



The Gallery Space

SHELTER ISLAND, LONG ISLAND

When you imagine a farmhouse on an island, you imagine a small, fairly humble dwelling, perhaps simple in form, made from rustic materials, with a back-to-basics aesthetic. You don't imagine an elegant gallery where art, design and architecture come together in seamless sophistication. One farmhouse on Long Island, however, has turned rural living on its head – or should that perhaps be on its hammer?

Located on the quiet but spectacularly beautiful Shelter Island, which floats midway between the North Fork and the South Fork, this farmhouse is primarily used as a beach house and weekend getaway by its New York-based family, although in recent years they've come to spend more and more time here. Because they were using it more often, and for large-scale entertaining, they realized that the existing bones of the building were not adequate for their entertaining needs – or for their family's lifestyle. So they called in a design team who were familiar both with beach houses and Shelter Island – SchappacherWhite Ltd.

Steve Schappacher and Rhea White examined the 1908 dwelling, listened to the client's brief (a request for a large-scale living room that opened to an outdoor dining room, a new master bedroom suite, and a garage with an

artist's studio above it) and considered the site. They soon realized that any major alterations to the farmhouse in mood, feel, or architectural style would destroy its integrity, and that any new additions might not fit in with the character of the house, or indeed with other existing structures on the property.

The solution? An extension that had its soul in the rustic nature of the farmhouse, but offered a perfect level of luxury living.

“Being from the Midwest, we were inspired by farms that had accumulated different buildings for different purposes over the years, such as the potting shed, the chicken coop, and so on,” explains Steve Schappacher. “So we decided to create a living room ‘barn’ and a bedroom ‘shed’ that were joined by clear glass passageways. The key was to do it without destroying the façade of the original buildings. So now, even though the house looks quite traditional from the front, the back is not what you would expect at all. Indeed, it's surprisingly open and modern, and yet it stays in character with the original charm of the farmhouse.”

Along with the living room and bedroom buildings, the architects also added a wrap-around porch to the front of the existing house,



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which provides a classically beautiful front entrance for visitors as well as a place for people to gather at parties and evening dinners (and they do love gravitating there). And if that wasn't enough "play space", they also designed a spectacular outdoor entertaining area at the rear of the house in the form of a pergola with a soaring ceiling, wonderful long dining table, and exterior fireplace. This entertaining area is reached through a wall of floor-to-ceiling glass in the living room that cleverly opens onto the exterior. This entire area – the indoor living room and the outdoor dining room – creates a memorable gathering place for the many dinner parties the couple love to host.

What's truly fascinating about this house, however, is the materials that have been used – soapstone for the fireplaces, mushroom wood for the walls and ceilings, reclaimed elm for the wide plank flooring (including reproduced "vintage" floor nails), local stacked stone for other walls and fireplaces, and copper for the roof. The decision to use natural materials – woods, stone, and metal – means that they will age gracefully with the house and become more interesting with time.

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