

DESIGNED BY SELLDORF
ARCHITECTS, THE
HAMPTON BAYS HOUSE OF
MARIE AND FRÉDÉRIC
MALLE FEATURES CEDAR-
CLAD FACADES WITH
MAHOGANY-TRIMMED
WINDOWS. LOUIS BENECH
CONCEIVED THE GARDENS,
MIXING GEOMETRIC
PATERRES, AN ALLÉE
OF FRUIT TREES, AND
WILD GRASSES

Tasked with designing a waterfront home
for famed perfumer *Frédéric Malle*, AD100
Hall of Famers *Annabelle Selldorf* and
Louis Benech balance romance and rigor

Scents & Sensibility

TEXT BY SAM COCHRAN PHOTOGRAPHY BY NGOC MINH NGO STYLED BY MARTIN BOURNE



LEFT MARIE AND FRÉDÉRIC MALLE WITH AN ANTIQUE VENETIAN BENCH AND ARTWORK BY CLAUDE VIALLAT. OPPOSITE A GENTLY CURVING BANISTER DISTINGUISHES THE CENTRAL STAIR HALL, WHICH DISPLAYS A SCULPTURE BY JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE AND, ON THE REAR WALL, ARTWORKS BY FRANÇOIS MORELLET AND JEAN DEGOTTÉX.

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At the Hampton Bays home of Frédéric and Marie Malle, the water looms large, if deceptively so. Beyond swaths of wild grasses and shrubs, the East End's famously wide sky meets the Great Peconic's deep-blue depths in a postcard-perfect

horizon line. But meander toward it and you'll find there's a ways to go yet, that verdant expanse concealing the steep sandy bluff and the many flights of stairs you must descend to reach the gentle tides—what is now, for the couple, a cherished act of delayed gratification.

"It was always my dream to have a place on a beach," says Frédéric, the legendary French perfumer. Oceanfront living, of course, comes at a cost, not least of all psychologically in the face of climate change. "There's the threat of those waves," he reflects. "A bad

winter day can erase your house. But being on a bay is a happy medium." And so it was that he and Marie, a psychoanalyst, set their sights on this low-key community along the westernmost stretch of the South Fork, less than two hours by car from New York City. Here the couple bought a narrow but deep plot abutting the shore on which to realize another long-held wish: to build a home from scratch for themselves and their four children.

"I would have loved to have been an architect," notes Frédéric, who has worked with many over the years, having tapped Steven Holl, Jakob + MacFarlane, Andrée Putman, and other venerable talents to design stores for his namesake line, which was acquired by The Estée Lauder Companies in 2015. (He officially stepped away from its operations last year.) For their new home, he and Marie turned to a longtime friend, the AD100 Hall of Famer Annabelle Selldorf, whose renovation of a Fifth Avenue mansion for the Neue

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FLOOR-LENGTH CURTAINS OF PRELLE FABRIC FRAME THE LIVING ROOM, WHERE A SETTEE AND CHAIRS BY POUL KJÆRHOLM MINGLE WITH A DONALD JUDD COFFEE TABLE AND LOUIS XV-STYLE FAUTEUILS; THE SCULPTURE IS BY JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE, THE ANTIQUE CARD TABLE AND CHEST ARE BY JULES LELEU, AND THE PAINTING IS BY JEAN DUBUFFET.

“Making things impractical, choosing aesthetics over comfort—I can be guilty of this,” *Frédéric Malle* confesses. “Here we didn’t want anything pretentious.”

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IN FRÉDÉRIC'S BOOK-FILLED OFFICE, A MIES VAN DER ROHE CHAIR PULLS UP TO THE CUSTOM DESK—MODELED AFTER MIES'S—WHICH REVEALS THE PERFUMER'S HOME ARSENAL OF SCENTS AND TESTER STRIPS.

