

WIDE OPEN  
SPACES

THIS CONTEMPORARY COUNTRY RETREAT  
SETTLES INTO ITS RURAL SURROUNDINGS ON  
MARTHA'S VINEYARD



TEXT BY BRENDA HORRIGAN  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN VANDEN BRINK



■ Perhaps the most extraordinary connection between the beautifully crafted home structures and the Slough Cove site, says landscape architect Kris Horiuchi, is that both are sensitively designed into an historic rural landscape while maintaining a contemporary appeal. Architect Mark Hutker recalls a jump rope line as a recurring theme: "Big house, little house, back house, barn."







■ The neighboring silo makes the farm connection and acted as the inspiration for the property. Facing south, the main house (left) looks out to a finger pond and to the barrier beaches beyond.

A simple pea stone road winds poetically through expansive drifts of native foliage as berry bushes carefully mark each twist and turn. At its end, a contemporary farm-style estate embraces the shore of Martha's Vineyard's Slough Cove, a wild grassy area where one would be more inclined to launch a canoe than plant a beach chair.

The rambling twenty-first century home blends harmoniously with its pastoral landscape, thanks to the sensitive designs of architects Mark Hutker and Charles Orr of Mark Hutker and Associates Architects (MHAA) and landscape architect Kris Horiuchi of Horiuchi Solien Landscape Architects. A neighboring saltwater farm inspired Hutker and Orr's design. The fawn gray hue and silhouette of the old farm's grain silo were in the forefront of their minds as they considered how to create a home worthy of the pristine wetland landscape. "Mark and I were very conscious of the existing terrain," Orr says, "and we made great efforts to reduce the visual impact of the buildings on the cove." And therein lies the significance of the project says Horiuchi: "The project succeeds ultimately because of a thoughtful

design process involving architect and landscape architect—one in which the entire design vocabulary is created with building and landscape materials and spaces seamlessly relating to each other."

The homeowners quickly agreed to MHAA's proposal of three smaller buildings rather than one imposing structure. The careful placement of the structures, clustered, says Horiuchi, "to create a center for family living while preserving most of the site's existing native vegetation," respected the proportions of the low-lying land, while still providing 8,600 square feet of interior living space.

The main house establishes the agrarian spirit of the estate. The heart of the home, the living room, faces the water and is flanked by two wings. Rather than having the house present a long ridgeline, the



■ As an alternative to a barn in a pasture, the design approach for this property did not rely on a simple replication of history. The contemporary house and landscape respond to the rural context by re-interpreting historic forms, materials, and uses, Horiuchi says. Sleek arbors lend interest and provide shade while stone walls coincide with the wood gate, which leads to the pool terrace and the main house (left).





■ The “star gazer” spa garden is the ultimate venue for a sultry soak. Thick grass—which encircles the spa and grows four- to five-feet tall—creates privacy, screening the hot tub from outside forces (including the guest house’s great room) above.







■ The master suite's terrace offers pool and pond views, as well as a bird's-eye view of the garage and guest house. The property's buildings were clustered to lessen the impact on the Vineyard's sensitive rural landscape.

architects designed the wings to be perpendicular to the cove so the gable end is visible. The left wing houses a den/office, powder room, kitchen, formal dining room, and screened porch. Upstairs lies the master bedroom suite. The right wing has three additional bedrooms, two baths, and a combination playroom, billiards room, and workout area on the second floor. Flat roof connectors between the wings and the living room break up the roofline, resulting in a main house that is expansive, simple, and closely connected with the gentle rises and dips of the surrounding rural scene and with the designed landscape.

To create harmony between the interior and exterior, Horiuchi explains, "Materials, forms, and workmanship are repeated inside and outside. Stone paving for the entry walks extends into the buildings and back outside. Arbors create shade for outdoor terraces as well as reduce heat and glare on the south-facing facades. Wood fencing and gates exhibit the same exquisite craft found in the post-and-beam interiors."

