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VICENTE WOLF
MIXES IT UP IN A
HAMPTONS
KITCHEN, P.98

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One of the living room's seating areas features a white leather sofa, a dark wood coffee table, and a white leather chair. The room is decorated with a large, ornate mirror, a fireplace, and a wooden side table. The lighting is warm and ambient, creating a cozy atmosphere.





hamptons real escape

Designer Vicente Wolf transformed an unsurprising shingle-style house on Long Island into a singular home for a finance man in search of serenity.





a pair of computer screens

in this home's study is a
giveaway: The man who lives
here follows the world's

financial markets. And his workweek often continues into Saturdays and Sundays, which he tries to spend here, on the East End of Long Island. "One minute he's talking to Europe; the next minute, to Asia," says Vicente Wolf, the veteran designer who was brought on board when the house was already under construction.

Those phone calls gave Wolf the first clue to how he would fill the rooms: "The owner's perspective is very international, and I wanted the house to reflect that," Wolf says. As a result, he chose items like the unexpectedly modern Chinese lantern above the round dining table (above right) and Thai architectural fragments mounted on steel rods as accent pieces in the den (top right).

But the house isn't an ethnographic museum. Wolf, a meticulous curator whose own travels have made the world his design oyster, used decorative objects sparingly. He mixed them with comfortable



upholstered pieces—many from his own furniture line—as well as modernist mainstays, including *Manager* chairs by Charles and Ray Eames, which he alternated at the dining table with more traditional, ebonized Williams Switzer armchairs.

Given his stressful career, the owner says, he wanted the house to be relaxing from the moment he walked in the door. In the hands of a less experienced designer, the presence of so many compelling objects could have been overwhelming. But Wolf arranged the pieces against neutral backdrops and, like a graphic designer reserving crucial white space, gave every item in the house—and the overworked owner—room to breathe.

Clockwise from top left: The house is new but invokes the old, in the den, with walls covered in a Donghia grass cloth, decorative Asian fragments play against Yankee architecture; the dining room includes a leather-draped round table and two very different styles of dining chair. Opposite: Arne Jacobsen Swan chairs tie the den visually to the owner's adjacent study; his relaxed and relaxing inner sanctuary.

PRODUCED BY LINDA O'KEEFE. PHOTOGRAPHS BY VICENTE WOLF.
WRITTEN BY FRED A. BERNSTEIN.



when wolf was hired, the house had been designed—in a traditional style, with gables, cedar shingles and colonial-style double-hung windows. Wolf couldn't change the impression

the house made from the street, but he was able to change the impression it made from the open front door. Among his eleventh-hour interventions were staining the wood floors dark brown and, while he was at it, applying the same stain to the terra-cotta tiles on the kitchen floor. (As long as the tiles are not glazed, Wolf advises, a regular wood stain will do the trick.)

On that newly darkened base, he arranged marriages of sleek and antique, thick and thin, primitive and high-tech. The prep island embodies the opposites-attract approach: Its slim marble top rests

on four bulky legs flanking a stainless steel base. At the other end of the kitchen, a settee of molded Eero Saarinen chairs sitle up to a trestle table with enough lumber for a small building.

Between the cooking and eating areas, Wolf formed a room divider from double-sided, glass-doored cabinets. While its transparency and gridded design make the piece modern, it also bows to tradition, precisely echoing the panes of the double-hung windows. The room doesn't need a lot of art—it's artful in its use of materials and textures—but Wolf created a picture ledge on which the owner can arrange pieces at will. The only picture that won't move is the flat-screen TV, which Wolf installed as just another in a row of images. In Wolf's hands, the utilitarian isn't stashed away but hidden in plain sight.

On a tile floor stained the color of dark wood, designer Vicente Wolf placed an island with a marble top and legs reminiscent of chess pieces. A professional-grade espresso machine nestles in the center of the otherwise-transparent room divider. Opposite: Other than the massive Spanish trestle table (made from old wood), everything in the kitchen's dining area, including glassware purchased at Blarney, is white.





