

A home on Martha's Vineyard takes full advantage of its spectacular location.

Buena Vista

By LISA GERSON

Photographs by PETER VANDERWARKER





BEDROOM EYES: The master bedroom, set inside one of the house's "silo" structures, has only the bed as furniture and only the landscape as decoration.



SC No house should ever be *on any hill or on anything*. It should be *of the hill*, belonging to it, so hill and house could live together each the happier for the other," Frank Lloyd Wright wrote in 1932.

Almost 70 years later, this design ethos has been brilliantly executed on Martha's Vineyard. Set on a secluded up-island site, a recently completed vacation home makes the very best of its surroundings. On one side the house looks up a ridge toward a beautiful wooded area; on the other side it offers a spectacular, layered vista with a meadow that slowly unfolds into a tidal pond, a barrier beach, and, finally, the sparkling expanse of the Atlantic.

It was these views that drew the owners—an international executive and his writer wife—to the area 25 years ago, when all that sat on this 10-acre property was a modest, uninsulated house. The couple spent many summers in the house with their young children, but by the early nineties, with the kids in their teens, they decided to tear it down and build something more meaningful to them. "The old house was an experimental house from the 1960s," says one of the owners. "Everyone agreed that it was not a particularly successful experiment. It was not a much-admired piece of architecture, and it was hard to live in. We wanted a house that was fun, functional, and related to the land."

The house's style is a compromise: The shingled exterior nods to Vineyard tradition, but inside, modernism rules with sleek furniture and lighting.

INSIDE OUT: The man of the house collaborated with the architect on the home's decks and patios, opposite, while his wife took charge of the interiors, keeping the decor minimal so as not to interfere with the view.





LIVING LARGE The 0-level living room is anchored by a slate fireplace, which rises up to connect the downstairs area with the wraparound library on the upper floor.



In keeping with the home's casual theme, there is no parlor or entry hall—the front door opens directly into the home's central space.

The couple had three main goals for their new home's design. First and foremost, the house had to partake of the site. The owners wanted every room to have unique views of both the wooded land and the water. "The most important thing was to make it fit in with the landscape," says the wife. "The view had to make you feel like you were outdoors when you were inside."

Second, the house was going to be enjoyed by at least three generations—the owners, their parents, and their teenage children (and eventually, they hoped, grandchildren)—and so the house had to accommodate all of those people. The owners wanted to have open, inviting, communal gathering spaces, yet private retreats for family members and guests. "We wanted the house to have a combination of space and privacy for the different parts of our family," says the wife. "Our children were starting to bring friends to visit, and in the old house, my husband and I had ended up locked away in our bedroom. It had gotten very crowded."

Finally, the home had to feel distinctly like a vacation house. The family had to feel comfortable walking into it barefoot from the beach or flopping on the furniture in swimsuits and shorts. It had to be functional and easy to live in, without requiring a lot of upkeep.

In late 1993, the couple brought their ideas to architect David Handlin, a college friend of the husband. For the next few years, the pair collaborated with Handlin and the employees of his eponymous firm to create a home that satisfied their requirements. The first thing they decided on was the style of the house. The couple wanted to be respectful of the Vineyard's architectural tradition, but they didn't like the cutesy, Victorian-style farmhouse adaptations that are popular on the island. Instead, they settled on a design that melded tradition with contemporary style. The exterior of the house would nod to the established Vineyard aesthetic, with shingled sides and two large, round silo structures that anchor the home. Inside, though, the home would have a contemporary feel, with angular lines, spare ornamentation, and restrained decor.

