

New England HOME

Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

Cape
&
Islands

Summer *Classic*

Elegance and ease, refined



The Pull of the Tide

An intrepid cold call set things in motion for this Cape house, where past and present coexist beautifully with the land.

Homeowner and interior designer Jill Najnigier vaulted the mudroom ceiling and covered it in oak to add interest and warmth. Terrazzo floors ground the space. "Every time I went to visit the site, I was like, 'I love this passageway,'" architect Alison Alessi says. **FACING PAGE:** Positioning the home further from the water unlocked generous space for outdoor entertaining.

Text by KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS | *Photography by* GREG PREMURU
Produced by KARIN LIDBECK BRENT



A Verellen sofa from Artifact Home in a mossy green bouclé anchors the living room with a welcoming curve. The fireplace is clad in leathered quartzite with a white-oak surround. Reeded millwork by ArcArt Furniture cleverly conceals TV components.





Tadelakt (waterproof plaster) walls done by artisan Luis Fernando and European oak cabinets sourced through Divine Design Center bring timelessness to the kitchen. Najnigier used Calacatta Macchia Vecchia marble for the countertops and backsplash. **FAR LEFT:** The dining room's antique table dates to the late 1800s/early 1900s and was once used to hold tools in a refinisher's workshop.



The expression “good things come to those who wait” can feel a bit patronizing, until you see proof of it in real life. Take this house for example. Interior designer Jill Najnigier spent years searching for the perfect waterfront property in East Orleans, where her family had long enjoyed Cape Cod National Seashore’s miles of pristine beaches.

On a bike ride one day, she spotted a house and made a cold call to its owners about their adjacent undeveloped lot. “A year later the owner reached out with their decision to sell both the original 1925 home and the adjoining undeveloped parcel,” Najnigier, owner of JN Interior Spaces, recalls. “A

month later the deal closed.” Like a pearl in an oyster shell, the existing house—which had to be replaced—came with a bonus: two sets of murals local artist Vernon Smith had painted in 1935. “I immediately knew we had to find a way to remove, restore, and repurpose these

“We love the offseason, especially Thanksgiving and a full house of family and friends.”

—Interior designer Jill Najnigier



ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Saved from the original house and resurrected in the new one, artist Vernon Smith's murals from 1935 were restored by artist (and Smith's grandson) Dan Joy. In the powder room, a curved vanity comprises a fluted concrete top, integrated ramp sink, and oak base. **FACING PAGE:** Najnigier designed the study around her husband's heirloom German shrunk, made in 1755. The walls and ceiling wear Benjamin Moore Bonsai.

in the new home,” Najnigier says.

She enlisted Smith's grandson, artist Dan Joy, to resurrect the artwork and then designed two of the bedrooms around them. “It was a fun puzzle to work out the details and placement,” Najnigier says. “Custom framing surrounding the murals gave them intention, as they no longer ran continuously.”

The murals added instant provenance to the designer's newly built, modern family retreat, which she describes as “Shingle style meets Napa.” It was a labor of love (emphasis on labor). “Being your own client is not easy,” Najnigier says. “I was my most

difficult client to date.”

She worked to create a clean canvas in the interior architecture, with an earthy color palette that lets the views steal the show. Flush baseboards, frameless interior doors, flush vents and outlets—“try and spot an outlet on the marble backsplash,” Najnigier dares—and not even one recessed light make the envelope seamless.

The nearly net-zero, high-performance, fully electric home also roosts on its perch perfectly. “We really wanted to make sure we sited the house well and worked off where the existing house stood,”





says Alison Alessi of A3 Architects, who worked closely with Najnigier. “Because the house is visible from the beach, we wanted it to be really quiet.”

They shifted the building away from the water to make way for ample backyard entertaining space and preserved many of the established trees. Wood abounds on the structure itself, too. “Jill used Alaskan yellow cedar on a lot of the details on the house, Alaskan yellow siding, the roofing, *everything* was Alaskan yellow,” says builder Donald Connelly. “It’s maintenance-free, which is ideal. She didn’t want to use any synthetic materials.”

The resulting home was well worth the wait—and the work. Najnigier, her



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The outdoor portion of the primary bath’s indoor/outdoor shower is used May through early November. The designer repurposed the original home’s soapstone sink in the utility/laundry room and paired it with modern fixtures from Visual Comfort & Co. In the guest bath, the vanity wall and shower are sheathed floor to ceiling in zellige tiles in shades of mint. **FACING PAGE:** In the primary bedroom, “I love the generous-yet-airy size of the Vertigo pendant light,” Najnigier says of the fixture, which is by Petite Friture.



husband, and their two grown sons pile in for more than just summers. “We love the offseason, especially Thanksgiving and a full house of family and friends,” she says.

And P.S., more than the murals made the move

from the original home. “The soapstone sink was saved; it’s over 100 years old,” Najnigier says. Here, patience didn’t just pay off. It helped create something built to last.

EDITOR’S NOTE: For details, see Resources.

INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN:
JN Interior Spaces

ARCHITECTURE: A3 Architects

BUILDER: JC Donald Company

LANDSCAPE DESIGN: Philip L. Cheney

The roof-deck is only visible from the east side of the house. Najnigier, Alessi, and builder Donald Connolly worked closely together to make sure it couldn’t be seen from the front or sides of the home—“That was a priority,” says Najnigier. A floating, open-riser staircase leads from the lower deck to the roof-deck.



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While restoring his grandfather Vernon Smith's original 1935 murals in interior designer Jill Najnigier's East Orleans home, artist **Dan Joy** worked with acrylics and his own memories. Time and the waxing and waning weather had taken a toll on the panels, requiring intervention. "I've always been surrounded by his work, so I know it pretty well," Joy says. "I know his brush stroke. I know certain things about his technique, and he's got certain styles—the way he makes a grass or he makes a leaf or he makes a ship. And so I was not intimidated to go in and do it."
—Kathryn O'Shea-Evans