House&Home

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The New York Times

Behind the panes, an exhaustive search for fittings and fabric.

The House That Homework Built

By RAUL A. BARRENECHE

EAST HAMPTON, N.Y.

DO deep pockets automatically make a better house? Michael Haverland doesn't think so.

With limitless funds, "a house becomes all about using the most expensive wood you can find," said Mr. Haverland, a New York architect with a practice that includes high-end homes and low-cost public work. "A tight budget will force you to be more inventive. And invention is, of course, more interesting." Nowhere would this distinction be more apt, it seems, than in the Hamptons, land of ample budgets (the name Rennert comes to mind).

As if in rebuttal, Mr. Haverland has designed for himself a modernist home with soaring interiors, a loft in the woods modeled after the Maison de Verre, a house designed in 1932 by Pierre Chareau that has a cultlike following. (In 1946, Mr. Chareau built a house for Robert Motherwell in East Hampton incorporating two Quonset huts. It was demolished in 1985.) The Maison de Verre, with walls made of hundreds of glass blocks, has an enduring modern elegance, like a Barcelona chair or a Florence Knoll sofa. Its industrial candor, with perforated metal screens and exposed girders has acquired a graceful patina with time.

LONG ISLAND LOFT A modernist house in the Hamptons by Michael Haverland, left, has mullions for windows and doors, above right, giving scale to 12-foot ceilings. Mr. Haverland modeled it on the 1932 Maison de Verre, by Pierre Chareau.

By relying on ingenuity and an almost obsessive fixation on details, Mr. Haverland built his house for just over $1 million, not including the price of the land or the time spent designing it literally down to the door handles. Even with the cost of the property, Mr. Haverland said his completely custom house came in under $2 million, significantly less than the off-the-shelf houses nearing completion at the well-publicized Houses at Sagaponac, the subdivision planned by Richard Meier, with 34 spec homes by celebrity architects.

Mr. Haverland's house is hardly affordable housing, but everything is relative, especially real estate.

"A lot of modern houses here end up being lazy modern," said Mr. Haverland, who is an assistant professor at the Yale School of Architecture. "Modernism is really about economy of means and rigor, and how you design space. If you lose those values, it's just a superficial treatment of modern surfaces." Before moving in last November, Mr. Haverland, 37, and his partner,

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CLOSE TO HOME

Sometimes, Walls Do Talk

Daniel J. van Ackere for The New York Times

HOME OFFICE Alice Hoffman invents characters in a place with a past.

By ALICE HOFFMAN

HOUSES are like books, split into chapters, filled with stories that are linked by setting. When you live in an old house, you are not just living with plaster and floorboards, but with stories. Histories you know nothing of occurred in the rooms in which you live. Someone fell in love in your kitchen, died in the spot where your bed is placed; someone did cartwheels across your lawn, had her heart broken one night; someone survived smallpox, influenza, childbirth.

Someone else lived here.

I'm drawn to old houses, to the history in the floor plan, the story in the crossbeams. My book "Blackbird House" is a collection of stories charting the lives of the imagined families who passed through my house on Cape Cod from the Revolutionary War to the present. The characters in it appeared to me without being asked. They straggled in, on horseback or on foot, wounded by the lives they had led or hopeful still. They built the barn, raised lambs in the field, caught fireflies, recovered from cancer and heartbreak, ran off to California or stayed within the confines of this property all their lives.

In each tale the house alone remained constant.

The old farm my husband and I bought on the edge of Cape Cod in 1996 was so rundown that real estate agents refused to show the property. Why had it sat on the market for so long, abandoned save for nesting squirrels? The house was haunted, for one thing; it had no heat, for another; there was also no hot water, insulation, no cellar except for a rain cistern. As for the two-stall barn framed by two-by-fours and held up by little more than a thick trumpet vine, it was truly a

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Living Large, But on the Fly

Kevin Moloney for The New York Times

TASTEMAKERS Kris and Kathy Kron were placed in a luxury house that is up for sale, in order to enhance its desirability.

By HILLARY ROSNER

WANTED: Exceptionally tidy people with attractive furniture to live in nice houses for low, low rent. Must not mind the hassles of frequent relocation, such as bubble-wrapping breakables, filing change-of-address forms and dealing with cable and Internet service providers. Must be willing to open home to strangers on short notice and to keep sink free of dirty dishes.

It may not be for everyone. But Rick and Jennifer Mertes have it down to a science. The couple and their 20-month-old son, Cooper, have moved three times in just over a year, packing their belongings into several U-Haul trucks. Mr. Mertes, who works from home as a business consultant, now has a contact high up at the telephone company, whom he calls directly when it is that time again.

