

ELLEDECOR

The background of the cover is a photograph of a bright, airy dining room. The ceiling is made of dark, rustic wooden beams. A large, multi-paned window in the background looks out onto a green landscape. In the center, a dark wood dining table is set with a white tablecloth, a centerpiece of white flowers, and several wicker chairs with light-colored cushions. A large, dark metal chandelier hangs from the ceiling. The overall aesthetic is relaxed and elegant.

relax!

Summer Pleasures

Easy Weekend Style
Romantic Pools
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laid-back
decorating

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SHIP SHAPE

INSPIRED BY A HISTORIC SEASIDE HOUSE IN SAG HARBOR, ARCHITECT CAMPION PLATT GIVES AN URBANE TWIST TO NAUTICAL THEMES

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When future historians look back, they will surely cluck in wonderment over the slavish devotion that fin-de-millennium homeowners and their architects paid to the past. They will also discover that this mindset was nowhere more in evidence than on the eastern tip of Long Island, New York. In the Hamptons, architectural homages to yesteryear—that is, to the early-20th-century glory days of pre-income-tax American fortunes—have reached such epic proportions that one would hardly be surprised to hear that the world has suddenly run out of cedar shingles.

The interiors of these gabled monsters tend to exhibit a similar wearisome lack of imagination, justified by words like integrity and appropriateness. Two responses: yawns and more yawns.

That's why Elena and Doug Atkin's house feels as refreshing as the light breeze that blows in off nearby Sag Harbor Cove the moment you open the front door. There's not a scrap of blue-and-white ticking in the place, yet the design of the house never resorts to tiresome futuristic tricks, like transparent walls and plastic furniture, to achieve its freshness.



Elena and Doug Atkin's 1950 cedar-shingle weekend house on Long Island's Sag Harbor Cove; the renovation and interior decoration were done by architect Campion Platt. Facing page: In the entry, an 18th-century Swedish demilune cupboard, a bistro chair from Mecox Gardens, and sea-themed prints from a Paris flea market. See Resources.

In the living room, a pair of bronze-and-elm drum tables by Platt, a sofa upholstered in Bennison's Plain Stripe, and a Tabou taboret in alder by City Studios from Tui Pranich. Facing page, from top: A 19th-century chaise longue from Gray Gardens Antiques and a Platt-designed club chair flank the fireplace; the collection of 19th-century herbarium specimens is from Fortune Antiques. The Porthole folding screen and Traveling chairs are by Platt; the vintage brass-studded chest is from Coconut Co. See Resources.





When she first saw the 1850 house on a quiet side street fronting the Cove, Atkin wasn't exactly eager to undertake the massive renovation she knew that it would require. But she was even more reluctant to end up with one of the area's many newly built McMansions. She imagined that the place had once belonged to some prosperous whaling captain, and the idea of that old salt, she says, guided her initial urge to get the place shipshape for her husband, who works in finance in Manhattan, and their sons, Peter, ten, and Michael, seven. But instead of booking a day trip to Nantucket and buying out Main Street, she made a smarter move: She hired architect and designer Campion Platt. "I never could have done it without him," she says.

Platt was more than willing to embrace a nautical theme. But rather than conjuring some crusty skipper or an obsessed Ahab, the designer took a more sophisticated approach and channeled the urbane Rex Harrison, creating his own subtle and imaginative take on *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*. "Behind a wall






we actually unearthed an old drawing of a captain with a beard and pipe," he says. "We used the idea of this traveling seafarer as a departure point."

Platt literally rethought the place from basement to roof. The foundation was raised and a dirt-floor cellar was transformed into a fully finished lower level, complete with laundry room, storage area, guest bedroom, and rumpus room for the kids. The galley kitchen (barely big enough to cook for two) was replaced with an entire kitchen wing. Platt opened up the rabbit warren of rooms on the first floor so the view out to the back, and to the water, can be seen from the front door. And a badly fitted-out attic was transformed into a master-bedroom suite, complete with bath, office, sitting area, and dressing room, so even during summer weekends, when the house is a-clamor with guests and kids, Mr. and Mrs. have a sanctum sanctorum.

Beyond the infrastructure, Platt saved his best reconstructions for the decor, updating traditional



In the den, the sofa, upholstered in a Rogers & Goffigon striped linen, and the brass ceiling light are Platt designs, the 1940s French armchairs are from Meccox Gardens, and the iron table lamps are from a Paris flea market. Facing page, from top: A Viking range hood and Platt's brass milk-pail chandeliers in the kitchen. The dining room's oak-and-soapstone table and handblown bubble-glass light fixture are by Platt; the lanterns are from Bloom. See Resources.




elements with wit and sly references. Hence, the blue-and-white motif of the master bedroom takes on a modern edge by being rendered in a bold botanical pattern. The familiar brass housing of an old ship's clock is given new life when mounted as an overhead light in the den, and milk pails are glorified as chandeliers in the kitchen. A fishnet, embedded in ivory Venetian plaster, lends texture and whimsy to the second-floor hallway. And in Peter's bedroom, a sepia-toned photomural of the Montauk lighthouse lends just a whiff of salt air.

Downstairs, slender, harpoonish curtain rods are mounted onto nautical brackets and kitted out with curtain rings that resemble fishhooks—all designed by Platt. "We didn't want to do period, we only wanted to recall it," he says. "What is true to the period, though, is the handcrafted elements—the woodwork, cabinetry, and lighting. Those will age beautifully and develop the kind of patina that you want in a house like this."

"It's amazing what he came up with," says Atkin, referring as well to the subtle colors and mix of antiques and custom-made pieces. "If I'd tried to do it myself, it would have been completely beige and boring," she adds. "I didn't even like blue before."

So would the old captain approve? It's doubtful that any mid-19th-century Yankee, used to salting away pennies for spermaceti candles, would be anything but agog at Platt's interpretation of sea-going style. But to the modern eye, all too familiar with an ocean of dull and dutiful nautical imitation, the Atkin house looks like nothing so much as a comforting and chic port in a storm. ■



Facing page, clockwise from right: Michael and Peter on the dock; in Peter's room, Platt designed the night table, bed, and sconces; the sepie photomural of Montauk Lighthouse is by Ricki Lee. The master bathtub is original to the house, and the 19th-century glass bottles are from Gray Gardens Antiques. This page: The headboard, Roman shade, and light fixture in the master bedroom are covered in a discontinued Larsen fabric. See Resources.