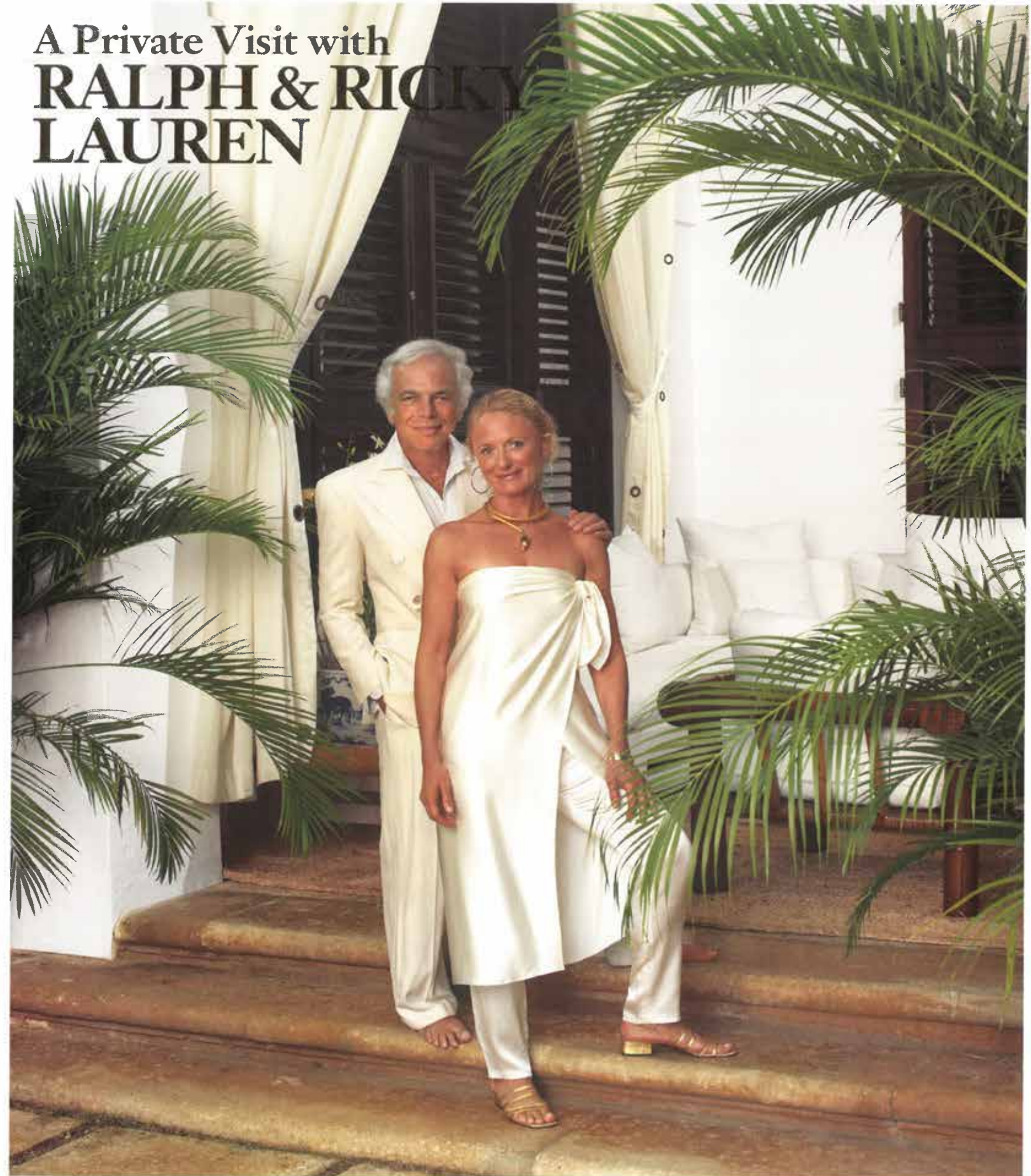


# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF DESIGN

