

FREDERIC



Although the onetime boathouse was remodeled into a proper home in 1989, what is now the living room remained a garage until Cunningham's clients bought it in 2020. During the renovation, Cunningham painted the terra cotta tile floors a rich, glossy black, and added the reclaimed pine beams. The sofa and chairs are from Cunningham's own line, Marked. MAX BURKHALTER

HOUSE TOURS

Mark Cunningham Puts a Black-and-White Spin on Seaside Decorating

See how the designer transformed the onetime boathouse on Long Island.

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When a pair of Manhattan-based clients asked designer Mark Cunningham to transform their weekend house in Bellport, New York, into a playful retreat for visitors, he drew on the very best of classic American decorating—from folk art to Albert Hadley—to create a retreat that's clean, fresh and unpretentious, but with a decidedly artistic and stylish stamp.



Stillfried Wien chairs surround an Olmstead dining table. A grid of Christopher Wool's "Black Book" screen prints enhances the space's utilitarian feel. The round coffee table is from Nickey Kehoe. MAX BURKHALTER



Utility takes precedence in the entry, where a simple splayed-leg oak table and Andrew Finnigan Woodworking coat rack from FAIR Design corral clutter. MAX BURKHALTER



A coat of Benjamin Moore's Steam becomes a de facto (and easy-to-clean) runner in the stair hall. MAX BURKHALTER

“This was the third project we’ve worked on together—also the largest and the first gut-reno,” explains Cunningham, who first introduced the couple to Bellport about six years ago. They quickly fell in love with the quiet Long Island town and bought their current house—built in the 1880s as a boathouse, later converted into a garage with chauffeur’s quarters upstairs, and finally a family home—in 2020.

Despite the house’s seaside setting, the clients weren’t interested in sticking to a typical nautical color scheme. “They wanted it to be comfortable and casual, but also specifically wanted everything to be black and white with some natural tones,” says Cunningham. So the designer honed in on an updated Americana aesthetic, with painted floors, reclaimed materials, and a mix of new and vintage furnishings with a slightly Shaker, slightly Scandinavian bent.



“The client had a very specific color in mind for the cabinetry, inspired by a friend’s kitchen in Ireland,” says Cunningham, who sampled dozens of paints before landing on Benjamin Moore’s Collingwood, a warm gray. A vintage French zinc-top florist’s table, found at Elsie Green, became the kitchen island; Urban Archaeology pendants hang above. Stool by Sawkille. MAX BURKHALTER



Midcentury meets industrial in the breakfast room, where vintage Scandinavian chairs and a Saarinen table mix with an antique English tavern bench (sourced at Puckhaber), a painted steel Schoolhouse pendant and sconces by Hector Finch. MAX BURKHALTER

“Our challenge was finding a cohesive narrative in the architecture and making sure our modern additions blended harmoniously with the original details,” says Cunningham. “Now, the clients refer to it as ‘The House That Jack Built’ as its current iteration is a true amalgamation of the many purposes it has served in its history.”



In the guest room, Cunningham evoked old-fashioned spatterware with a Peter Fasano wallpaper and matching fabric (aptly called Spatter Dash) and paired them with an updated windowpane from Marked. Iron beds from Burke Decor fit right in with an array of carefully curated vintage finds. MAX BURKHALTER



Cunningham sourced this 19th-century English painted chest at The Home Bothy in West Sussex, UK. Mirror, Rejuvenation. Basket, Aero. MAX BURKHALTER



A duo of white subway and black herringbone tiles by Nemo bring the two-toned palette into the primary bath. The hardware is by Waterworks. MAX BURKHALTER



Located on the ground level, the primary bedroom is a more tranquil affair. Cunningham added a custom-upholstered headboard in Pierre Frey's Cesar to the Room & Board bed; a pillow in Muse by Kufri and striped Marked chair (in Gretchen Bellinger's Another Line print) add a subtle dose of pattern. The floor lamp is from RT Facts. MAX BURKHALTER