



# Toast to Simplicity

A HOUSE ON MARTHA'S VINEYARD  
DISTILLS THE ESSENCE OF ITS WINDBLOWN SETTING

Architecture by Peter Rose, AIA/Interior Design by Shelton, Mindel & Associates  
Text by Steven M. L. Aronson/Photography by Michael Moran

Only once in a blue moon do my partner, Peter Shelton, and I work on just the interior design of a house," states Lee Mindel. "We invariably do the architecture, too. That said, it was a pleasure to get to synthesize the various components of a building done by an architect whose rigor we respect."

No sooner had that architect—Cambridge-based Peter Rose—finished the graceful, cedar-shingled house on Martha's Vineyard than its owner decided to sell it. The buyers were longtime Shelton and Mindel clients (see *Architectural Digest*, October 2000 and May 2001), who had rented on the same blazing scimitar of beach for years and had always aspired to the house's site. And that's site writ large: five wild, romantic acres—dune, beach grass, scrubby oak—where rugosa roses climb and pinecones fall.

The house is nestled strategically into

the landscape, on the slope of a plateau a mere 15 feet above the breaking waves (thanks to oversize windows and floor-to-ceiling sliding glass panels, every room enjoys "a million-acre ocean view"). "The building is very choreographic," the architect adds. Call it a dance, then—a dance that moves with rhythmic discipline between wetlands, bluff and sea.

There are two turn-of-the-last-century beach shacks on the property, and these served Rose as reference and context. "The importance of them is they're modest," he explains. "We're just at the end of an era when everything was built bigger than it should have been, so I made an effort to do a relatively small house—one that would blend in, if not nearly disappear—almost as a kind of civic gesture."

Shelton and Mindel took inspiration from these shacks as well. "What they represent is an ultimate simplicity, and this suggested to us the vocabulary for our fit-

Clients of Peter Shelton and Lee Mindel's called on the architects to handle the interiors of a Peter Rose-designed beach house they'd acquired on five Martha's Vineyard acres. ABOVE: The oceanfront elevation. OPPOSITE: The colors of Fernando and Humberto Campana's Sushi sofa enliven the entrance. Down the steps is the living room. Rogers & Goffigon pillow fabrics.









The living room features a Shelton, Mindel-designed rug, along with an array of pedigree Modern pieces, including an Arne Vodder chaise, Jean Royère armchairs, a Pierre Chapo low table and a Franco Albini rattan armchair. Chair fabric, Rogers & Goffigon.













ting the house,” Mindel says. “No hokey decoys or sentimental trappings of Americana. On the contrary, we wanted to do something easy, natural, organic, free-form, informal and, as always, informed.”

The wife is quick to extol the designers’ clarity and purity of vision. “There’s nothing here that’s arbitrary; it all feels inevitable,” she says. “And everything *conceptually* makes sense—that when you’re inside, you’re also experiencing the outside.” This feeling starts with the palette and textures (the window treatments, for instance, are a diaphanous voile the color of fog) and continues with the shapes of the furniture (there’s one chair that virtually scoops you out the window).

Many of the pieces have the look of objects that were created by nature: The granite Noguchi side table could pass for a composite of rocks washed ashore; the Pierre Chapo low table is like a deconstructed conch; the Fabricius & Kastholm table of aged laminate resembles a translucent oyster shell; and the Line Vautrin mirror is redolent of the pinecones that stud the property. Other pieces have nautical connotations: The Charlotte Perriand low table, with its worn patina, calls up the hull of a ship; the arm of the Arne Vodder chaise could be an oar; the Børge Mogensen chair sports the wood joinery of Nordic sailboats; and there’s an orange table in the fiber-

**LEFT:** The dining room’s cedar walls are complemented by more Scandinavian Modern furniture—Hans Wegner Wishbone chairs and a Fabricius & Kastholm table. A Noriko Furunishi photograph hangs on the wall. **ABOVE:** Decorative objects in the kitchen include a Michelle Boyer candelabrum and green vases by Dani and Jacques Rueland. Wolf range and Sub-Zero refrigerator, at Abc.com.





**ABOVE:** Against the side of the cedar-shingle-clad main house, a trio of surfboards stand at the ready. **RIGHT:** In the master bedroom are a Saarinen Tulip table, a Line Vautrin mirror and more Ruelland vases. A Jean Prouvé chaise is on the adjacent bluestone terrace.

glass that surfboards are saliently made of.

The artwork, too, was prompted by the site. Jose Alvarez's moon-shaped *Article of Faith* is an assemblage of mica and other minerals not unlike what can be found on the beach below; and the two colorful Keith Tyson works are from his series called *Nature Paintings*.

Shelton and Mindel designed a number of rugs that became, in effect, part of the architecture—they're the circulation spine of the house. The orthogonal rug in the entrance promenade functions as a kind of boardwalk (it's the scale of a boardwalk—four feet wide—as well as the same driftwood color), connecting to the library and the two teenage children's rooms and, in another direction, to the master bedroom. The rugs in the living room and the library are a pointillist version of the color of water when the sun is on it—textured to simulate concentric circles made by a pebble dropped into a pond.

The only piece of furniture that's truly structured also happens to be the most relaxed: the Campana brothers' color-ridden rubber-on-wood Sushi sofa. This iconic work deliciously calls to mind not only pieces of sushi but also rolled-up flip-flops, water toys and body boards (not incidentally, emblems of the recreational activities that the family enjoys). "It's high-low," Mindel observes, "which is really what the house is."

"This is a simple place where we all connect," the wife sums up. "We connect to the ocean, and we connect to each other." □