NOVEMBER 2007

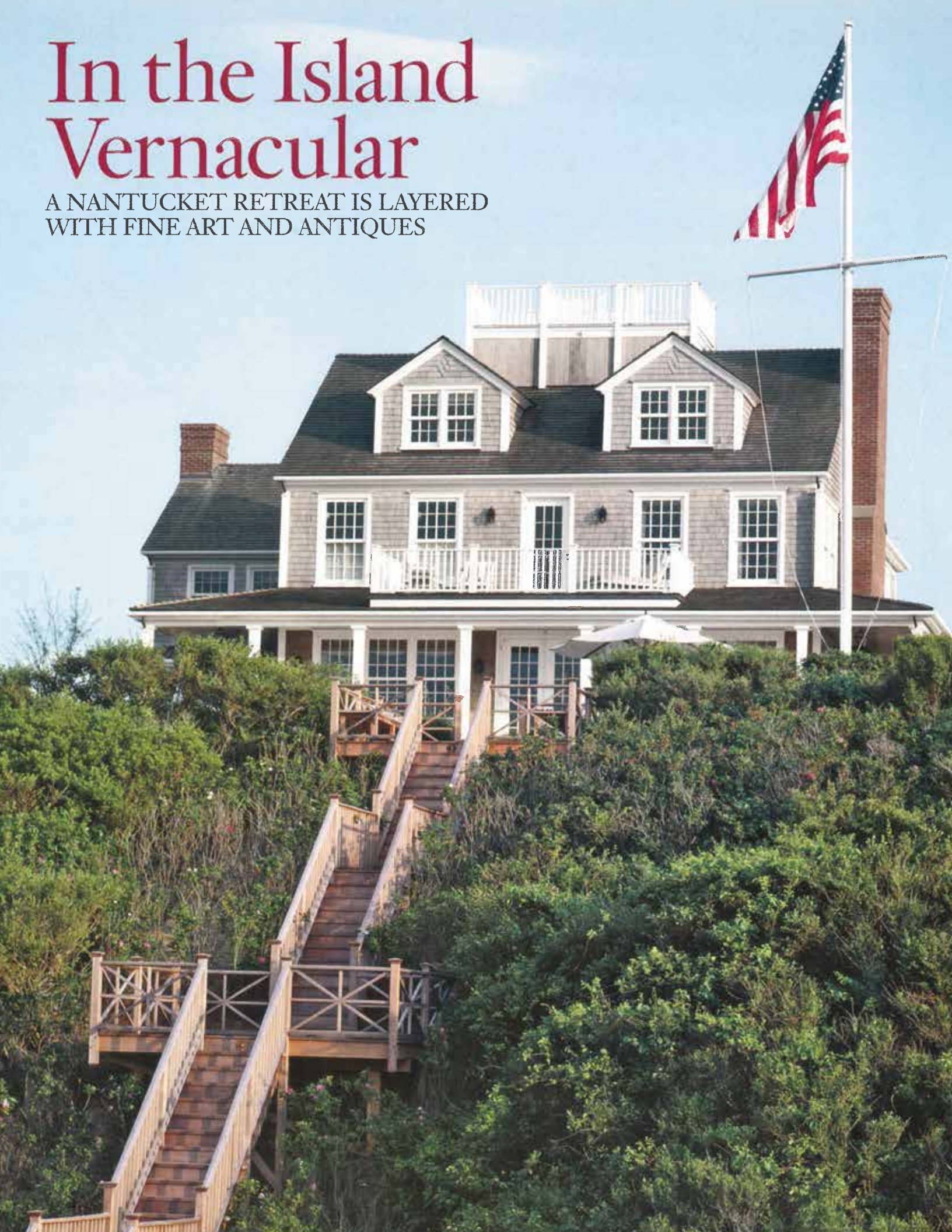
## A Private Visit with **RALPH & RICKY LAUREN**