The payoff is a chance to live in a great place for a fraction of the going rate.

Since April, the Merteses have been in a 3,500-square-foot 1908 Craftsman house with exposed beams, a whirlpool tub and a finished walk-out basement. The house is on the market for $697,000 and would normally rent for about $2,400. The Merteses pay $750.

The Merteses are home managers, a role that is becoming increasingly popular — and visible — in the world of real estate. Home managers live in houses that are for sale and would otherwise be vacant, offering potential buyers a look at furnished, decorated rooms. The homeowner continues to pay the mortgage, while the home manager is responsible for all utilities and the general upkeep of the house. Home managers pay "rent," generally between a third and half of the market rate, to a private company, which matches prospec-

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The House That Homework Built

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Philip Galanes, 40, a lawyer and novelist, rented a converted barn in East Hampton for five years as a weekend retreat from their duplex in the West Village. Their rental was a classic Hamptons charmer, complete with shingles and privet hedge. But the overstuffed floral-print sofas and toile wallpaper were not to their taste. After renting for a year, they decided to build a weekend home where they could indulge their taste for offbeat modernism.

For four years, Mr. Haverland and Mr. Galanes spent most weekends biking across the East End in search of property.

"We must have cycled up and down every street from Southampton to Amagansett," said Mr. Galanes, whose debut novel, "Father's Day," was published in June by Knopf. "Especially in the winter, when the foliage was down and we could see the properties better. We were relentless."

Their pedaling paid off. After inspecting nearly 50 properties, Mr. Haverland and Mr. Galanes settled on a 1.1-acre parcel in East Hampton two years ago.

The property, set back almost 300 feet from Cove Hollow Road, appealed to them for its seclusion.

"It made me feel more comfortable about doing something that wasn't traditional," Mr. Haverland said. "On a village lane I would have felt obligated to do a shingle house."

At first Mr. Galanes imagined modeling their home after classic West Coast Modernism, which he liked for its richly textured materials and indoor-outdoor spaces. "But it doesn't make sense to create that kind of house where you have California weather for just two and a half months a year," he said.

On a trip to Paris, they visited the Maison de Verre. Much of its spirit shows up in the meticulously designed 3,900-square-foot house on Cove Hollow Road. Instead of glass block, Mr. Haverland built 12½-foot-high walls of glass with black steel frames, which look like oversize factory windows. He painted the steel beams and columns on the inside black, creating a polished industrial look. "The idea behind it was to create a simple glass box for the furniture," Mr. Haverland said. "Even when it's boiling hot out and you're inside with the air-conditioning running, you still feel like you're outdoors."

Charles Gwathmey, whose 1965 design for his parents' home in Amagansett is considered a classic of beach house Modernism, called Mr. Haverland's house "very inventive." "Sometimes rigor can be a detriment," he added. "In this case it's a benefit."

Building a house can test any relationship, especially when both parties have strong convictions. Mr. Haverland is the architect in the household, but Mr. Galanes knows a thing or two about design, especially Modern furniture, which he collects. (He has two classic midcentury desks in his office: one by Jean Prouvé, the other by Jacques Adnet.)

Mr. Galanes resigned in 2001 as chief operating officer of Golden Books Family Entertainment, the children's book company. He now has a budding business advising collectors on the acquisition of Modernist furniture, rugs, fabrics and lighting.

Mr. Haverland and Mr. Galanes's only fight involved the 12½-foot ceilings in the living and dining areas. Mr. Galanes felt they were too tall. But after much discussion, Mr. Haverland convinced him that the height offset the house's 40-foot width. "They don't seem so tall because your eye is drawn out to the landscape and the sky," he said.

The men insist the design was a collaboration, but they interacted like architect and client, with Mr. Galanes throwing out ideas and Mr. Haverland figuring out ways to execute them. "I just said what I wanted and somehow Michael made it all happen," Mr. Galanes said.

Early in the design, Mr. Galanes's critiques of the glass walls sent Mr. Haverland back to the drawing board for two months. "The mullions were so thick," Mr. Galanes said. "I thought they were just awful."

His suggestion paid off. The glass walls, modeled after 1930's French factory windows, got thinner mullions that reflect sunlight, which makes them appear even thinner. Unlike drafty old windows, the walls of insulated glass do not make the house expensive to heat and cool, in part because overhangs keep the sun out in summer. In winter, 350 yards of chenille curtains and a blackout curtain liner separated by six-inch air spaces keep the cold air out. Mr. Haverland said his electric bill averages $150 a month, $50 less than the one they received for their old shingle house.

