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THE LUSH LIFE



SHARP THINKING

In her new Sag Harbor home, decorator Bella Mancini stays true to her mantra of “beautiful, but livable”

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY **READ MCKENDREE**



Outdoor Decor
The house is clad in clear cedar siding and a standing seam roof. See Resources.





Open Invitation
 (OPPOSITE) A ceiling fixture from Andrew Neyer hangs above the airy living room, which includes a custom sectional covered in Holly Hunt's Great Plains. (THIS PAGE) Pendants from Allied Maker punctuate the Bulthaup kitchen. See Resources.

For 25 years, decorator Bella Mancini and her husband, Jeff, lived in New York City and spent weekends at their summer getaway on the North Fork, but the desire to make a permanent move to the East End grew more urgent as time went by, particularly with the dawn of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. “We had tossed around the idea of moving to Sag Harbor for many years,” Mancini says, “even though we weren’t ‘Hamptons people.’ We had both grown up in places that had more of a hometown feeling, and we knew that as our eldest was starting high school, the idea of trying something new was creeping up on us faster than we realized.”

While they were house-hunting for “a contemporary home—but not one that was huge, with lots of things to take care of,” Mancini and her husband found a single-story dwelling on a private two acres with lots of potential for them and

their two children, Paolo, 15, and Paloma, 11. The only problem? “There was already an accepted offer on it, but as luck would have it, the deal fell through, and the house became ours. We knew she was a winner.”

They decided to keep the footprint of the four-bedroom structure while reconfiguring the space to fit their lifestyle needs—a challenge pulled off with some facility, given Bella’s design chops and the input of Jeff, a marketing executive who has a master’s degree in architecture. “We’ve designed all our previous houses together,” Mancini says, “and luckily, we usually agree on everything! Here, we replaced all the windows and blew out the back of the house with huge expanses of glass. We entertain all summer long, and our home is always filled with people, so it has been designed to take advantage of the outdoors from almost every room.” Additionally, the couple are avid cooks, making good use of both the sleek Bulthaup kitchen indoors and a tricked-up outdoor kitchen. “My husband is a fisherman and also has a very robust garden, so we are pretty flush with fresh fish and produce from June to October.”

Private Oases

(THIS PAGE) The primary bedroom's custom headboard is covered in a de Le Cuona fabric. The carpet is from Maman Rugs. (OPPOSITE) The bath features a Legion Furniture tub from Kitchen & Bath Authority. The fluted fixture surround and matching floor tiles are from Ann Sacks. See Resources.



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”



Peaceful Perches

(THIS PAGE) The headboard in a guest room is covered in a Romo fabric. The fringed half-moon mirror is from the Future Perfect. (OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) The terrazzo in the guest bathroom is from Concrete Collaborative. The double-mounted vanity in the primary bath is from Bathroom Place. The headboard in daughter Paloma's room is covered in a Rogers & Goffigon fabric. The bed in son Paolo's room is from Blu Dot. See Resources.





During the design process, Mancini recounts, her studio director “encouraged me to think of the project as sort of a lab. What normally doesn’t work for clients, for example, could easily work for us. I’ve always been influenced by my Southern California roots and have a rather obsessive love for Australian design, so you can find nods of both here and there.” Since founding her firm in 2000, Mancini has adhered to a guiding mantra of “beautiful, but livable,” a theme that’s deeply embedded in her new digs. “We ask clients to be as honest as possible about what their life looks like,” she says. “If you eat Indian takeout for dinner on your coffee table every Thursday night, then tell us. I don’t want to give you a coffee table that’s going to stain.” In every project, the decorator also routinely checks off what she calls her “always list,” key elements that make a successful home. These include a heady array of wood tones, gorgeous deep colors, lots of texture, and provocative lighting. She’s also partial to a combo of vintage and new. “I source vintage from all over the

place, from Beall & Bell in Greenport to Istdibs, Chairish, and eBay. And I love a tag sale.” Furnishings in the house include a marble slab from Marmi Stone that now serves as the top of her coffee table (“It kind of floats”), a vintage Aalto side table, wool-bouclé accent pillows from Pierre Frey, and a chrome pedestal that she “bought at the Chelsea flea market 25 years ago. I still like that shimmer.” Various textiles and textures add further layers of interest, from the living room’s Joseph Carini carpet to a fringed mirror in the guest room. Having grown up in a home in which some spaces were “off limits,” Mancini is pleased to have risen to a higher level of “beautiful, but livable” functionality in her new Sag Harbor abode. “Some people might think that having a white couch in the living room is insane,” she says, “but ours is covered in a high-performance outdoor fabric. And the throw pillows—well, I’m not attached to them. After all, I have a puppy. Although I would be sad if anything happened to the pillows from Pierre Frey!” 🌟



Fun In The Sun
 (THIS SPREAD) The back of the house is made for entertaining, with several distinct seating areas. Furnishings include poolside chaise longues from CB2, firepit chairs from Design Within Reach, and a pair of armchairs from the Laurel Group. See Resources.