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LEONA LEWIS

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The great escape

For true New Yorkers, there is only one place to take a break from hectic city life: The Hamptons. And interior designer Jenny Wolf's light, bright, beach-inspired bolthole makes for a suitably stylish getaway. *Rachel Leedham* explores



Photographs by **Emily Gilbert**
Portrait above by **Patrick Cline**

Before she turned her hand to interior design, Jenny Wolf worked for Ralph Lauren in visual merchandising, and her sartorial eye is evidently still at play in her approach to decorating. "I always say a room is like a pair of jeans and a white T-shirt until you put the layers on," she observes. "It is all about how you dress it, how you make the space come to life."

If the East Hampton Village bolthole she shares with her husband John and daughters Ella, four, and Olivia, four months, is that jeans and T-shirt combo, it has been dressed for a laid-back weekend jaunt: think textures, natural materials and just a hint of colour. The look is considered, but with a dose of breezy insouciance. "We wanted a contemporary beach vibe," Wolf says.

Natural textures
abound in Jenny Wolf's
Hamptons home.
Below left Wolf with
daughters Ella and Olivia





The cottage, which the couple bought two years ago, offers an escape from their fast-paced lives in New York: John is a property developer, while Jenny heads up her design practice in Tribeca, with several projects on the go at any given time. “We used to drive out here with Ella and the dogs and stay with friends or at a B&B,” Wolf recalls. “We decided to start looking to buy a place, focusing on Bridgehampton, East Hampton or Sag Harbour. This was the first house we saw, but we were actually only dropping by to pick up another key from the agent. We asked for a quick tour and we were sold.”

What particularly appealed about the property, which occupies a corner plot, was its garden, lovingly planted by the previous owners over 14 years. The swimming pool is surrounded by an oasis of lush foliage, with rows of mature hydrangeas defining the perimeter. “We were blown away by the backyard,” Wolf says. “We could instantly envisage the children playing and the dogs running around. It was a very emotional response.”



Clockwise from top left A reclaimed ship's lantern gives the dining area a marine feel; number stencils were bought at a yacht's chandler; Wolf created a mezzanine in the children's bedroom; the family ready for a day at the beach



Built in the early 1900s, the shingle-clad house had started out as a modest two-up, two-down dwelling, but the ground floor was extended 10 years ago with a kitchen and third bedroom. “It had beautiful bones, but the rooms needed scaling back, Wolf recalls. “John and I had a very similar vision for the interiors – we wanted to match the inside to the outside by bringing in light, air and a more contemporary feel.”

Wolf, who refurbished the house in just six weeks, cites Montauk and modern European beach villas such as Hotel Raya in Panarea, Italy, as the twin inspirations for her pared-back approach, which entailed stripping out the cornicing and



ceilings of the living room and dining room to expose the structural joists. The upstairs bedroom ceilings were punched through to create soaring height, and a mezzanine level was built in the girls' bedroom to provide a sleeping platform.

The elaborate Victorian balustrade was replaced with a clean-lined, contemporary staircase, and the couple added cedar cladding, which was painted white. Wolf also opted to paint the dark mahogany floors. "I went through about eight swatches before I found the right shade - I had this idea of a soft grey-green. It's the perfect backdrop to the furnishings."

Wolf grew up in New Orleans and on the coast of South Carolina among a family of furniture retailers, and she says that the design gene is in her blood. "At the age of seven, I would ask if I could redecorate the living room," she laughs. "I think I always knew that I would end up an interior designer."

Natural materials have informed her decoration of the spaces, with sisal, reclaimed timber, linen and woven rush adding a tactile, soothing quality. Touches such as an old ship's lantern,



a porthole mirror and black number stencils picked up at a yacht chandler nod to the coastal location of the house. "I love to introduce a little graphic black because it cuts through the neutral tones," Wolf says.

Most Friday evenings, the couple can be found piling the children and dogs into the car to drive from their Manhattan home to the Hamptons.



Clockwise from top Clean lines and modern fittings exploit the natural light in the kitchen; the pool area is a "little paradise"; Wolf chose a soft grey-green colour scheme throughout

"We like to wake up here on Saturday morning so that we can head straight to the beach with the children and dogs. We'll pick up some things at the grocery store and then get friends over for a late lunch and a swim," says Wolf. "This is a true family house but it's also a great place to gather friends and entertain - it's a little paradise and we want to share it." ● jennywolfinteriors.com