



SEAT DREAMS
This picture, the sitting room, set in the new block at the rear of the house, below, features two Hans Wegner sofas and wall lights by Charlotte Perriand

Collector's call

When gallery director Gordon Veneklasen wanted to update his holiday house in the Hamptons, he enlisted an architect who knows that home is where the art is

Even the quieter corners of East Hampton, Long Island, face a paradox common to ultra-fashionable seaside resorts: the multi-million dollar beachside shack. In the last few decades, the beach town has witnessed the transformation of its ordinary homesteads and barns into designer holiday homes, and the housing stock has strained to adopt a new identity that bridges the gap between modest origins and today's more extravagant desires, while still fitting into the protected landscape. Overblown McMansions planted uneasily in what were, until recently, potato fields show how easy it is to be seduced by traditionalist yearnings and vaunting pretensions.

It was only 60 years ago that Jackson Pollock and his wife, fellow artist Lee Krasner, escaped from the embryonic Manhattan art scene to live in a remote fisherman's homestead in The Springs, then a farming and fishing community, very close to East Hampton. The house and studio now operates as the Pollock-Krasner House & Study Center, but if you visit, you'll find the barn, where Pollock famously painted his canvases on the floor, is really more of an overgrown



tool shed, and is considerably smaller than it appears in Hans Namuth's heroic photographs of the artist in action. Nowadays, Pollock pilgrims have to pad around the paint-splattered floor in special slippers.

Just down the road from the Pollock house is the Veneklasen residence, which was designed by Annabelle Selldorf, of Selldorf Architects, for Gordon Veneklasen, a close friend and the director of the Michael Werner Gallery in New York. The house explores a different Hamptons aesthetic, recalling the experimental modern architectural ethos of the 1950s and 1960s. The existing homestead, a small pitched-roof bungalow and garden shed, has been sensitively incorporated into a larger composition that's organised around a new courtyard deck and entrance. Clad in a soft grey cement board, the new blocks at the front and back have a graphic simplicity.

The beach is a big part of summer life in the Hamptons, but this house was intended to be a holiday home that can be used all year round. The generous allocation of space means there's a healthy balance between communal and more private zones in a »

**BACK TO STOOL**

Left, wooden stools by Charlotte Perriand, a 'Ribbon' chair by Cesare Leonardi and Franca Stagi, and *Air Routes of Europe (Night and Day)* by Langlands & Bell adorn the library

Below, the dining room has a Sigmar Polke painting, an Osvaldo Borsani light fixture and Fornasetti chairs

Below left, the sunken terrace features a long oak table and benches designed by the architect



house that's used by a large circle of friends on most weekends. The new block at the front houses a garage and library, which is reached by an external wooden staircase and is orientated away from the main house to create a secluded escape. The new block at the back houses the sitting room, which extends onto a terrace, and a generous master suite upstairs. The terrace (formed by a concrete plinth necessitated by local flooding laws) is protected by the overhang of the house, while an adjacent sunken area forms a sort of open air living room complete with giant table and benches and shaded by a vast American oak.

The garden is also part of this discreet approach to modernising the vernacular. Planting is restricted mainly to native plants that can thrive without too much watering, even through long, dry summers, and the selection was further limited to plants that deer won't eat, to save having to fence off the garden – this ensured the space kept its alluring openness and unrestricted views right down to the water's edge.

Both Selldorf and VeneKlasen describe their design collaboration as 'intuitive' and 'organic'. This may be



partly due to the fact that Selldorf resisted starting work until she had a really clear idea of how to handle the expansion without overwhelming the site. It may also be because her New York practice has forged its reputation not so much for its residential work, but rather as the architect of choice of the Manhattan and London gallery scenes, a world known for its very different requirements. Selldorf Architects was widely acclaimed, for instance, for the Neue Galerie, a transformation of a Fifth Avenue mansion into an extraordinary museum devoted to 20th century German and Austrian art. And the firm also received praise for the Hauser & Wirth Gallery in London, a restrained renovation of a Lutyens grade II-listed building on Piccadilly, where the grand panelled interiors contrast beautifully with installations by the likes of Paul McCarthy and Martin Creed.

Since completing the VeneKlasen house, Selldorf has busied itself with further Manhattan projects, including a New York flagship store for Abercrombie & Fitch, due to open on Fifth Avenue in November. ★ Selldorf Architects, www.selldorf.com