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ARCHITECTURE / MARGARET MENTER AND PAT BYRNE, MENTER BYRNE ARCHITECTS
INTERIOR DESIGN / SHELLEY CAREY, SANDCASTLE DESIGNS
HOME BUILDER / PAUL VASSALLO AND DAVID BRODER, SCHULTZ MILLER
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / KENNETH PHILP, KENNETH PHILP LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



SWEET ESCAPE

THE SEASIDE RESORT TOWNS OF THE NORTHEAST PROVIDE THE INSPIRATION FOR A FAMILY'S RETREAT IN THE SAN JUANS.

WRITTEN BY MICHELLE BRUNNER / PHOTOGRAPHY BY BENJAMIN BENSCHNEIDER



While Shingle-style architecture calls to mind the hydrangea-lined estates of well-heeled summer destinations such as Nantucket, Kennebunkport and the Hamptons, thankfully the East

Coast holds no copyright on the look. "The style holds up particularly well to the Pacific Northwest weather," says residential designer Margaret Menter, who designed this retreat in the San Juan Islands with her firm partner, architect Pat Byrne. When their clients requested a vacation house that would feel appropriate for the craggy shorelines of coastal Washington yet evoke the classic beach cottages of Cape Cod, the duo responded with this updated take on the vernacular that combines cedar shingles with a standing seam metal roof. A chimney of local fieldstone further links the structure to its site.

Part of a larger, multigenerational compound and working farm, the house is bordered by forest on one side and a pond on the other, with Puget Sound in the distance. The positioning of the single-story main residence allows for the best of both worlds: During the day, the family enjoys breathtaking vistas of the rolling meadow and waterfront; in the evenings, the enclosed courtyard provides shelter from bracing harbor winds. To take full advantage of the natural environment, the architectural team incorporated outdoor access to most of the rooms to allow activities to flow effortlessly from interior to exterior.

For the layout, Menter and Byrne created a linear floor plan, so the home gracefully unfolds outward from a large central great room where reclaimed wood barn doors lead to "breezeway" areas on each side. Those interstitial rooms act as a library and a reading nook, easing the transition from communal to private spaces. In the main living area, a trio of strategically placed dormers brings in an abundance of natural light, and the high vaulted ceiling

lends a loft-like feel to the space. "That detailing where the steel cross ties connect to the trusses is very modern and precise," says Byrne. "It's a complement to the lower, more traditional portion of the room."

The clients requested a blank slate for the interiors so that the focus would be on the glorious views of the land, sea and sky. "Instead of using trim on the walls, we tried to keep everything very clean with the horizontal shiplap paneling being the unifying factor throughout the rooms, so no individual detail stands out," says Menter. In keeping with that pared-back aesthetic, designer Shelley Carey opted for a mix of sun-faded coastal hues and natural textures. Light oak wide-plank floors, gray concrete countertops and crisp Belgian linen slipcovered furnishings set a casual, unfussy tone. "When we were nailing down the palette and inspiration, we kept returning to a casual, coastal feel and added some fun elements with vintage framed wall art, flags, and photographs. We drew inspiration for the overall palette from colors you find along the island's beaches, sky and landscape," she says. "Everything looks old or repurposed as if it will age well over time. We didn't want it to feel like you can't touch anything."

Outside, the landscape design conveys a similar sense of ease, forgoing a formal look for one that feels slightly wild and beach-like through contrasting drifts of grasses, such as Pennisetum, as well as native sword fern and huckleberries. Landscape architect Kenneth Philp employed sustainable, drought-tolerant plants that can handle the island's limited rain and intense sun exposure in the summer. Because the property dramatically slopes downward toward the pond, Philp had to make sure the main house and its secondary buildings, including a guest house/studio, garage and pool house, worked with the constant grade of the meadow. "It was an exercise in how to sculpt the land so that the buildings really felt like they fit in and weren't just dropped there," he says.

The setting proved a challenge for the project in other ways, too. Located over a hundred miles from Seattle, it didn't make sense to have the crew commute for several hours each day. As a result, 16 tradespeople took up residence to build the house, which took some two years given the scale of the endeavor. "It's the first time we've ever done a project where we had to live on-site," says senior project manager David Broder, part of general contractor Paul Vassallo's team. The remote location created another unique situation: Many of the construction materials had to literally be ferried over. "It's like building a condo where everything has to go through one elevator, except on an island everything has to come across by boat," says Broder. "It was definitely not normal protocol." Talk about uncharted waters. ■

"WE TRIED TO KEEP EVERYTHING VERY CLEAN WITH THE PANELING BEING THE UNIFYING FACTOR."

—MARGARET MENTER



Nothing bids a warm welcome quite like a Dutch door. The main entry to this San Juan Islands home features a transom-topped version painted Benjamin Moore's Hale Navy. White shiplap paneling by O. B. Williams and an aged iron lantern from Visual Comfort & Co. convey a modern farmhouse vibe.



Residential designer Margaret Menter and her partner, architect Pat Byrne, used French Loewen doors and windows from Island Sash & Door to flood the great room with light. The RH sofa slipcovered in Belgian linen and the custom daybed in a Romo check offer cozy spots to take in the views.

A framed vintage American flag hangs over the dining area, which includes a wooden Ralph Lauren Home farm table surrounded by high-back woven rattan chairs. The round RH candelabra-style chandelier echoes the iron trusses overhead. The sisal carpet is from Curran Home.





Gray cast-concrete countertops, lit by Visual Comfort & Co. fixtures, and crisp white cabinets reinforce the coastal feel. The counter stools are by Lee Industries. Shades by Bartlett Blinds let the sun shine through. Albert Lee supplied the Wolf ovens and Sub-Zero refrigerator.

“WHEN WE WERE NAILING DOWN THE PALETTE AND INSPIRATION, WE KEPT RETURNING TO A CASUAL, COASTAL FEEL AND ADDED SOME FUN ELEMENTS.”

-SHELLEY CAREY



Above: A door of reclaimed barn wood sourced from Greenhome Solutions leads to a small library, intended as a semi-private space to steal away for a quiet moment or do some weekend work. The Timber Top flooring is European white oak.

Right: In the master bedroom, Benjamin Moore's Edgcomb Gray plays on the warmth of the reclaimed beams, bringing a sun-kissed glow to the room. The RH bed rests on a carpet from Curran Home. Draperies in a Borderline fabric treat the French doors.





Bluestone paves the area around the pool and poolhouse set within a meadow. Askew Paulson built both structures, collaborating with KrisCo Aquatech Pools & Spas on the pool. Sliding barn doors open up to a kitchenette and bar area for easy entertaining, while Frontgate chaises and umbrellas form a relaxing lounge area.