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MODERN CLARITY

A cutting-edge custom home near Annapolis celebrates its owners' art collection and views of the South River

BY SHARON JAFFE DAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MORGAN HOWARTH



Travertine pavers draw visitors toward a threshold that spans a reflecting pool. A glass "portal" houses the great room on the main floor and a lounge with a pool table on the mezzanine. Clever design minimizes the height of the third-floor master suite when viewed from the front.

Miles of tranquil waters mesmerize visitors to a light-filled Edgewater, Maryland, home—even in the middle of January. A forested road leads to the site, which forms a point where it meets the South River. A scalloped inlet pools on the south side, creating the impression that guests are pleasantly marooned on an island.

A few years ago, this scene captivated a couple seeking a waterfront property. They loved the five-acre site so much that they made an offer on it without setting foot inside the 1980s house built near the water's edge.

The owners, semi-retired attorneys, turned to architect Ben Ames for help. They wanted their home to celebrate modern architecture, their growing art collection and, of course, the views. As the husband recalls, "I made Ben climb up to the roof of the existing house and I said, 'This is the bedroom floor. I want this view.'"

The existing home posed too many structural problems to renovate, so the owners opted to tear it down and start from scratch. Ames quickly invited interior designer Catherine Hailey to the drawing board. These frequent collaborators began a dialog with their clients that would determine how their home would take shape. "They told us they wanted a work of art that they could live in," recalls Hailey.

The husband envisioned the house as a portal, framing the water view. "That was probably the primary design concept," says Ames, who designed a two-story great room with a mezzanine, where living, dining and entertaining would take place. Offices, guest and master suites and TV and exercise rooms were positioned around the perimeters of the glass volume.

Ames streamlined the home's footprint; its 6,000 square feet of living space spans four levels, including a full basement and a

ARCHITECTURE: BENJAMIN AMES, AIA, Cunningham I Quill Architects, Washington, DC.

INTERIOR DESIGN: CATHERINE HAILEY, ASID, Hailey Design, Alexandria, Virginia. **LANDSCAPE**

ARCHITECTURE: KEVIN CAMPION, ASLA, Annapolis, MD. **CONTRACTOR:** ILEX CONSTRUCTION, Washington, DC.



The great room frames views of the South River and the Chesapeake beyond. Ben Ames designed a laminated-glass "box" that houses a painting by Kely Méndez Riestra and a Spark Modern fire element. During warm weather, the glass doors open the full width of the room and screens slide into place to allow bay breezes to waft in.



Catherine Hailey selected raffia chairs and a table planted with wheat grass (pictured here) to reflect the natural tableau outdoors. The Odegard rug offsets colorful paintings by Steve Kaufman (opposite, bottom). The open kitchen (opposite, top) features custom cabinets, Caesarstone countertops and a "floating" hood.



master suite on the third floor. Nimble manipulation of rooflines helps make the upper aerie all but disappear from the front. “We worked to find that sweet spot between a grand space and it feeling too big,” Ames explains.

A clever mix of clear and opaque materials and the use of overhangs, louvers and solar shades create a vibrant interplay of light and also temper the sun’s effects on energy use. Despite the simplicity of the exterior palette—stucco, aluminum and steel—the

design demanded what Ames terms “structural gymnastics.” A steel moment-frame protects the house from hurricanes and seismic events. Steel supports were a challenge to integrate outside the rear window walls.

The interiors are at the same time minimal and rich. Ames and Hailey made consistent use of dark-stained walnut and travertine throughout. Hailey sparingly added modern furniture with enough texture and color to establish presence—but not compete with the views or the artwork.

“I was trying to give them pops of color and interesting textures so that as much as the space was clean and contemporary, it was not so minimal that it felt cold,” Hailey says. She wove in natural materials, including a live-edge wooden coffee table that her clients discovered online and sculptural raffia chairs, to “play off the outdoor elements you see throughout the space.”

With so much openness, finding wall space to display artwork posed a challenge. Plans to make a painting by Kely Méndez Riestra the focal point in the living room led to the design of a laminated-glass “box” that would showcase the piece, as well as an ethanol-powered fireplace.

The kitchen faces the living area; a laminated-glass panel framing the cabinets



The rear elevation reveals how Ames articulated the home's volumes and varied rooflines. Above the kitchen and dining area, the tower on the left houses the wife's home office on the mezzanine and the master bedroom on the third floor, with the master bath and private terrace above the great room. The volume on the right houses the guest suite.



An open stairwell sheathed in eco-friendly Kalwall (above) connects all four levels of the home. Ames vertically hung cable rail with small bi-pin lights that appear to float at night. The master suite is a soothing refuge, where the sitting room is simply furnished with two Steven Anthony chaises upholstered in luxurious bamboo-cotton fabric by Pollack (far right). The master bath (above, right) enjoys unencumbered river views. A door leads to the roof deck and a private hot tub. The bathroom's radiant-heat floors and vanity surround (right) are clad in travertine.



echoes the fireplace surround. The rift-cut oak cabinets are stained dark walnut to blend in with the floors. With walls of windows on two sides, the dining area makes guests feel as though they're outdoors in any season.

The mezzanine level houses an open lounge with a pool table. The northern side leads to a guest suite, while the southern side contains the owners' offices. A trio of Campbell's soup can paintings by Steve Kaufman, a former colleague of Andy Warhol's, are visible from the living room below.

The open stairwell sheathed in highly insulated Kalwall leads to the master suite. In this third-floor refuge, custom millwork divides the sitting room and sleeping area. A Lichtenstein hangs above the bed, which enjoys water views on three sides.

Housed in a glass cube, the master bath, says Ames, "is, admittedly a little bit retroverted." A large open shower with a river-rock floor overlooks the river. Built-in cabinets and a roomy closet keep clutter at bay.

Landscape architect Kevin Campion, who in the design stage worked at Graham Landscape Architecture, took his cues from the view in his approach. "The perspective down the river was the most meaningful part of the process," he explains. "We wanted the garden to reflect that. It was about pulling people to the view."

By adjusting the grade and "sinking" the garage, he and Ames created a flat plane leading to the house. Bands of travertine form a path to the threshold. Terraces include dining and grilling areas off the kitchen and an outdoor living space overlooking the lawn. Lush indigenous plantings, says Campion, who recently founded Campion Hruby Landscape Architects, "nest the house and fuse it with the natural ecology."

The designers and their clients worked hard to develop and realize a clear and singular vision for the house—and the results are a rousing success. As Campion remarks, "I was struck by the clarity and purity of the owners' appreciation for modern art and architecture. We tried hard not to complicate the project and keep the materials simple and modern. At every turn, they chose the modern gesture." ♦

Photographer Morgan Howarth is based in Gainesville, Virginia.

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“The perspective down the river was the most meaningful part of the process. We wanted the garden to reflect that.” —KEVIN CAMPION

Landscape architect Kevin Campion created a dramatic approach to the house (right), with a hedge of Karl Foerster reed grass on one side and a double row of river birch underplanted with purple love grass on the other. Behind the home, the great room opens to a patio paved in travertine (above). A seating area (opposite, bottom) overlooks the river, where the owners dock their pleasure boat. Native grasses and plantings (opposite, left and right) frame the view.



