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The pergola surrounding the home frames exterior living spaces while a third floor deck provides water views.

A thought-provoking home on the outer Cape blurs the boundaries between indoors and out, embracing the natural beauty that surrounds it.

# OPEN MINDED

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Architect Maryann Thompson cantilevered a soffit indoors and out to manage light in the dining area. Building the deck only a few inches above the ground eliminated the need for a railing. Design Group Italia stools from Herman Miller belly up to a kitchen dining counter clad in bleached, glazed oak.



**H**overing just above the bristly scrub and stunted pines of the outer Cape, bits of steel glint under the intense gaze of summer light. Western cedar silvered to a muted gray braces banks of windows reflecting a cloudless sky. Nestled among wildflowers is a house at once well-defined but transparent, organic-looking yet modern in every sense of the word.

"Modern seemed the obvious choice for the site and for something that looked like today," says the wife. "I love the old houses of New England, the saltboxes and the capes, but you can't recreate that here today. This is all about the openness and the view."

Broad decks stretch into the landscape, letting the tops of grasses tickle their edges, while the roofline floats as if atop a breeze. From a seagull's vantage, the house is a zigzag shape, the roof camouflaged with smooth river rock. It's almost as if a glacier deposited the house on the Truro landscape rather than its being conceived of by architect Maryann Thompson and expertly built by Art Hultin. For the Minnesota-based couple and their two small children who make this their home as often as time allows, the house is simply a joyous embrace of what has always been there—wind, sky and water.

Thompson designed the decks to be low enough to forgo a railing that would interrupt the view. A contemporary pergola creates the effect of an outdoor room. Steel inserts within the pergola's columns add

a detail similar to one seen on the fireplace. "Defining those exterior rooms makes for a more dynamic skin," says Thompson. "There's an ambiguity there that's really interesting. We wanted to exteriorize the interior and interiorize the exterior."

Openness is one of the hallmarks of this home that occupies the footprint of a former house with an addition that creates the chevron-shaped plan. Inspired by one of Thompson's favorite buildings, the famed Katsura Detached Palace in Japan, the home's shape allows for thinner rooms with multiple views and optimal air circulation. "We really tried to put window across from window or door so that there would always be a way to get breezes through the house," says the architect.

"The house can be opened up entirely, almost like deconstructing it," says the husband. "It's like the house



can disappear. When it's opened up, it's only half there."

"I just love to wake up and throw open all the windows," adds the wife.

Windows throughout the house go from floor to ceiling, with the exception of the kitchen where under-counter cabinets keep storage from getting in the way of the views. Thompson paid particular attention to the window height. "The windows are sized to keep out the summer sun and to let in the winter sun," she says. A band of clerestory windows just below the ceiling lets warm air escape and controls light on the first floor.

Thompson designed what architectural project manager Michelle Laboy calls a "light shelf that straddles the divide between indoors and out." In the dining room it appears as an extended soffit that runs from the inside of the house to become an exterior overhang on the deck. In the summer it protects the house from direct rays. In the winter, when the sun is lower, it allows the penetration of light.

Mirrors on the ceiling side of the shelf project light into the room indirectly, Thompson explains. The same construction was used in the kitchen, where the soffit also holds the overhead lighting.

The interior architecture follows a modernist sense, eschewing the paneling, moldings and wainscoting so identified with Shingle-style houses. Furniture, mostly midcentury inspired, was kept to a minimum and the only draperies are white sheers that billow in the breeze. But that doesn't mean there's a lack of



FOR ITS OWNERS, THE HOUSE IS SIMPLY A JOYOUS EMBRACE OF WHAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE—WIND, SKY AND WATER.



Tau Ceramica wraps the living room fireplace in style. The raised hearth accommodates wood storage and seating. LEFT: The Ligne Roset sideboard in the family room is new, but the chair is a vintage 1st Dibs find.





A ribbon of wood incorporates nightstands, headboard and shelving in one convenient and good-looking built-in in the master bedroom. FACING PAGE, LEFT: A glass slider separates indoor and outdoor showers in the master bath. FACING PAGE, RIGHT: The modern house nestles into its landscape.

NESTLED INTO THE ROOF, THE DECK, LIKE THE REST OF THE HOUSE BELOW, BLURS THE LINE BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE.



ornamentation. In the living room a fireplace clad in porcelain tile has a raised hearth that doubles as wood storage and a window seat. In lieu of a mantel, a single band of steel divides firebox from chimney.

Thompson used similar "hardscaping" techniques in the master suite, where the headboard is integrated into built-in bookcases and cabinets wrap half the room. Windows wrap the other half and open to a private deck. In the master bath, outdoor and indoor showers stand side-by-side divided by a slider. "The built-in aspects make it very easy to live in," says the husband. "They make for good summer living."

Furniture in the living room mixes new and old. A vintage Edward Wormley armchair sits near a new Ligne Roset lacquered sideboard and a cluster of pendant lights hangs overhead. A Design Within Reach floor lamp keeps company with a sixty-year-old Knoll sofa and armless chairs found on eBay.

One anomaly in the sleek space is the dining table. The worktable—literally a piece of wood on a pair of sawhorses—was dragged up from the basement before the renovation and addition. The wife, a computer scientist, spends hours there. "I'm a kitchen

table kind of person," she says. "We've looked at other tables and know we need to get something else, but we've lived a lot of our life at that table. During the construction phase it traveled to friends' houses and served as a garden bench."

The table stands between the kitchen and the family room in an open space with views to the meadow and Pamet Harbor beyond. From the second floor, the view is of a watery ribbon running through the tidal marsh, offering a constantly changing scene. Thompson created a third-floor rooftop deck without building any higher by sinking the sitting area into the ceiling of the second floor.

Nestled into the roof, the deck, like the rest of the house below, blurs the line between inside and outside. "The third-floor deck at sunset is an incredible experience," says the husband.

In a transparent structure like this, life is all about the blowing grasses, the scent of the sea and the changing sky. Still, when the focus turns indoors, the family finds their home embraces them as fully as it does the world outside. •

**RESOURCES** For more information about this home, see page 153.