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SHINGLE  
STYLE

Bridgehampton,  
New York

# Building Character

An inside-out metamorphosis reshapes a drab spec house into a graceful, welcoming home.

BY KELLY ROBERSON PHOTOGRAPHY BY TRIA GIOVAN PRODUCED BY BONNIE MAHARAM

BEFORE



**This Photo** Prerenovation, the house resembled less a vacation retreat than an expanded barn. New cedar shingles and gambrels—created with extended, flared rooflines—helped to refashion the exterior.



### Personal Style

Nina and Greg Richter wanted their home to exude the best of Long Island's Shingle-style homes, so they worked with their architect to dress up the exterior with lots of white trim.

**This Photo** To celebrate the home's surroundings, glass panes in the front door and sidelights help the flow of light and views through the home.

**Opposite** Dark floors and accents showcase the feast of painted-white walls and moldings.



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Imagine the ill-fated marriage of a poorly designed spec house and a barn. That combination—with a dark, cavern-like interior devoid of details and saddled with an awkward layout—was exactly what Nina and Greg Richter embraced on their journey for a vacation house in Bridgehampton, New York. What made it worthwhile was the site: a glorious 3-acre spread that backs up to a preserve, has a view that goes on forever, and is located just a short drive from the beach.

After one minor and one major renovation, the house barely resembles that awkward structure, with tasteful, light-filled spaces that adapt equally as well to postbeach gatherings with friends and family as they do to quiet dinners in the kitchen. The couple began their alterations by collaborating with interior designer Ken Gemes on a mostly cosmetic redo—lots of paint, comfortable but stylish furniture, and fabrics in warm tones and patterns.

"Nina isn't afraid of color, but you don't want a house to be jarring as you walk through it," Gemes says. "The changes gave the spaces continuity."

Architect Stuart Disston led an extensive renovation of interior spaces and the exterior facade a few years later. The original attached garage was enclosed and rooms efficiently reorganized; the result was an expansive kitchen, mudroom, laundry, half-bath, outdoor shower, and side entry. Plain walls were dressed up with moldings, wainscoting, and chair rails. "Details really give a sense of finish and scale to rooms and make the house a lot more gracious," Disston says.

On the main level, the Richters extended the master suite, and upstairs they added a guest suite to accommodate the parade of welcome summertime visitors and friends of the couple's four children. "Nina wanted to make sure the spaces all felt like they had breathing room, so the house functions well with a lot of people but doesn't feel empty when it's just the two of them," Gemes says.

In the end, the couple's patience and the changes they exacted in its transformation were worth it. It's "a prettier version of itself," Nina says.

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*"Everybody wants their home to reflect how they live and who they are. They don't necessarily want it to look like someone else has done it."*

INTERIOR DESIGNER KEN GEMES


### Personal Style

Afraid to embrace pattern? Play with small doses here and there—a chair in stripes, pillows in stripes, pillows in florals, and chevrons—to add dimension to your spaces.

*This Photo* Elegant yet comfortable furniture and durable sisal rugs sit just inside the porch. *Opposite* An upper-level balcony was lengthened to extend above the fireplace. French doors connect it to a bedroom.







*"Adding more light always helps a room, and details give spaces scale and proportion."*

ARCHITECT STUART DISSTON

### *Personal Style*

Traditionally styled furniture can be mixed and matched to achieve a one-of-a-kind look. Here, the Richters blended a rustic farm table with formal dining chairs.

**This Photo** The renovation subtly divided the dining room from the kitchen to distinguish the spaces.

The Richters wanted to maintain easy traffic flow, however, so there's still a clear path from the dining table to the kitchen island, which can double as a buffet when they're entertaining guests.





## Voice of Experience

Architect Stuart Disston took cues from the existing house for the remodel. "If you have a house that lacks proportion and scale, you can look for some clues that may be there," he says. On the exterior, for example, Disston worked with the gambrel roof to create graceful lower eaves, which he then layered with trim boards. "Whether it's a split-level or a Cape Cod, there's usually something you can go with," he says.



**Top** A large, mahogany-topped island is the nucleus around which the family gathers; a striped shade adds a color pop. **Left** A large vent hood over the range picks up on the same molding and millwork details found in the rest of the house; an inset shelf provides a spot for oft-used items.

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## The Plans, Before & After

With the exception of two bedrooms, every space in the Richters' house was reworked to be more flexible, gracious, and accommodating to the family's busy lifestyle. There are expansive outdoor spaces that take advantage of the farmland views, as well as modern conveniences that make life easier. Here's what the renovation accomplished.



6,800 square feet

ARCHITECTURE: STUART DISSTON  
INTERIOR DESIGN: KEN GEMES

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