



Nature *is in the Details*

A new home with a rustic feel on Falmouth's Oyster Pond boasts an interior design that encourages some exploration.

Oh, to be a child again. When hours upon hours could be spent outside in nature—be it in the middle of the woods or in a tidal pool on the beach—exploring hidden worlds. You didn't have to be overwhelmed with little creatures buzzing, crawling, swimming constantly around you, you merely needed a fascinating discovery to come along every once in a while to make you gasp with delight. It's what makes up most of our childhood memories.

BY SCOTT LAJOIE • PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAN CUTRONA



Above: The kitchen and living room are very quaint, rustic and minimalist; shelves were used instead of cabinets to make the 16-foot deep house feel larger. Right: Bold glass in a metal chandelier hangs above a bumped-out dining nook.

It's not often you can say you've had the same experience in a home. Most statements in architectural design are pretty bold, and the larger the feature, the more impressive we assume it to be. So it is quite ironic to find a home that expresses the owner's love of nature in the most subtle ways.

Jill Neubauer of Jill Neubauer Architects in Falmouth worked with the homeowner to build this quiet retreat on a marsh adjoining Oyster Pond. It is only a few hundred yards from Shore Road (and the beach and the sound beyond that), but it is set off and surrounded by tree cover just enough that it seems miles away from civilization.

The footprint is rather small, and Neubauer had to work within height restrictions as well. The relatively narrow home measures only 16 feet from front to back, so downstairs common rooms take up the entire depth of the



footprint. A living room abuts the kitchen and dining nook to one side of the interestingly oversized front door (nothing else in this house is oversized), and a bathroom, an open closet of cubbies, and a playroom are set off to the other.

A wraparound staircase leads up around a cushioned reading seat to the second floor. The long, narrow hallway connects three bedrooms—a children's bedroom, a guest room and the master bedroom. The master bath and a walkthrough closet are positioned running down the length of the house to fit within the narrow footprint; dormers allow for more room in the bathroom, while the closet and shower have steeper ceilings creating a tighter squeeze.

The floors, baseboards, and open beamed ceilings are a warm orangey cedar, and any

Clockwise from right: Children can share a pot of tea in the architect-designed treehouse. A wraparound staircase leads around a reading seat to the second floor. Adults can send items over to children in the treehouse via a clothesline-like pulley.

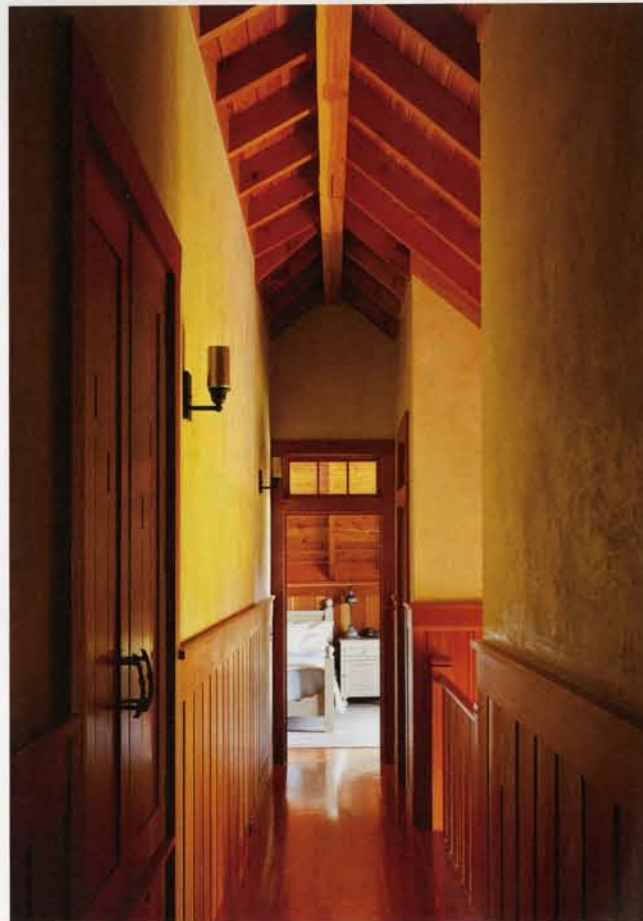




But it is the small touches of architectural detail that make this house so unique. First, dragonflies are everywhere—carved into the balustrades leading up to the front door and those in front of the children’s bunk bed built into the wall. Another decorative item running through the home is the cattail. They are between the balustrades on the deck and etched into the glass on the door leading from that deck to the downstairs bathroom. “It works as both an abstract element and as a connection to the cattails in the marsh,” says Neubauer.

It is fun to search for other animals embedded in the hardware of the home. Herons frolic on the fireplace’s black slate tiles. Jellyfish swim along the tiles of the bathrooms. Frogs make for knobs of built-in drawers in the upstairs

Right: The master bath windows look right over the window boxes above the front door, and the shower’s sloped ceiling is slightly more severe than the rest of the space’s. Below: The master bedroom, located on the opposite end from the guest and children’s bedrooms, has its own private balcony looking over Oyster Pond, the Shining Sea Bike Path and Shore Road beach beyond.



Clockwise from left: The upstairs hallway is tall and narrow and provides a line of sight from one side of the house to the other. The front façade is hardly dramatic, fitting in nicely among the shrubbery with numerous window boxes full of flowers. The nook for sleeping in the children’s room is adorned with humming birds and dragonflies carved into the balustrades.

wall space where a window does not exist is naked beige plaster. Light manages to illuminate the house in a myriad of ways. In the upstairs hallway, it makes its way in through clerestory windows above one’s head; in the end bedrooms, it shines through small square windows next to the legs of the end tables (roof eaves come down quite low in certain spots). Beautiful sunrises light up the entire house through the windows facing the marsh.

The large-scale architectural design is impressive in and of itself, especially in its space efficiency and simple practicality. The patterns of beams above the dining nook and upstairs bedrooms are geometrical eye candy, and the design of the exterior—although you’ll be challenged to find a good perspective of the entire house from anywhere but the middle of the marsh—is remarkably balanced.





A children's recreational area is casual and comfortable (above), and allows for many creative endeavors (left).



bedrooms, and outlines of turtles crawl along the floor in the cubbies by the front door. "It was an opportunity to design what is essentially an old cottage—this tiny little gem—with charming little surprises," Neubauer says. "It was fun to think about what the children's experience would be in the house."

There is some table-top and shelf décor and a few paintings on the wall (including a breathtaking piece over the mantle of the fireplace), but in totality, it is sparsely decorated, giving more focus to the house's own architectural design and built-ins. The whimsical furniture, much of it supplied by Sundries in Falmouth, is comfortable, casual and colorful, yet understated enough to let the house itself have the stage. The glass of the light fixtures make a bold statement, especially those on the quirky metal chandelier above the dining room table, but their modest size makes them fall into the

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background quite quickly.

In the children's downstairs playroom, a wall-length blackboard encourages you to design your own art when the inspiration moves you, and wipe it clean when you're done. A corkboard on the other side allows for hanging up more traditional pieces. If you aren't fully getting the feeling of nature indoors, you can always walk outside. There is a somewhat narrow deck running from the bathroom to the end of the house by the living room. You can sit there with your morning coffee and watch real birds flutter on the long grasses of the marsh, while the kids retreat to a Neubauer-designed treehouse. The owner can send over snacks via a clothesline connecting the treehouse to the deck. Not far from the treehouse, hidden in the trees is a stall-less outdoor shower, with a silver sunflower shower head.

Nature is all around you—both inside and outside. And nothing is more thrilling than the anticipation of discovering what surprises lie in its midst. 🍄

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