TV room made graphic by a collection of *National Geographic* magazines, stacked to show their yellow spines.

The generously scaled rooms of the first floor also include the living room, an eat-in kitchen, and bedrooms for the Zeff’s daughters, 8-year-old Wyeth and 7-year-old Saffron, and guests. The 1,200-square-foot master bedroom, accessible by the industrial staircase at the end of the hallway, reprises the feel of a farmhouse, with double-height ceilings and a peaked roof. “It feels very much like you’re inside a barn, with a view of the bay,” explains Zeff. “It has a really interesting feeling

about it, because that’s really the only room up there, which is another trick of the house.”

And the Black Barn has already worked its magic on many. Among the steady stream of enchanted visitors last summer were Robert Dankner and Jerry Lubiner, real estate professionals who have since partnered with Zeff on a series of spec homes that will dot the Hamptons, beginning with Black Barns on Old Noyac Path in Sag Harbor, Cross Highway in East Hampton, and Sagaponack’s Toppings Path. “Black Barn is a refreshing alternative to the typical Hamptons McMansion, and it is the antithesis of show-off,” says Dankner, a Southampton resident. “It is virtually impossible to manufacture an emotional connection to a house for someone, but the Black Barn’s masterful blend of art and nature creates this experience unanimously and instantly upon walking in the front door.” **H**

