



# A GRAND SYNERGY

A Pleasant Bay home combines the best of nature with Polhemus Savery DaSilva's architectural innovation, creating a showcase for the homeowners' art and furniture collections—and a cherished retreat for their family.

By Laurel Kormanik  
Photography by Brian Vanden Brink

There is nature's art, and then there are human creations. Nature's art comes in many guises: shifting views, light and shade. Enhancing and working with natural elements, human instincts, instincts, and average owner's wishes to please and surprise the eye. With architecture, an ideal situation occurs when professional work with nature to create a design that enhances the sense rather than one that obscures and celebrates the work of the human imagination.

This was just the case when architect John DeSilva and the design and construction team of Polhemus Savery DaSilva Architects Builders of Chatham collaborated with open-minded clients from New York to design and build a family-friendly home that sits comfortably on a wooded hillside while offering varied frames for views of a marsh, Pleasant Bay and the ocean beyond. With great human-nature synergy, the home also acts as a gallery for the couple's art and art furniture collections.

Having already lived in a traditional expanded Cape-style home in Chatham, the couple was seeking something a little bit different this time, with inspiration coming from the American West and other areas of New England. "We had seen a lot of beautiful homes, particularly lake houses, while traveling to spend New Hampshire and Vermont," says the wife. This is not to suggest that their Cape home is out of sync with its local setting. Gothic Revival windows, hand-painted shingles, spring and oak and cedar detailing all have precedent on the Cape and islands. This building and updating of traditional styles was, in fact, an aspect of the project that gave DeSilva great joy. "To have the opportunity to design a house that is clearly contemporary but synthesizes eclectic influences from both the regional context and architectural history is very gratifying. I am quite proud of the results," says the architect.



Architect John DaSilva says the elegant Chatham contemporary is a synthesis of "both the regional context and architectural history."



A natural seaside palette throughout infuses the surrounding spaces of Cape Cod's environment.

The home is barely visible from the water and is illuminated in a sense of surprise from the wooded side. Approached up a sweeping drive, the home's four facades reveal nature's influence. A steep sloping roof with a variety of dormers rising from behind suggests a range of mountain peaks. The turrety in-line Gothic arches and large overhangs result, as DeSilva says, "The shattering canopy of the surrounding trees." In the evening, a dramatic, multi-faceted glass panel, which is an update of a 19th-century detail, captures the ever-changing colors of the nearby marsh at sunset. "When the light hits it, it is like being peering the homeowner says. Donna Mahan of Town announced the project based on a design by DeSilva's wife, architect Sharon DeSilva, using varying patterns and glass shades.



Soaring interior spaces frame gorgeous natural vistas.

Reflecting the varied natural views around it, the home's exterior presents many surprising elements, including a porch-enclosed landing under low Gothic arches in a main stair and three gables and Victorian-inspired arched brackets building up these arches. Between the screen wall covered by the arches and a large round window in an opening to the sky beyond the porch-enclosed, the building reveals the view and outside. DeSilva engineers, the notion of a soaring mass. Secluded in this special space is the wife's art studio, where, when time allows, she sews to paint. The husband runs his studio, using fine, playing guitar, or listening to music.

Outside the home, an architect and nature collaboration in every room. Outdoor architectural elements are echoed: plaster walls and brackets from the boundary between the dining room and adjacent kitchen and family room. Two balconies and rolling terraces to view the outside arches. These sets of brackets, like those outside, delineate an open gallery, which occupies the space gained above the porch-enclosed.

WWW.CAPECODLIFE.COM Cape Cod HOME 33



Artistic architectural elements create a dramatic showcase for the family's art collection.

A soaring stone fireplace—one of five fireplaces in the home—defines the entryway. Drawing the eye upward, it shows off not only a gallery-level ceiling, recently occupied by a stone roof, but leads the eye to a ceiling from which a Positano Artichoke Pendant light hangs, an object DeSilva recommended. "It has the aesthetic feeling of being contemporary, but still full of romantic character like the rest of the house," he explains.

The couple collects paintings by artists like Paul Bonolis, Marlene Meme, and Alexander Calder; pieces by Louis Comfort Tiffany, as well as pottery and Italian glass which are displayed on university in parlors in the second floor gallery. Additional art is displayed on screens along the living room and throughout the home.

The home's furniture also makes a statement. Art furniture pieces, such as the living room coffee table, the side table in the museum, and the museum bed handcrafted from iron. Piretti & Estense in Long Island, New York.

While the house acts as a frame and backdrop for art, it is also built for people, including the couple's two daughters and grandchildren. "It's a family house," says the husband. "We built the house for family."

36 Cape Cod HOME SPRING 2014

WWW.CAPECODLIFE.COM Cape Cod HOME 37



"Nature has inspired many of this home's elements, and human imagination has created the rest, resulting in a home of living art. The picture is dynamic, captivating, full of surprises, and beautiful to behold."

Human art is well accommodated by the home, but so is nature's design. The DeSilva house was designed to absorb the views from various angles and through various frames. The living spaces on the first floor, and the second-floor master bedroom, and three guest rooms all face the views. Each position and each window offer a slightly different version of the message. "There is so much view," says DeSilva. "You're getting in great volumes and angles and each frame and highlights the view without dominating it."

All of the view rooms are to the north, which made the maximization of light from the north one of the major challenges of the project. To that end, DeSilva says, the architect used sun-tracking, high-ceiling windows and dormers set with triangular windows. A deck carved out of the roof and accessed from the top of the living room, captures shade light into the core of the home, as does the generous entry hall, which captures southern light and leads to wood deck facing living areas.

Laurel Kormanik, a former Cape Cod LIFE editor, has written hundreds of articles about architecture and interior design. She is a English professor at Quincy College and lives in Barnstable.

While the home's exterior was capturing enough to keep everyone inside, the family loves the many directions the Cape offers. In addition to taking the couple enjoy boating and shore shopping. They also like to picnic on the star beach and watch for whales off the coast.

After a busy day spent outdoors, however, the couple likes to retreat to what they call the "pamper bath" and DeSilva calls a "wood-bath chapel." It is the museum, where they are able to begin and end their reading, listening to music, absorbing the views, and admiring the architectural landscape, designed by Hawk Landscape Design of Buzzards Beach. The wife says their seven 9-year-old grandson asked why the room has only two chairs. "We do need our privacy," the husband comments.

Nature has inspired many of this home's elements, and human imagination has created the rest, resulting in a home of living art, the picture is dynamic, captivating, full of surprises, and beautiful to behold.

WWW.CAPECODLIFE.COM Cape Cod HOME 39