

Cocooning on Long Island

FAITH POPCORN'S WEEKEND CABIN ON GEORGICA POND

Architecture by Frank Greenwald, AIA/Interior Design by Bray-Schaible
Text by Gerald Clarke/Photography by Scott Frances



Faith Popcorn makes her living—and a very good living it is—peering into the future and spotting trends before anyone else. The “Nostradamus of Marketing,” *Fortune* magazine named her, and she was one of the first to announce that SUVs would soon take over the highways. Long before terrorism became a concern, Popcorn also predicted that, alarmed by a hectic and even dangerous world, people would turn inward and seek refuge in warm and comfortable homes like those they remembered from childhood. “The future bears a resemblance to the past, only more so,” wrote Popcorn, whose books—*The Popcorn Report*, *Clicking*, *EVEvolution* and *Dictionary of the Future*—are crowded with such catchy aphorisms.

Cocooning was the word Popcorn used to describe that back-to-the-future trend, and she found her own cocoon in 1985, in a tiny—a really, really tiny—one-story, 600-square-foot cottage in Wainscott, a hamlet on eastern Long Island. An old cook-



ABOVE LEFT: The weekend cabin of author and trend watcher Faith Popcorn (far left, with her daughter, g.g.) on Long Island. LEFT: The house was expanded and revamped by, counterclockwise from top right, designers Michael Schaible and Robert Bray, their associate, Mitchell Turnbough, and architect Frank Greenwald.

"Faith's instructions for the house? None," Bray says. "We've worked together before, so we knew she wanted something enclosed and encapsulated." THIS PAGE: The living room looks out onto Georgica Pond. Sanderson striped ticking on chairs. Patterson, Flynn & Martin rug.





The dining area's circa 1920 pine table, which seats 10, and circa 1830 chairs with original leather, from Amy Perlin Antiques, were found in the Hamptons. "The furnishings we acquired locally worked very well," Bray explains. Bernard Palissy-style ceramics line the shelf.

house that had been moved from nearby Bridgehampton, it was, by her own account, a mess, infested with termites and encumbered with such unwanted eccentricities as a window between the living room and the bath, allowing those in either room to observe the goings-on in the other. "Nobody wanted it," says Popcorn. "But I loved it." And it is easy to see why.

Though her tiny house came with only a tiny piece of land, it was right on Georgica Pond, a tidal pond connected to the Atlantic, and summer and winter it possessed views of uncommon beauty.

She got rid of the termites and boarded up the awkward window, but Popcorn made few other alterations for more than a decade. From her six-story town house in Man-

hattan, she ran a company, BrainReserve, and she was constantly traveling, telling the heads of companies how they could best market their wares. After five frenzied days of being "hurled from place to place," as she phrases it, what Popcorn wanted on weekends was calm and quiet—a cocoon, in other words, for her and her dog, a Japanese Chin named Miyake. "It was my re-

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covery house," she says. "And I was happy that I did not have room for houseguests."

A lifestyle change in the late '90s—a decision to adopt a Chinese baby girl—suddenly made small too small. Popcorn hired Frank Greenwald, an East Hampton architect, to provide room for her daughter—g.g., as Popcorn was to name her—and the nannies. Prevented by zon-

ing restrictions from building outward, Greenwald expanded vertically, lifting the entire house up to dig a foundation, then adding a second floor. "It's easy to do a big house," says Greenwald. "You can always solve a problem by adding more space. A small house is more challenging."

When Greenwald finished, Popcorn turned to the Manhattan team of Robert Bray

and Michael Schaible, who, together with their associate, Mitchell Turnbough, had designed the interior of her Upper East Side town house—six floors of urban sophistication enclosed in linen-white walls (see *Architectural Digest*, February 1998). For Popcorn's Wainscott cottage—her "fairy-tale cottage," he calls it—Bray decided something else was in order. "In

"She's adventuresome," Bray says of Popcorn. "She was willing to gamble on this house, which we made quite dark. Not everyone could live here." ABOVE: A view from the dining area into the kitchen. The designers employed stained wood for the walls and floors. Viking range.



ABOVE: "I'll take credit for the color," Bray remarks of the purple used on many interior walls, including those in the upstairs guest room. The Qing Dynasty table is from Hampton Briggs Antiques. "This house is individualistic—a true reflection of Faith," says Greenwald.

the Hamptons," he explains, "most of the houses seem to be designed for summer—sea grass and white slipcovers. We wanted to veer away from that."

Making a sharp U-turn from the conventional, the designers covered the walls in dark, stained wood or a deep, painted purple—aubergine, as Bray refers to it—and made the ceiling and floors

dark. "In the summer, when there's a bright sun outside, it's shady and shadowy," says Bray, "and in the winter it's enclosed and safe. It really is a place for cocooning." For a house with such small rooms, designers usually choose small furniture—undersize sofas and tables. But once again the Bray team went in the opposite direction, giving Popcorn a huge, 12-foot-long dining

table and "cushy places to plop," to use Bray's words.

Such breaks with tradition were not timid decisions, and Bray applauds Popcorn's willingness to experiment. "Yes, I'll try that," she would say. The only thing she insisted on was that both house and furniture be maintenance-free, proof against small children and even smaller dogs. Acknowledging that spills



are inevitable, Bray made sure that the slipcovers were washable and that the woven-plastic rugs could ignore even an accidental dousing of red wine. "Faith never wanted a guest to feel as if he couldn't put a drink down anywhere," says Turnbough. "As futuristic as she is, she's also realistic."

Both outside and inside, Popcorn's house looks as if it

might be home to one of Tolkien's hobbits, or perhaps one of the lovable furry creatures in Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*. Now approaching her fifth birthday, g.g. is clearly the center of Popcorn's life—"the greatest gift I've ever had." But Miyake and her new companion, Yoshi, another Japanese Chin, are not far behind. To accommodate them, Green-

wald placed a dog door next to the front door, and Bray designed a canine stepladder so that they can climb unaided onto Popcorn's high iron bed.

Small sometimes is better, and Popcorn says she has experienced not only happiness but ecstasy in her house. "How lucky can you get?" This new Nostradamus has seen her own future, and it's a tiny cottage on Georgica Pond. □

Formerly a 600-square-foot cookhouse, the structure, which dates to the late 18th century, has gained a bedroom and bath downstairs as well as a second story. A sloping lawn leads from the rear of the residence to the pond. "It's the most beautiful place in the world," says Popcorn.