Mr. Galanes tends to follow his instincts. Mr. Haverland, on the other hand, is painstakingly meticulous and fixated on detail. "I can't make a choice until I know every single option," he said. "It's exhausting." He sampled 30 different stains for the mahogany fascias of the roof overhangs before finding one that exactly matched the reddish-brown of the oak pocket doors.

The turquoise fabric they picked for a pair of 1950's Marco Zanuso armchairs they found in Rome was Mr. Galanes's first choice. "But Michael made us look at about 10,000 fabric swatches," Mr. Galanes said.

Mr. Haverland kept costs in check by using inexpensive materials that don't look cheap. For example, the bathroom walls are finished in a painted Masonite that costs $1.50 a square foot. "It has a certain warmth to it," Mr. Haverland said. "I always thought it would be beautiful if it were detailed properly."

Wherever they went, the men searched shops and antiques stores for reasonably priced antique sinks, tubs, wooden doors and door hardware that would warm up the house's clean modernism with the patina they had admired in the Maison de Verre. "I wanted to find things that wouldn't otherwise be used in a modern house like this, to use materials cleverly and in quirky ways," Mr. Haverland said.

In Palm Springs, Calif., the couple spotted brass trivets from the 1960's for $7 each at a shop called Antique Collective. They liked the filigreed shape and patina, so they bought six without knowing what to do with them. They ended up turning them into light sconces by attaching the trivets to brass dowels that they screwed into the wall. Mr. Haverland bought three copies of "The Lilies," a book with reproductions of Pierre-Joseph Redouté's early 19th-century botanical prints, at the Strand bookstore in Manhattan for $29.95 each. He planned to tear out the color plates and use them to decoupage the kitchen cabinets, but wound up using color photocopies of the drawings because he could enlarge or reduce them to fit the cabinet fronts.

The home's inventiveness, rigor and wide-open spaces fit Mr. Haverland's definition of an authentically modern house. Whether they appreciate that or not, eagle-eyed house hunters have taken notice: Mr. Haverland and Mr. Galanes recently received a $3 million offer. But it is not for sale. "They're going to have to drag us out of here feet first," Mr. Haverland said.

THE COLLECTION Decoupaged copies of 19th-century botanical prints in the kitchen, above, with a 1930's French sink, early 1900's milk-glass hanging fixtures and a 1940's crystal globe from a Paris flea market. A room divider papered in a William Morris pattern and an early 70's Raymond Loewy console, of molded plastic with a metal frame, left, define a dining area. Philip Galanes, far left, has a study with a Saarinen Womb chair and a Jean Prouvé desk and chair. Overhangs, right, block the sun in summer and curtains, below, hold in the heat in winter. In the foreground, below, an ironwood chair; behind it, a Little Tulip chair by Pierre Paulin, a Dunbar sofa and Eames leather chair prototypes.

An ambitious vision of a simple glass box on a secluded lot.

Photographs by Laurie Lambrecht for The New York Times; styling by Elizabeth Botero

ONLINE: Raul A. Barreneche narrates a tour of Michael Haverland's home in East Hampton at **nytimes.com/home.**

Searching Hard To Keep It Simple

TO furnish their house, Michael Haverland and Philip Galanes cast a wide net. An Eames rocker, below, was about $600 at a Treadway-Toomey Galleries auction in Chicago years ago; www.treadwaygallery.com. Olde Good Things, in Scranton, Pa., had 1930's French country sinks ($700), claw-foot tubs ($650) and brass chandeliers ($2,400 for three). The store has branches in New York: (888) 551-7333 or www.oldegoodthings.com. The Brass Knob in Washington, (202) 332-3370, supplied an antique wood stove ($900) and glass and porcelain doorknobs ($30 to $50). Vintage push-button light switches ($14.95 to $29.95) came from Classic Accents in Southgate, Mich., www.classicaccents.net or (800) 245-7742.

Mr. Haverland made sconces with $7 brass trivets from Antique Collective in Palm Springs, Calif.; (760) 323-4443. Vermont Salvage Exchange in White River Junction, Vt., (802) 295-7616, had solid paneled doors for $125. Turkish travertine floor tiles ($4.50 a square foot) came from Stone Locator in Falls Church, Va., www.stonelocator.com or (800) 503-1099. Reissued William Morris wallpaper for the room dividers was $125 a yard from Charles Rupert in Victoria, British Columbia, (250) 592-4916. And a Jean Prouvé desk was $7,500 from Patrick Marchand, a New York dealer, (212) 255-9481. *RAUL A. BARRENECHE*