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ISLAND BREEZE

At a Martha's Vineyard home conceived by interior designer Mark Cunningham and architect John B. Murray, elevated style is infused with a seriously easygoing spirit

*By Vicky Lowry
Photography by Eric Piasecki*

An oak ceiling adds coziness to the sunroom of a family retreat on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, devised by architect John B. Murray. Designer Mark Cunningham, who oversaw the interiors, installed Ralph Lauren lanterns above a custom Fern table from Fair with Stahl + Band chairs. In a seating area, gray upholstered vintage chairs and pine stools by Fair join tufted Dune lounge chairs around an Adam Court coffee table from Studio Twenty Seven. For details see Sources.



Mark Cunningham has a lock on effortless ease. The New York designer reliably delivers thoughtfully tailored style and seductive comfort, whether the setting is a luxurious Miami apartment, a rural New York farmhouse, or a glass-box beach house in the Hamptons. “All of our clients say that our spaces are really comfortable, beautiful but functional, and feel like them,” Cunningham says.

A recent commission to oversee the interiors of a newly built vacation retreat on Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts, demonstrates his deft command of sophisticated leisure. “Not too formal and not too stuffy” was the decree, Cunningham says, issued by a New York-based couple with four children and a growing art collection, which includes standout works by Alex Katz, Candida Höfer, and Oscar Murillo, among others.

“They wanted a house that had a contemporary sensibility

yet retained the vernacular of the island,” explains the project’s architect, John B. Murray. In other words, a beach house but not your typical beach house.

The couple has a long history on Martha’s Vineyard. The husband, who works in the financial world, spent summers there while growing up. When he met his future wife, they began renting cottages on the island together, eventually buying an old shingled house in Edgartown that they later tore down to build a new residence, but one that was still traditional enough to fit in with its Colonial-era neighbors.

When a four-acre lot on the outskirts of the village came up for sale in 2020—offering privacy, thanks to stands of old-grove trees; spectacular bay views; and a chance to create their “forever family home,” as Cunningham describes it—they nabbed it. “We wanted it in keeping with the rest of the homes but with a more contemporary, fresh feel than our first home,” says the wife. “We wanted it much more light and airy.” Plus, they had a dream team in the wings:



A Maren Kloppmann ceramic wall sculpture overlooks the sunroom’s Cunningham-designed sofa, and a Sam Moyer artwork hangs above a custom demilune console by Walter P. Sauer. OPPOSITE: At the center of the large family room, a Charles Paris pendant is suspended over a pedestal table by Cunningham and chairs from his furniture collection, Marked, while a Richard Misrach photograph and a Brent Wadden textile work frame the doorway to the stair hall.

In the living room, an artwork by Rebecca Ward is installed above built-in shelves by Murray and a table and chairs by Marked. Next to the velvet-upholstered armchairs by Cunningham, a Peter Spellooulos lamp for Marked rests atop a Demiurge side table. OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: The kitchen is outfitted with custom oak cabinetry by Murray, Caesarstone countertops, oak flooring, and a Pelle pendant that hangs above the island lined with counter stools from Design Within Reach. A vintage Guillerme et Chambron armchair and an Azadeh Shladovsky side table stand beneath a Harold Ancart painting in the living room.



“NOT TOO FORMAL AND NOT TOO STUFFY” WAS THE DECREE FROM THE HOMEOWNERS, SAYS DESIGNER MARK CUNNINGHAM

Murray and Cunningham had collaborated on the gut renovation of the family’s Manhattan apartment a few years earlier.