# In the Island Vernacular

A NANTUCKET RETREAT IS LAYERED  
WITH FINE ART AND ANTIQUES





Architecture by Botticelli & Pohl/Interior Design by Cullman & Kravis  
Text by Steven M. L. Aronson/Photography by Durston Saylor

Since the husband wanted to be on the water in the worst way and the wife equally desperately wanted to be no more than a 10-minute walk to the heart of town, the property they settled on was clearly going to have to meet both those conditions. This one did, and had a thrilling linear quality besides. Only 75 feet wide, it extended a full 600 feet—from the street, across a plane of lawn, down a *Rosa rugosa*-covered coastal bank—to the beach, providing, as it ran its course, unsurpassable views of harbor, sound, and town.

For all that, the five-bay turn-of-the-last-century house that stood on the 45-foot bluff was in a state of high disrepair. The couple, who loved the island to the sentimental point of naming their dog Tucket, took care to hire architects known for their sensitivity to the Colonial American essence of the place. Ray Pohl and Lisa Botticelli, a Nantucket-based husband-and-wife team, proceeded to save the main gable (reconstructing the exterior around it in the simple Nantucket vernacular of white cedar shingles that “gray out” almost instantly in the salt air), then reshape the interior (configuring fewer but more generously proportioned rooms). A fitting wing and a compatible guest cottage were then added on the road side, and the project was capped with a widow’s walk—“something I learned to call a roof walk,” Pohl explains, “because *widow* is apparently now a disparaging word.”

For the look and feel inside, the clients aspired to a hybrid



On Nantucket, Massachusetts, a couple commissioned Botticelli & Pohl Architects and interior designer Elissa Cullman to create their seaside retreat. OPPOSITE AND TOP: The exterior's Colonial simplicity reflects the island's sense of place. Landscape architect Keith LeBlanc designed the gardens.

ABOVE: Cullman selected primarily 18th- and 19th-century pieces for the living room. The Regency side chairs, from Hyde Park Antiques, are mahogany with ebony inlay. Rug, Elizabeth Eakins. Lamp, Suzanne Golden. Tea caddy, Sallea. Drapery, shade, sofa and front pillow border fabrics, Rogers & Goffigon.





ABOVE: “Roy Lichtenstein’s *Sunrise* could not have found a more suitable setting,” Cullman says of the painting she placed above the living room sofa. The 19th-century turned-wood container is from H. M. Luther. Chair floral, John Rosselli. RIGHT: Arthur Dove’s *Seagull*, circa 1933, hangs above the living room fireplace. The mantel, from Francis J. Purcell, dates to circa 1815. Wing chair fabric, Travers.

of relaxed beach and high-style country—infused, moreover, with the spirit of one of those ceremonious old houses in town spawned by the whaling trade in its lucrative golden age. To all these ends, they engaged designer Elissa Cullman, and before long, a top dealer in 19th-century American mantels was pulling up in front of the Cullman & Kravis offices on Madison Avenue. The clients, the architects, and Cullman and her senior designer Jenny Fischbach all came parading down. “The guy had at least eight seven-foot-wide mantels lined up on the sidewalk and three or four leaned up against the side of his truck,” Pohl recalls. “He was pulling them out, pushing them back in, dragging them out again. I felt like I was in some souk in Morocco—the only thing missing was the cobra danc-

ing to the wooden flute.” From that curbside bazaar they came away with a passel of splendid mantels, including the circa 1815 elaborate fan mantel in the living room. The clients, who themselves were in the process of putting together a collection of American art from early Modernist to contemporary, relied heavily on Cullman to help them form an important collection of 18th- and 19th-century English and American furnishings. This coalition of collecting has resulted in a house where Queen Anne happily consorts with Jim Dine, and Helen Frankenthaler with George I; where Charles Burchfield is brilliantly reflected in George II (the former’s *Flower Garden* in the latter’s green-painted mirror), and Arthur Dove holds sway over George III (the former’s dive-bombing









The designer commissioned a 19th-century-primitive-style mural for the dining room: a waterscape of the island.