ART: © TINA BARNEY/KASMIN, NEW YORK



Galerie they had long admired. “I knew I wanted to collaborate with someone with a strong point of view,” Frédéric recalls. “I said to Annabelle, ‘Dazzle me.’” That she did. If Frédéric was initially daunted by the prospect of designing someplace from the ground up, Selldorf was quick to impose conceptual constraints. “Maybe the hardest thing in architecture is that you get to set up the rules,” she says. “It requires a huge amount of rigor, but you don’t want to feel that you have fenced yourself in. It is really about understanding and owning the vocabulary.” To this end, Selldorf proposed a strict geometry for the façades, with cedar siding and broad openings framed by mahogany. “We cracked the code when we decided to make this very symmetrical system,” she notes. “It’s not about being modern and it’s not about being *not* modern. We were exploring proportions of space, relationships between indoors and outdoors.” The exterior’s spirit of precision gives way to sophisticated yet informal interiors, centered on a sinuous staircase. “I wanted there to be this gorgeous

RIGHT HANGING IN THE PRIMARY BEDROOM ARE TINA BARNEY PORTRAITS OF THE MALLE FAMILY AND A PAINTING THAT CAME FROM CHÂTEAU DE GROUSSAY; VINTAGE BEDSIDE LIGHTS BY JOE COLOMBO. BELOW THE COUPLE’S BATH FEATURES A CUSTOM DOUBLE VANITY WITH KOHLER SINKS AND LEFROY BROOKS FITTINGS.



moment of passage,” Selldorf explains of the subtle curvature. “It’s two things at once, elegant and casual.” On the main level, concrete floor tiles finished in black glaze lend continuity room to room, where long curtains graze the ground. Some ceilings bear humble shiplap, others neat grids of trim punctuated by downlights and wall washers. (Hervé Descottes of L’Observatoire International consulted on the glow.) Botanical murals painted by the couple’s friend Konstantin Kakanias add more romance still, enlivening the kitchen and one of the four principal bedrooms with their branching and blooming motifs. Furnishings tend toward the personal and pedigreed, vintage finds and family heirlooms layered into one ineffable mix. In the living room, case in point, chairs by Poul Kjærholm, tables by Donald Judd and Martin Szekely, and objects collected by the Malles on their far-flung travels mingle with treasures from Marie’s ancestral country house, Château de Groussay, decorated by her tastemaking granduncle Charles de Beistegui. Among those keepsakes are a side table by

jeweler Fulco di Verdura, a leather-clad bergère, and an Old Master painting that Frédéric happened to pick up at auction not knowing its provenance. “Making things impractical, choosing aesthetics over comfort—I can be guilty of this,” he confesses. “Here we didn’t want anything pretentious.”

Nowhere is that more true than the gardens, reimagined by landscape designer Louis Benech, another family friend and AD100 titan. Lush, anecdotal plantings radiate a sense of unstudied romance, whether in the case of the unruly grasses, flecked with native flowers, that hug the bluff or the fast-growing conifers that block views of the neighbor—and there’s blissfully only one, their pal Muriel Brandolini, thanks to the woodlands next door. All the while Benech took care to tease the water, heightening anticipation by framing the parking area in hedges then directing sight lines with an allée of fruit trees, their lower branches pruned to preserve the panorama. “A few inches,” he says, “can completely change the views.”

Inside and out, the Malles make the most of it all. On workdays, Marie will see patients remotely from her downstairs office while Frédéric retires to his own book-lined space—his famous nose now concocting scents for brands and hospitality clients as part of his new venture, Perfume Makers, which he launched with his son Lucien last year. Lunch might be taken beneath the pergola between dips at the pool. Maybe cocktail hour unfolds in the Adirondack chairs that surround the waterfront firepit. And perhaps the dinner table is set on the shaded terrace. “There is not a set agenda for the day,” says Frédéric. “It’s a house where we have many options and where we change according to seasons.”

At some point, people make their way to the beach, following the humble timber planks that Benech laid out as a simple walkway, its path zigging and zagging to afford distinct views of the bay. Would a straight line have been more direct? Of course. But what’s the rush? ▲



ABOVE BONACINA PENDANT LAMPS HANG OVER THE KITCHEN ISLAND, WHICH IS TOPPED IN GLAZED CERAMIC TILES; ARTEK STOOLS BY ALVAR AALTO. LEFT ARTIST KONSTANTIN KAKANIAS, A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY, PAINTED THE BOTANICAL MURALS ON THE KITCHEN WALLS.



A GRASS PATH CUTS THROUGH THE MEADOW AND ORCHARD OF FRUIT TREES TO THE FIREPIT, WHICH IS RINGED BY ADIRONDACK CHAIRS.