What the Pros Know

When you're working with a designer, compromise is key. If you're going to love your home, it's important that it reflect your own totems and tastes, even—or especially—if your designer has established a signature style. Over the years, Vicente Wolf has become known for what he calls "dusty pastel" colors, gauzy fabric (often allowed to float in front of walls) and furniture arranged in layers (like the mini-dresser, designed by Wolf, beneath the clients' personal desires). The owner of this house enjoys sleeping on platform beds, which, he says, make him feel grounded. So when Wolf designed the mahogany-and-steel bed here, he made sure the mattress would rest on a platform near the floor—although he dressed it up with corner details that include oversize white wheels. From the owner's point of view, the resulting piece is a comforting platform; from Wolf's, it's a focal point with dramatic proportions.



vicente wolf, who was born in

Cuba, has been an interior design icon for more than 30 years. These days, he not only creates spaces but photographs them (the images here

are his). Each winter, he embarks on a trip to Asia and the Middle East, the journeys began as antique-buying trips but have become photo expeditions as well. This year, Wolf's voyage will take him to India, Bali, Thailand and Iran.

The fact that Wolf can leave his office for weeks at a time is a testament to his organizational skills, honed over decades of serving demanding clients. In this case, construction wasn't finished until April, but the owner wanted the house ready before summer. Wolf bought everything in advance and installed it all in three days.

That it got done in time is especially impressive given that many items were custom-made for the house, including the giant mirror leaning against a wall at the top of the stairs. Wolf often uses oversized mirrors to make spaces seem larger and more complex than the architecturate itself permits, and he often leans the mirrors against walls for the sake of informality. (In this case, the mirror is a single piece of metal, brushed around the edges to create a subtle frame.)

Though every bit a modernist—he painted much of the house in Benjamin Moore's Super White—Wolf isn't afraid of color. The master bedroom is a dusky blue (Benjamin Moore's Cumulus Cotton) that the owner says he finds restful, and the guest room has a single wall of dusty salmon. The room's other walls, which are white, reflect just a bit of the color, extending the effect.

From top: A guest room with a refreshing splash of color and a Venetian Porcelain chair; the white-on-white master bathroom; the stair landing, with an 18th-century Portuguese table, a Wolf-designed ottoman and a *Paralelo* lamp by Achille Castiglioni. Opposite: The master bedroom features a custom bed and a *Business* plantation chair. Wolf specified Roman shades for window treatments throughout the house.

details

[1] In the foyer, Wolf had the builders leave a spot for a vital rug: sunk into the wooden floor, it looks like an area rug, but it's flush with the floorboards. To erase the impression created by the house's traditional exterior, Wolf furnished the foyer with pairs of sleek consoles and steel mirrors of his design. "We made sure what you see when you walked in was unexpected," the designer explains.

[2] A photo by Louise Dahl-Wolfe rests on a windowsill in the all-white master bathroom. Wolf modeled the bathroom paneling on that of an English library but covered it in bright white paint (Benjamin Moore's Super White).

[3] Exploring contrasts of thick and thin, Wolf chose muscular wooden legs to support an inch-thick marble island top and Italian bar stools that are barely three-dimensional.

[4] Wolf updated a classic—the fabric-covered dining table—by draping this round one in leather. For visual interest, Wolf chose subtly contrasting shades of leather from Spinneybeck.

[5] In the corner of the living room, Wolf installed mirrors in wide horizontal stripes, a signature design gesture. The spaces between them have a role, too. As Wolf explains, the disconnected mirrors "bring a sense of movement to the space, because as you're walking by you're seeing different things."

[6] Wolf "mitered" the corners of the dining room with mirrors angled 45 degrees. Attached to the mirrors are sconces from VW Home to cast a gentle light that, along with the mirrors and the table draps, helps to soften the room's hard edges. ●



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