

STEVEN GAMBREL

TIME & PLACE



SIX SWANS

SOUTHAMPTON

The history of Six Swans is entirely new, and yet the soul of the place has quickly become old. The four-year construction project became a “restoration” of sorts. Once the frame of the house was erected, it suddenly felt like we had discovered the ruin of a great 19th-century house ready for us to build upon the existing remains. In many ways, the wetlands and site restrictions worked in my client’s favor, limiting the scale of the structure, now enveloping the center of endless water views in several directions.

Every design decision was made in terms of what the house wanted to be, what it would have been if it had existed, and mainly how we envisioned a new lifestyle within its walls. The collective interpretation of several historical references was further enhanced by my client’s European roots, particularly her amazing views on entertaining and daily life. My favorite term coined by her was “Keep it casual, it’s not for Sunday.” Every room

was designed for daily family living where preparing meals and entertaining intermingle, as in the back parts of a great European country house. Vessels, serving pieces, and cutting boards are displayed, not concealed, artfully arranged on deep shelves and within ample cabinets. This led to two separate kitchens, one that serves as part of the entertaining space for long fireside dinners, and one where the family chef can cook constant meals without concerning himself with presentation during meal preparation.

Our decision to work within styles of the past was derived from the location in the estate district of historic Southampton. With all of this authentic vernacular precedence, it seemed disrespectful to produce a modernist statement. There are not many villages that exist with such strong ties to such a unique architectural language.

Most of the design work was done in a team fashion, every detail and elevation carefully

scrutinized for scale, materiality, and function. My client has strong views on materials and style, but her way of expressing ideas is through describing scenarios on how each space will be used. With these very descriptive narratives each corner becomes layered to express its use, with distressed wood finishes, reclaimed stonework, applied leather and plasterwork, custom and

vintage lighting, woven linen textiles, and rugged antiques. These elements are carefully composed yet seemingly effortless in their combinations.

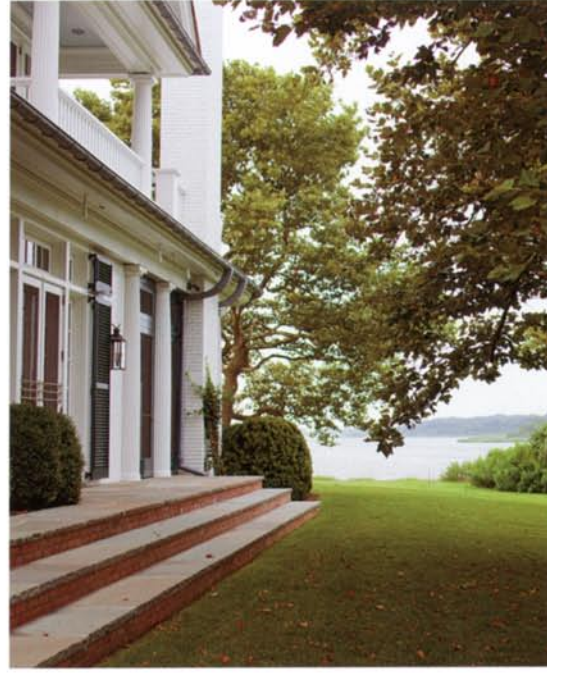
When one walks through the giant Dutch front door, however, it is the view of Shinnecock Bay that takes center stage. Nature has not been upstaged, but simply framed by details that speak of a well-lived life within seasoned walls.



The end of the main hall has an antique lead glass window that diffuses the natural light and softens the atmosphere.









PAGE 203: The library was modeled on my client's previous library in a great house designed by Grosvenor Atterbury. I like the idea of culling from both the architectural past, and from an individual's unique experiences and interests. We altered the spirit of the original design by introducing a much more casual finish, one that appears to have been bleached with years of rugged seaside climate.

ABOVE LEFT: The powder room has a sink carved out of one giant chunk of onyx.

ABOVE RIGHT: The view into the serving room is layered with unique architectural details. We designed a transom filled with candles, one electrified for a soft glow. The transom further down is a vintage find, which was incorporated into the space along with antique English doors.

OPPOSITE: The serving room has a very mellow finish, almost an olive-colored haze over the rift white oak. It feels like it took a century to develop, and actually did require multiple samples and experimentation. The ceiling incorporates a large vintage medallion in leather and brass of unknown origin.









The living room has dual fireplaces and a striking view of the bay beyond. Therefore the furnishings and colors are kept rather subdued.





ABOVE: The 19th-century Dutch mirror floats mysteriously in front of a water view.



RIGHT: The gray guest bedroom centers around a stunning 19th-century Bardiglio marble mantle, found in New York.



The master bedroom has water views on both sides, suggesting the use of soft lucid blues and reed-like textures.



ABOVE: The back staircase reads like a giant beacon, complete with an antique lens from a lighthouse, converted into a lantern.

OPPOSITE: The main staircase houses a collection of antique ship model dioramas, collected during several shopping trips abroad.







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