The living room exemplifies the theme of bringing the outdoors in with its stone floor and inlaid

"carpet" of end grain fir. Floor-to-ceiling windows run the length and height of the south wall, providing magnificent views all day. "Unlike the popular sunken living room," Orr says, "the site and the view told us this living room should be lifted onto a stone plinth." An inglenook composed of an exposed interior beam and two stone benches flanking the stone fireplace add to this classic, barn-inspired room. The granite used for the fireplace and its benches is repeated outdoors in gate posts and thresholds.

Every room in the main home has windows on at least three sides. "We like to get as much varied natural lighting and cross ventilation as possible," Hutker explains. Unlike some homes, planned so that the most intoxicating scenes are visible from the living room or the master bedroom, this estate is designed so the views expand from almost any room. Still, Hutker and Orr were careful to protect privacy, often sacrificed in the design of many open living spaces. Even the most open rooms have pocket doors so that they can be isolated. The kitchen, for example, can be closed off entirely from both the entry and dining room during catered parties.



Like the main buildings, the guest house was also subdivided. The sleeping quarters occupy the left half of the building, which features a shingled exterior and a yellow cedar roof, while the living space gains its character from horizontal cedar siding and a roof of lead-coated copper. Natural materials common to the landscape were used along with neutral colors, which defer to the beauty of the landscape. Both sides of the structure have already weathered to the same soft taupe as the old silo next door. Both types of roof, cedar and metal, are the same deep brown-gray color. Brown aluminum-clad casings on the windows solidify the uniform look. "The subtle nature of the architecture is manifest in the way the natural light plays off the varying patterns of similar materials throughout the day," Hutker says. Thus, a narrow passage, made mostly of glass so the view of the cove and ocean beyond is visible, links the guest house's two halves. This respect for outdoor beauty is a trademark design element of Hutker's firm: keeping people in the landscape, bringing the outdoors in.

Entry to the guest house is gained between the two halves of the building, at the end of a pathway made of bluestone slabs set amidst a pond of beach cobblestones. Horiuchi specified the use of those stones "to reinforce the connection of the designed landscape to the oceanfront site." Sensitive design elements like these won Horiuchi awards from the American Society of Landscape Architects and the Boston Society of Landscape Architects for this project.

A three-bay barn-style garage separates the guest house and main house. Its cedar shingles and metal roof help the garage blend with the







■ The raised living room parallels the main home's circulation hallway, which leads to the children's bedrooms. "It's an integration of bringing stone from the outside inside," Hutker remarks of the living room. "There is a direct connection between the interiors, exteriors, and surrounding landscape." The hallway's shelves store the family's books. ■ OPPOSITE: MHAA's Dave Johnson helped design the inglenook's parallel stone benches, which are lined with wood and cushions. The fireplace proved to be one of the greatest design challenges for the MHAA team: It forms a wall between the living room and dining room, but the rooms are at different elevations.





■ The elegant dining room space is framed by a granite fireplace shared with the living room. French doors lead to a screened porch and a twelve-foot window proffering pond views. While the dining room enjoys close access to food preparation areas, its intimacy is preserved by a pocket door which closes the room off from the kitchen (right).





■ Instead of walls of cabinets, Hutker designed the kitchen with banks of windows, keeping the rural landscape in sight.

other buildings and neighboring farm, downplaying its utilitarian function. The rafter tails on the barn (and on all three buildings, in fact) are exposed on the outside. “We like to show the nature of how something is built,” Hutker explains. In the back of the barn, a long pergola and patio look onto the pool area, further disguising the barn’s function as storage for cars and canoes. The pool area contains some of the only manicured lawn on the entire property and is invisible from the front of the house. But from the second floor of all three structures, the twinkling blue pool water and vivid green grass add a splash of color within the confines of a curving, low lying stone wall on an otherwise muted rural landscape.

In configuring the exterior, Hutker and Orr chose monochromatic materials that do not compete

with nature’s artwork. Like farmhouses of old, the point of the design—inside and out—was to offer opportunities for togetherness as well as places to enjoy solitude. It is a home, in short, made to welcome this generation and the next, to give them a refuge and to allow them to enjoy a rural Vineyard landscape that is stunning in its simplicity.

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# BARN RAISING

The newest barn on Barnstable's block is the ultimate guest house for family and friends. Sorry, no barnyard animals allowed.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY PATRICK WISEMAN