



WORLD VISION

John Bjørnen and his partner Cee Scott Brown have created an idyllic waterfront home, inspired by their global travels

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DISTINCTIVE



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Detached 1930s cottage

LOCATION

Sag Harbor, New York

ROOMS Sitting room, dining room, kitchen, office, library, three bedrooms, three bathrooms

PURCHASED 1994

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

"We used to live in New York City where Cee and I both worked," says John.



POOLHOUSE

"In the summer, I love to invite people over. We congregate around the pool at the weekend," says John

**SITTING ROOM**

Club chairs give the double-height space a colonial feel. Try Graham and Green for a Moroccan leather pouffe, from £139. Laura Ashley sells similar leather armchairs, from £900. Painted Wall Panelling stocks runs of tongue-and-groove, from £189 for 2m



Inspired by their extensive travels in Asia, John Bjornen and his partner Cee Scott Brown were keen to bring something of the East to their little corner of New York

State. 'Over the years, we've built up quite a collection of furniture, textiles and art –

things that serve as poignant visual memories of our travels,' says John.

It was Cee, then working on the New York City art scene, who discovered the property. 'Two painters, had previously lived here and it had a wonderful bohemian quality,' says John. In the space of two years, the couple had relocated to Sag Harbor

permanently. The redwood-clad cottage, set in an idyllic cove next to the former home of American author John Steinbeck hadn't been touched for half a century. 'It was a diamond in the rough,' says John. 'Fortunately we were able to see the property's potential.'

The pair soon set to work, freshening up the interior with a lick of white paint. 'It gives ▶

**OFFICE**

Wooden panelling lends intimacy and warmth. Pavilion dining table, £299, John Lewis, is a good match. Cherner side chairs, £618 each, Twentytwentyone

**KITCHEN**

Flat-fronted cabinets in a chalky shade have understated elegance. The Linear kitchen by Harvey Jones, from £18,000, is similar. Wolf range cooker, £15,000, John Lewis

FAVOURITE FEATURE *'I love the simple elegance of whitewashed panelling and wooden flooring. We brought the reclaimed teak boards back from Indonesia'*

DINING ROOM

Classic mid-century furniture and light fittings add retro cool. Hans Wegner Wishbone chairs, £564 each; Bondenup & Thrup Semi Pendant light, from £109, both Twentytwentyone





DINING ROOM
Items from the couple's travels form a shrine. Try The Buddha's Face for a similar Thai bust, £30.



LIBRARY
Huge tomes make an imposing display. Find large texts at antiquarian and second-hand bookshops.



HALL
Even this space reflects the East. Porthole mirror, £89, Graham and Green, would suit this area.

the house a laid-back feel,' says John. They also installed reclaimed teak floorboards from Indonesia, renovated the timber window frames and updated panel doors with bespoke bronze hardware from Bali.

One of the greatest challenges was staying true to the spirit of the cottage. 'We wanted to preserve the understated feel of the

property, so when it came to the kitchen we kept the original beams and opted for simple units,' says John. Flat-fronted wood cabinetry is paired with solid bronze while ceramic schoolhouse pendants with filament bulbs cast a hazy glow on white stone worktops.

With the bones of the cottage in place, John, an interior designer, was able to make

his mark. He commissioned a textural linen sofa for the vaulted sitting room, reupholstered a retro tub chair in saddle leather, sourced vintage light fittings to be installed throughout the house and hand-glazed brick tiles for the bathrooms.

'There's a real mixture of furniture: from a Hans Wegner daybed and Louis ▶



LIBRARY
A bespoke floor-to-ceiling bookcase affords ample storage for the couple's novels and design manuals. Aspen shelving, £695, Habitat, is comparable. For further information about John's interior design work, visit bjornendesign.com.

MASTER BEDROOM

Light-filled and spacious, this room offers glorious views across the lake. For similar cotton bedlinen try The White Company, from £45 for a double duvet cover. The hand-painted seashells cushion, £49, Notonthehighstreet.com, is similar



DESIGN TIP

'Don't be afraid to add new things - a home can be freshened up with something as simple as a cushion or throw'

Poulsen pendant lights to things we've bought in auction houses and thrift stores,' says John. 'As a designer, I'm my own worst client and I wanted to create a style that would evolve over time. It's an eclectic look that manages to be both tailored and comfortable.'

As John and Cee intended, the house has also become a showcase for the pieces they

have accumulated on their travels. Items such as the guest bedroom's impressive Mentawai panel from Indonesia and the Japanese rosewood and rice paper bedside lamps, which give a moody warmth to the space. In the gardens things are no different and a traditional Balinese Balé is a novel take on a poolhouse. 'We had it designed while we

were travelling, shipped it home and got a carpenter to assemble it on site,' says John.

'We feel privileged to live somewhere that has such a beautiful, timeless quality,' he continues. 'In the summer, we'll barbecue, enjoy the sunshine or sit among the trees along the cove. We love to travel but this is very much our home, a haven we'll never leave.'



GUEST BEDROOM

Colourful artwork and furnishings from around the globe lift this simple scheme. Roots sells a range of ornaments and accessories from all over the world, including teak panels



GUEST BATHROOM

Eastern figurines and vintage touches give character. Historic Lighting sells a wall light like the one seen here, £84

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