*Seagull* above the latter's mahogany console tables), and William IV rubs elbows with Roy Lichtenstein.

To make things less dressy—to add what Cullman calls “some seasoning”—she introduced a smattering of folk art, including 10 strongly sculptural weathervanes. “The husband would allow the occasional whimsical piece, but there was a line that he was never going to let us cross,” she comments. “He would say, ‘No, too rusty,’ or, ‘No, too crusty.’ And he was right—in order to combine the fine and the folk, you had to put limitations on the folk.”

The large entrance hall

with its opulent elliptical stair is the core of the house. The coffer-ceilinged living room off it, which occupies the entire beach-side volume of the structure and opens onto a classic Nantucket wraparound covered porch, has a beachy palette—a sand-colored cross-hatch glaze—that is cunningly accented with cranberry glass. For the library, Cullman determined she could get better light and patina out of cherry than mahogany. Granting that “cherry is very tricky,” she flew in her wood-finishing specialist, who sanded, waxed, distressed, and oiled away until the wood looked “well loved and well

ABOVE: “The dining room,” says Cullman, “with its hand-painted scenic canvas by Chuck Fischer, is the most vibrant room in the house.” Drapery fabric, Stark. Wool carpet, Elizabeth Eakins. Chinese ginger jar lamp on console, Kentshire Galleries. Etched hurricane lamps, Hirsch & Adler.

worn.” Against it, now, picture the play of brass accessories, of scrimshaw in the bookcases, of ivory urns and delft chargers on the mantel.

The designer commissioned a 19th-century-primitive-style mural for the dining room: a waterscape of the island, complete with a lighthouse (two of the three remaining lighthouses on Nantucket can be discerned from the house), to lend the space the sense of be-

ing double-edged by the sea. Upstairs, two fine English desks bookend the limed-pine study, where a red, white, and blue rug, in checks and stars, strikes a patriotic note. The “sweet spot of the house,” as Fischbach describes it, is the master bedroom with its westerly view of the celebrated Nantucket sunsets; here lamps, plates, and boxes in white-opaline glass serve to intensify the natural light.



The study's walls were paneled for greater warmth. Hung on a motorized track above the fireplace is a 1964 Mitzi Melnicoff oil, which conceals the television. Writing table and desk chair, Kentshire Galleries. Wood candlestick, Amy Perlin Antiques. Brunswick & Fils window seat fabric. Lee Jofa shade sheer.







ABOVE: Cullman's color choices allow the master bedroom's view to dominate. Regency caned armchair, Colefax & Fowler Antiques. Mahogany bed, Leonard's. Creamware baskets, Guy Regal Antiques. Front pillow fabric, Schumacher; center-panel fabric, Rogers & Goffigon. Bed skirt and tufted-chair linen, John Rosselli. Drapery fabric, Cowtan & Tout. Shade fabric, Pollack.

BELOW: Outside the living room is the wide rear porch, which offers a shady vantage point from which to gaze at the boats crossing Nantucket Sound. The deck is done in *ipe*. Weather-end umbrella and outdoor furniture. OPPOSITE: At the rear of the yard, a stair descends to the beach, where a similarly designed cabana doubles as a space for storage.

The 10-foot-high space that the architects excavated for the house's lower level is ample enough to accommodate a gym, a wine cellar, a humongous playroom for the couple's two teenage sons (appropriately decorated with game boards and in primary colors), and a honey-colored-pine-paneled home theater, where people down in the depths can gather on rainy days—"In Nantucket, there's not a lot to do," the wife explains, adding, "You get a little tired of going to the whaling museum." Even the tunnel

that runs under the driveway from here to the guest cottage is decoratively up to the tenor of the rest of the house, what with its limestone floors and plaster walls lined with tole sconces.

"The clients didn't rest until everything was exactly right," Elissa Cullman marvels. "Not just the broad strokes like carpets, curtains, and furniture, but down to every tabletop and bookshelf. Their attention to detail matched my own—all in all, it was a perfect marriage." □





