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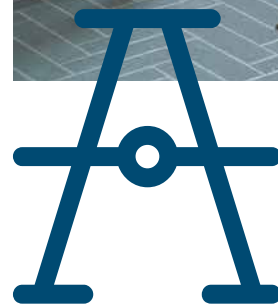
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BUILDING CONNECTION

A coastal renovation deepens
the links between land and
sea while making space for
family and community



BY KATHERINE GAUDET
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DARREN SETLOW



Along the spruce-lined shore of Blue Hill there's a rare open piece of land, where grassy lawn runs down to a gazebo that looks out over seaweed-strewn ledges and across the strait. Set back from the shore is an elegant home, its sea-facing front pointed like a prow. A few years ago, this property lured a couple away from their plan of building a lakeside home. "We fell in love with the property and the space that it holds. We realized it was 20 minutes away from family and friends," says the husband; he and his wife both grew up in nearby Bucksport. But the home itself wasn't quite right. "It was a wonderful space, but it wasn't a space for younger people to go. We have three kids, who at the time were in high school and middle school," says the husband. "It needed to be a little more spacious, to have some more closet space, and generally be modernized." The outdoor area, too, needed to be opened up. "High bushes and trees had grown in front of the windows of the house, and you started to lose that connectedness to the ocean," says the husband. "We want to feel that the house and the sea are connected."

"I just knew the project was going to be something special when I walked onto the property and met the homeowners," says landscape architect Todd Richardson of Richardson and Associates. "What a tremendous site. It's stupendous. From the get-go, it was fraught with opportunity. You have to be careful what you do, to not mess it up." Richardson worked to incorporate the main house and guesthouse with varied outdoor areas—hot tub, pool, basketball court, outdoor cooking area, gazebo—into a coherent and graceful flow. Around the guesthouse, pool, and driveway he created "bright and cheerful" plantings, but where the water was visible, he wanted to avoid any competition with the view. "Throughout the property we kept it pretty quiet, using more native plants and larger massing of plants. We typically don't do bells and whistles with our plantings; we keep it pretty sparse if we can. With a site like

(Opening spread) A spectacular property on the Blue Hill peninsula drew the homeowners to this coastal retreat. The landscape was carefully designed to keep the focus on the ocean while creating graceful transitions among the property's elements, including a hot tub that is subtly framed by shoreline plants.

Knickerbocker Group's design team bumped out the entrance (opposite), adding a dormer that creates exterior interest and interior space.

The homeowner wanted the interior design to echo the blues of the ocean and sky outside. Interior doors were painted in a bold, deep blue, while softer shades cover the walls and floors (above).



this we want to be a little understated.” Rather than adding ornamental gardens on the water side of the home, Richardson “tried to emulate a coastal condition,” bringing in boulders that he surrounded with shoreline plants. The result, he says, is that “the house feels closer to the water than it actually is. If you stand at the windows of the great room and look out, the foreground wouldn’t be lawn but a sitting-space composition of blueberry, huckleberry, and bayberry. The landscape rolls right up to the house.”

Leah Lippmann of Knickerbocker Group served as the studio lead on the renovation project, working with architect Julien Jalbert and interior project designer Nanette Tanner, her colleagues at Knickerbocker Group, as well as Richardson, general contractors Mike and Melissa Osborne, and an impressive cast of local artisans and craftspeople. The project of changing the site from a single home to a family retreat included a partial gut renovation of the home, some reconfiguring of the landscape, and the addition of a pool and pool house to accommodate a large community of family and friends. “It was a build-it-and-they-will-come situation,” says Lippmann. “They wanted to make it generational, so their kids would return, and grandkids, eventually. And they wanted it to be able to hold big parties. They’re really embedded in the community.”

The Knickerbocker team reconfigured the existing home with changes that respected the integrity of the structure while improving circulation and creating spaces to suit the homeowners’ lifestyle. Bumping out the driveway-side entry and adding a dormer allowed for a “grander” arrival, says Lippmann, with an inviting exterior form and a cathedral ceiling within. Relocating a stairway enabled “a bigger, more chef-ready kitchen” suited for entertaining; the kitchen

What had been a confined kitchen was opened up to create an airy cooking and dining space (above). Two islands allow plenty of space for seating, prepping, and storage, with a farmhouse sink that looks out toward the ocean view. Above the range, tiles made with Capiz shell add iridescence.



now flows into the dining area and great room. That change also created better flow into the primary suite, avoiding a path past the kitchen and creating a balance between openness and privacy. “For the primary bedroom area, we wanted a place just for us—where, no matter how many people were there, we could go and hide,” says the husband. Upstairs, a loft provides a similar retreat for young people. “We wanted the loft to be an open space for the kids to have their own space to disappear, watch DVDs, play games,” says the husband. “The other idea behind the upstairs was grandchildren,” he continues. “We don’t have any yet, but we’re planners.”

