

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

## A Retreat Designed for Drama-Free Weekends

For a couple of theater professionals looking for a refuge from the Broadway bustle, this Hamptons interior grants a full measure of serenity.

By SARAH MEDFORD  
Dec. 23, 2014



MOOD LIGHTING, meaningful props, multiple entrances and exits—the parallels between home décor and the theater are too many to ignore. But for their new weekend house in Water Mill, N.Y., Walter Bobbie, a Tony Award-winning director of Broadway musicals, and David Frye, a Grammy-winning tenor at the Metropolitan Opera, were seeking a respite from the roles they play in Manhattan during the week. “Since both Walter and David are in performance, they wanted the opposite of that—a place that was un-theatrical,” said James Huniford, the New York interior designer who worked with them on the project.

After the couple discovered that the 1910 fixer-upper farmhouse they’d bought in 2009 was beyond repair, they replaced it with a structure that references a classic Hamptons barn. Mr. Huniford collaborated with Southampton architect James McChesney on a three-bedroom home that combined traditional lines with a contemporary floor plan. True to its humble antecedents, the building has no crown moldings or fussy windows, and a floor of reclaimed Vermont timber runs throughout. “I love cement floors, but the look was too austere for this house,” Mr. Huniford said. “It took about 10 tries to get the stain color right.”

The property adjoins a tree farm, and sightlines were devised to bring nature indoors. To create an enveloping sense of calm, the designer custom-mixed a gray-

green wall color that seems to vary from room to room, hour by hour, in the changing light. The furniture is an edited mix of antiques, vintage pieces and new upholstery—none of it showstopping, but all comfortable and discreetly tasteful.

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Though you won’t find an Auntie Mame staircase here, the interior isn’t completely free of drama: A second-floor bridge crosses the double-height living room and connects guest rooms at either end of the house. (The master bedroom is on the ground floor.) “Walter and David are good friends and gave me a lot of freedom,” said Mr. Huniford. “It was a loose, organic process—they were both familiar with the idea of revising to make it better.” So while the project steered clear of full-on theater, there was definitely a little massaging of the script.



Living room STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, STYLING BY CARLA GONZALEZHART

**NATURAL SELECTION,** For a new barn-style home in Watermill, N.Y., interior designer James Huniford borrowed more than views from an adjacent tree farm: He found the serenity his clients were after in its earthy palette. In the living room, mica-shaded lamps coexist with reclaimed wood floors, a rustic farm table and a pendant light fashioned from oxidized metal panels; a wing chair covered in Travers striped linen pierces the calm. The wall color, used throughout the house, was custom-mixed to evoke “the warm, olive-y green of nature and the gray of a cloudy day,” said Mr. Huniford. “An overcast sky can actually be a relief in the Hamptons—a very restorative effect. It’s a day for reading and naps by the fire.”







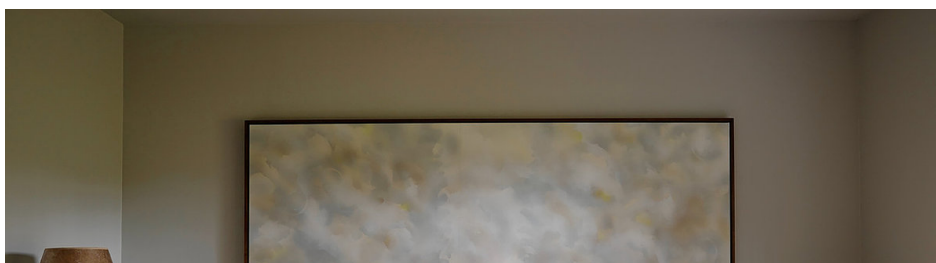
Dining room STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, STYLING BY CARLA GONZALEZHART

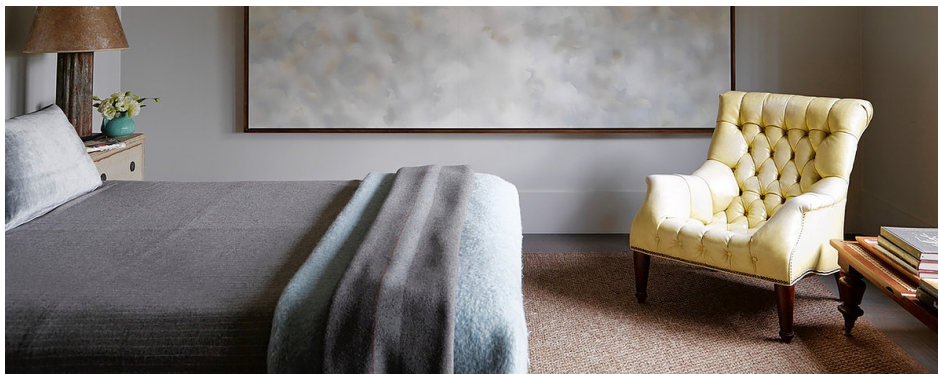
**MOOD PIECES,** Though the dining room is sparsely furnished, each element contributes to a refined, slightly more formal vibe. (It's the only room in the house with curtains; the others use simple shades.) Mr. Huniford designed the 11-foot-long bluestone table to complement the antique Weiner Werkstatte chairs he found in Paris and then recovered in a textured Maharam fabric. The whimsical pendant light, another custom piece, references the work of Viennese designer Josef Hoffmann. A wicker panel adorns one wall, and the bull's-eye mirror is repurposed from an airplane engine.



The exterior STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, STYLING BY CARLA GONZALEZHART

**ROOTS IN THE PAST,** Owners Walter Bobbie and David Frye were drawn to the unassuming lines of traditional Hamptons barns, on which their new home is based. "David and I love barns, and that suited our property perfectly," said Mr. Bobbie. Architect James McChesney designed a house with a central axis running from the front entrance through to a shed-style porch at the back of the house with a massive, sliding door (open in this view). Plentiful windows offer a constant invitation to venture outdoors. "I love watching our guests unpack and then melt into the weekend," added Mr. Bobbie.





Master bedroom STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, STYLING BY CARLA GONZALEZHART

**DREAMY COMPOSITION**, The master bedroom is a blood-pressure-lowering space that comes alive with a few meaningful pieces. Mr. Huniford devised a soothing backdrop by emphasizing horizontal lines and mid-toned neutrals found in a chocolate sisal rug and vintage blankets. Mr. Bobbie and Mr. Frye contributed a contemporary canvas by East End artist Sheila Isham and a favorite vintage armchair in tufted lemon-yellow Naugahyde. Mr. Bobbie said Mr. Huniford “edits our history of possessions,” while introducing a few new elements. But, he added, “It always feels personal.”



ONE EXCEPTION TO THE RULE, Amid such tranquility, bold moves echo like thunderclaps: Witness the assortment of antique grain sieves migrating up a guest room wall. “I love repurposing industrial and agricultural objects,” Mr. Huniford said. He combined the sieves with a vintage metal scoop, an early American drop-leaf table and a cotton carpet by Elizabeth Eakins. The self-effacing palette of grays and browns allows the dramatic geometry of the wall assemblage to shine. Did we say dramatic?