

Galerie

This Modernist Masterpiece in the Hamptons Proves That Opposites Attract

Steven Harris and Lucien Rees Roberts conceive an elevated yet playful oceanfront retreat

By Tim McKeough

June 2, 2023

Out near the tip of New York's Long Island, in the town of Bridgehampton, architect Steven Harris has created an oceanfront home where opposites most definitely attract. There, perched above grassy dunes, a series of pristine glass-and-brick boxes reflect the strict geometries of a modernist dream. But step inside the entrance hall and the crisp lines and sharp edges melt away to reveal far more sensual forms, starting with an exquisitely twisting staircase enclosed on one side by a curl of teakwood. Just beyond, to the rear, glass walls open to a curvaceous, asymmetrical pool and a terrace pavilion topped by a boomerang-shaped roof.

The directive that brought forth these contrasting yet complementary forms had a similar sense of duality: Conceive an unforgettable house filled with breathtaking art and design, but make it a fun, welcoming, worry-free home for a couple with three young children who host a never-ending stream of family and friends. "The owners are very family-focused and always seem to have 17 people with them," says Harris. "Their kids, the kids' friends, the cousins, the aunts, the uncles, and many others. So the idea of having something that was accommodating to everyone was critical."



In the children's sitting room, an artwork by Carrie Moyer overlooks a sofa designed by Lucien Rees Roberts, a pair of Isamu Noguchi tables, and a swivel lounge chair by Ben Swildens for Stabin Bennis; the rug is by Crosby Street Studios. PHOTO: ERIC PETSCHKEK

The cosmopolitan owners—he's a tech-minded venture capitalist and she works in management consulting—were intent on being surrounded by the objects that inspire them. Never mind if their children end up tearing past the Olafur Eliasson glass mosaics mounted in a hallway or munching potato chips on the plasterglass John Koga dining chairs. "They love design and art, and enjoy exploring what's possible to do with those things in a space," says Lucien Rees Roberts, whose interiors and landscape firm, Rees Roberts + Partners, shares offices with those of Harris, his longtime partner and collaborator.

While capable of hosting a big crowd, the residence is designed to be just as comfortable when the family is there alone. There are three levels, with the top floor dedicated to the main living room, including the primary suite, three bedrooms for the children, and a 70-foot-long ocean-facing space that contains the kitchen and the living and dining areas. From that truly great room, the genius of the pool pavilion's sculptural roof becomes apparent—it's actually a novel water feature, a reflecting pond that serves as a prelude to the wide-open ocean view. "Your eye skips from that pool to the ocean, visually collapsing the space in between," says Harris.

Four guest suites occupy the middle floor, and there's a third level below, which partially tucks into the landscape and serves to raise the living spaces above FEMA flood elevation requirements. Here, the design team installed a basketball court and a gym with a pneumatic glass wall that opens to a secluded garden and terrace surrounded by Japanese holly hedges.

“Your eye skips from that pool to the ocean, visually collapsing the space in between” - STEVEN HARRIS



Brooklyn painter Carrie Moyer, whose expressive canvases pay homage to artists like Helen Frankenthaler, created the colorful abstraction in the children's sitting area. “It has a playfulness that works so well in the space,” says Rees Roberts. Moyer, who shows with DC Moore Gallery, also made this evocative artwork, *La Signora* (2020).

Elsewhere, the property's grounds are a mix of manicured and wild. A tightly clipped lawn and perfect ribbons of pea gravel near the house give way to undulating mounds planted with tall beach grasses. “Even though the house is very geometric, the owners wanted the landscape to feel soft,” explains David Kelly, the partner in charge of landscape design at Rees Roberts + Partners.

The stimulating art and design starts outside, too. Concrete panels by artist Mig Perkins, featuring abstract shapes cast in relief, function like a signpost by a set of steps leading up to the house. Near the front door, Perkins also created a floor-to-ceiling, gray-on-white abstract mural that begins outside, slices through the length of the entrance hall, and continues out by the pool. The mural's Surrealist-style forms are echoed in other elements, from the biomorphic Philippe Hiquily sculpture that stands beside the staircase to the primary bedroom's Alexandre Logé Bird chandelier, which could have come straight out of a Joan Miró painting.

Visually striking, unexpected moments can be found throughout, not least in the living area, where a seam in travertine slabs surrounding the fireplace conceals a hidden treasure. One slab is actually a pivot door that swings open to reveal a vivid-orange wet bar. After all, with its exceptional views, the space is a magical spot for enjoying drinks while reclining on the sprawling Francesco Binfaré sectional, more of a seating landscape than a conventional sofa.

The result is a home that's deeply sophisticated but also a lot of fun. “When we finished installing the furniture, the whole family came out,” recalls Rees Roberts. “Everyone just hopped on that living room sofa and immediately felt at ease.” And that, he adds, is the ultimate sign of success.

*A version of this article first appeared in print in our 2023 Summer Issue under the headline “A Perfect Balance.”
Subscribe to the magazine.*