The homeowners hired longtime friends Mike and Melissa Osborne to contract the project. Challenges in the build came from its timing: the

Wrapped in windows, the great room brings in expansive ocean views. A glass-topped coffee table with a driftwood base echoes a similar one in the entry.



COVID pandemic shut down supply chains just as they were getting started. “All of a sudden, the world shut down, but the clients did not want the project to stop,” says Mike. The team worked through the delays and shortages, finding storage for hard-to-source items and seeking out substitutions for some carefully chosen materials. For the Osbornes, a husband-and-wife team whose business typically focuses on midrange homes, the experience was eye-opening. “It gave us great exposure to high-end materials and finishes,” says Mike. “The house was beautiful before—a well-built custom home.” But now, says Melissa, “The kitchen is to die for.”

For the interior design, the wife had a strong vision. “I wanted everything to go around the ocean. Inside or outside, the same exact palette—I mean, in the summer,” she says. “If you look outside, sometimes it’s hard to see the difference in blues between the ocean and the sky.” The design leans heavily on blues in every room, with some touches of green and cream to echo the landscape. “At first, I thought it was going to be challenging, but once we started incorporating textures, patterns, and hues, it became an unexpected creative endeavor,” says interior designer Nanette Tanner. “People always want blue in Maine, but not typically for the entire house. It was interesting to work within that parameter.” Tanner used blues from robin’s-egg to deep navy, complemented by brass accents that both provide contrast and also nod to nautical tradition. The wife comes from a lobstering family, which inspired some whimsical touches, like buoy lights over the bar in the guesthouse, custom-made by DSO Creative Fabrication in Saco. A bunk room in the pool house is wallpapered with fishing boats in a storm-tossed sea, complemented by buoy-shaped pillows, a doorstep made of a recycled sail, and a bright red wooden squid.



In the primary bedroom (top), painted nickel-gap paneling creates an accent wall. The room demonstrates the home’s deeply layered decor, in which multiple levels of lighting as well as contrasting textures of fabrics and finishes create interest within a limited palette.

The primary suite bath (above) features a detailed marble “rug” surrounded by porcelain tile with a marble-like pattern. Interior designer Nanette Tanner calls the Victoria and Albert soaking tub “a modern version of the old-fashioned clawfoot tub.”



Above the great room, a comfortable loft (top) is a perfect rainy-day retreat.

Ample storage (bottom) makes the home comfortable for guests, supporting the homeowners’ goal of creating a destination for family and friends.



The pool house (opposite) is built for parties, with a bar, pool table, and lots of games. The flooring echoes the main house's hardwood in appearance, but is in fact easy-to-clean porcelain tile. Buoy-shaped lights above the bar were custom-made by DSO Creative Fabrication in Saco.

A bunk room in the pool house (left) pays tribute to one homeowner's lobstering family with nautical details including storm-tossed Whitby wallpaper, a bright red squid by Portland artist Jon Strom (also known as J.S. Woodfish), custom-made buoy pillows, and bunk ladders and railings crafted by Cumberland Ironworks.

Throughout the home brass lighting, fixtures, and accents underscore the nautical theme and contrast richly with the blue palette (above, right).



Maine places significant to the family were chosen as names for rooms, inscribed on brass plaques and affixed to deep blue doors—writing the family's history into their new home.

The finished project embodies the homeowners' emphasis on deepening connections with the property's history and natural beauty while creating new spaces for family and community to gather. "This is coming home for us," says the wife. "Maine is our home. Our kids only summer in Maine, but they also consider it home. Coming home is when we come here." **HM+D**

In a guest bathroom (left), marble and brass accents pop against color-drenched walls.

A chandelier from Made Goods adds whimsy in the guest suite kitchenette (below).

