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ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

MAGAZINE

AD100 Designer Kelly Behun Adds a Dash of Fun to This Zen Hamptons House



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Colorful [Benjamin Moore](#) paints brighten custom built-ins in the kids' room. [Pierre Paulin](#) chair; [Kinder Modern](#) carpet; [Jasmin Anoschkin](#) ceramics.

By Hannah Martin
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It sounds clichéd, but we wanted to build our dream house,” says this mother of three, an author, about her place in Southampton. She and her husband had spent years summering in the area, always shacking up at his parents’ house. But when they found a large, park-like four-acre plot, set back from the ocean (but still close enough to catch its breeze and soothing soundtrack), they knew it was time to establish a place of their own. Their dream? A house that was anything but cliché.

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“I knew I didn’t want the typical shingled Hamptons house,” the homeowner explains. “I wanted something I built from the ground up.” They called on local architect James Merrell, known for his modern Hamptons homes, to realize a structure with strong lines, spacious but not ostentatious square footage, and enough vernacular touches (a gabled roof; dormers) to fit in with the neighborhood. The result, in Merrell’s words, “walks the tightrope between the 21st century and our idea of the traditional Hamptons village.”

Organized in an H-shape, with its long axis running east to west, his design helps the family get in sync with nature. Sunlight follows them as they move through the day—waking them up in the morning, illuminating the kitchen in the afternoons and evenings, and putting on a show with each rise and set, in the glass-encased living room. Thanks to thoughtful positioning, plantings by AD100 landscape architect Edmund Hollander, and well-placed windows, the homeowner attests, “You can stand in any room and see outside in both directions.” That’s by design. “The architecture informed the landscape,” says Hollander. “Once the house was sited we asked ourselves, What do we want to see?”

As a playful foil to the architecture, they tapped New York-based AD100 designer Kelly Behun to inject the Zen interiors with color and conversation pieces. “We love wacky,” says the homeowner. “But I also wanted sophistication.”

Behun delivered, dipping into her extensive Rolodex of artisans to fill the place with eye-catching furniture sure to get people talking. Brooklyn-based Ladies & Gentlemen Studio strung their Shape Up chandelier over the family-room table. Colorful rugs designed by Kinder Modern and Behun herself for the Rug Company jazz up the floors. And Memphis Group ceramics (one of Behun’s favorite design eras) sit alongside contemporary vessels by Brooklyn-based Erica Prince and Chicago- and Gary, Indiana-based Manal Kara.

“Of course furniture needs to be comfortable and functional,” says Behun. “But I like to go in and respond to a space as though it were a landscape. I think of furniture as sculpture.”

Then there’s the actual sculpture—in a house with so many windows, the always-visible outdoor art can feel like an element of the interiors. Behun worked closely with Hollander to place and light the family’s growing collection, including a stainless-steel zipper sculpture by Mark Richard Hall embedded in the grass (Behun tracked it down after spotting it on Instagram) and an eight-foot-tall painted-fiberglass sculpture, lurking in the willow trees along the driveway, commissioned from Brooklyn-based Chiaoza. For the kids, she fabricated a supersized chess board and planted a pair of Thomas Heatherwick’s Spun chairs in the yard like two enormous tops.

“Those are the kinds of things you never tire of,” Behun says. “They make you smile.”

Still, by grounding the interiors in neutral tones, luxe materials, and subtle, stained white oak, Behun kept the house feeling refined. In the living room, Francesco Binfaré’s sprawling, modular On the Rocks sofa mixes with furnishings in brass (a Haas Brothers Hex stool) and

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stone (a 1,300-pound cocktail table carved from Italian marble). In the master bedroom, the client's wish for wall-to-wall fuzzy wool carpet and après-ski vibes led Behun to concoct a sandy-hued 1970s-esque chalet-by-the-sea feel, with the addition of a ribbon-like vintage chair, pendant lights by ceramist Eric Roinestad, and a channel-tufted headboard.

Behun was designing the family fantasy, all while keeping their reality in mind. "I'm a novelist," explains the homeowner, "so great spaces to read and that honor books were very important to me."

In the library—situated by Merrell in the home's central, double-height volume—Behun created an area where the family comes together on a pair of Vladimir Kagan sofas to read and listen to their daughter play the piano. In the kids' shared "bunkroom," capsule-like beds and cozy wall nooks were destined for little ones hiding away with a good story.

The final note of fun emerged from a less predictable request: a bowling alley in the basement. "I've never done a bowling alley, and I don't know if I'll get a chance to do one again," recalls Behun. "So I thought, What the heck? Go for it!"

Taking inspiration from French artist Jean Dubuffet's monumental sculptures, Behun wrapped the basement-level lanes, to perception-bending effect, in a graphic, black-and-white pattern printed on Élitis wallpaper. The family was thrilled. "We've managed to find enough fun, nonelectronic things to prove there's life outside the iPad," the homeowner says. "Now all the kids' friends want to come over."