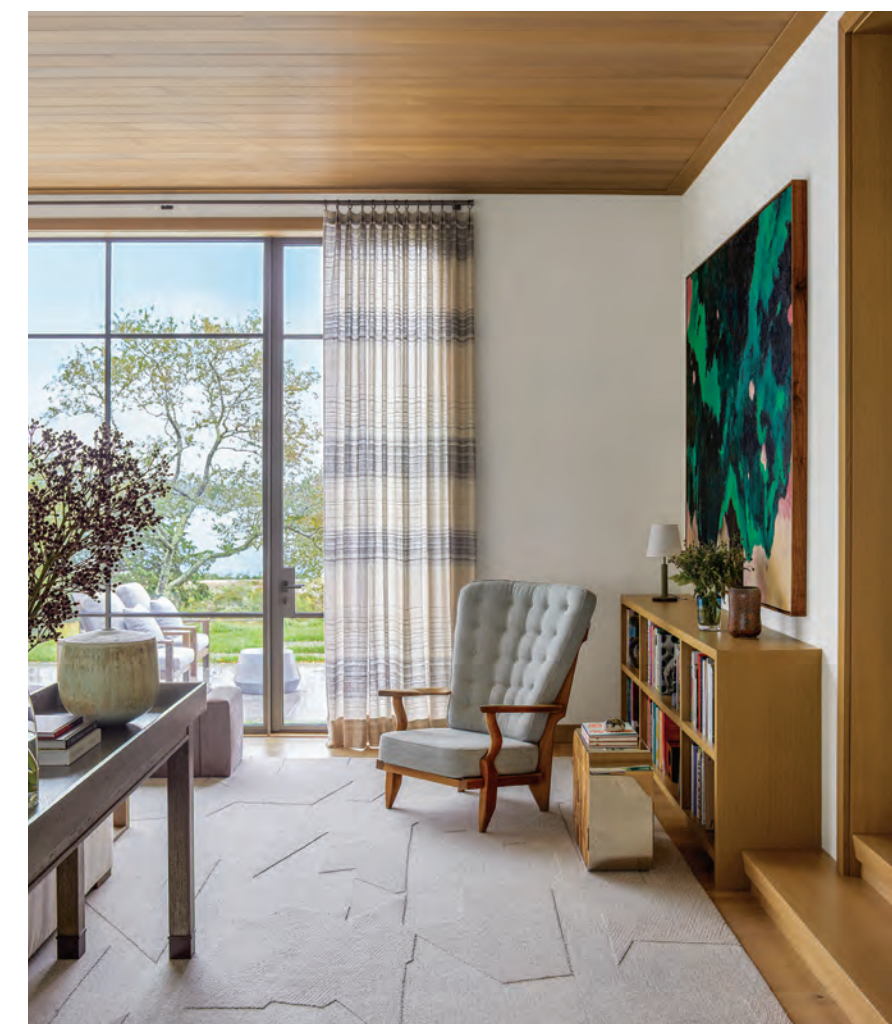
The home Murray designed features a cedar-shingle exterior—already silvering from the sun and salt since its completion last year—and a massive fieldstone chimney, elements that hew to Vineyard tradition. But clean-lined, steel-framed windows and glass walls hint at the modernity within.

Throughout the 12,000-square-foot house, each room feels uniquely layered and warmly intimate. There is also plentiful light and enough white walls to display the couple’s ever-changing artworks, which have expanded exponentially since the wife, who once worked in finance, earned a master’s degree in contemporary art from Christie’s and joined the board of the Brooklyn Museum.

At the center of the family room, Cunningham—who worked with his firm’s design director, Alex Gaston, on the project—paired a custom-made pedestal table with chairs from the designer’s furniture collection, Marked. The chairs’ navy woven-leather backs and blue-and-white-patterned seat upholstery are a jaunty complement to the blues of a large-scale ocean photograph by Richard Misrach and a woven-textile work by Brent Wadden.

For the dining room, Cunningham grouped midcentury-modern-style wood chairs cushioned in a dark Edelman leather with an austere table by Sébastien Léon and Valérie Pasquiou that features a thin concrete top and trim, pipelike metal legs. Above, a Matt Gagnon Studio chandelier crafted with swirling ceramic loops appears to frolic from the ceiling like a cloud without interrupting the woodland view.

The all-season sunroom, meanwhile, is the heart and soul of the house. Wrapped with walls of sliding glass, a rift oak





“THERE’S A SENSE OF INTIMACY AS WELL AS EXPANSIVENESS,” SAYS ARCHITECT JOHN B. MURRAY. “YOU FEEL PROTECTED”



ceiling, and flooring of weathered Windsor limestone that extends to the patios for a continuous indoor-outdoor feel, the spacious room is furnished with a huge custom-made oak dining table, vintage armchairs, a deep-seated sofa of Cunningham’s design, and a rustic stump side table by Chris Lehrecke. Presiding over the versatile space are a whimsical Maren Kloppmann wall sculpture composed of ceramic pieces and an abstract canvas by Sam Moyer incorporating slices of stone. “It’s everybody’s favorite room; they spend the most time in there,” Cunningham says.

A tour de force floating staircase, fashioned from steel and wood, connects the home’s three floors, rising from a state-of-the-art wine room to the top floor’s primary bedroom suite—all pale hues and soft textures—and a loftlike TV room. Painted a vernal green, the space is one of many designed to encourage repose. A sofa upholstered with puffer-jacket-style channel tufting melds into a cozy daybed window seat offering an inviting perch above the leafy treetops just outside.

“It’s a glass house but not a glass house,” says Murray. “There’s a sense of intimacy as well as expansiveness. You feel protected.” □



In the primary bath, which is lined with Taj Mahal quartzite from BAS Stone, a painting by Michele Fletcher is mounted above an MTI Baths tub. OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: A Francesco Balzano bench from the Invisible Collection stands at the foot of the primary suite’s Marked bed, which is dressed with E. Braun linens, a Frette coverlet, and pillows in a Schumacher fabric; Mark Albrecht Studio sconces complement the Holly Hunt nightstands. Cunningham designed the TV room’s built-in sofa with a window nook where he hung a Hiroshi Sugimoto seascape photograph.