

## graphic details

The annual ritual for the couple who owns this New York summer house is to arrive Memorial Day, lift the sheets off all the furnishings, and settle down for three months of rest, relaxation, and lots of entertaining. But one frigid winter night after

### Glen Gissler

the water pipes burst, this getaway was devastated, and interior designer Glenn Gissler was put in charge of the major and much-needed facelift. As this is a summer home, but not part of a beach community, Gissler felt it was important to find a design balance between formality and informality, one he characterizes as an "easy formality." This was accomplished by keeping a simple color palette, and using natural materials for area floor covers (sea grass and cotton rugs), relaxed linen curtains, and furnishings that combine the rustic with the fine.

The space has a plantation-like quality; the design subtly recalls this with the introduction of dark wood furnishings, a mix of new and antique pieces, and a grand scale created with an open living room layout. "Moments of green," expressed in details like a pillow, vase, palm tree, or fabric-covered footstool, add just enough color but maintain the visual calm. This styling also makes it easy for the owners to have the room look right; there's not a lot to worry about or readjust when company comes or goes.

**(right)** The design goal was a mood of "easy formality" that would play up the plantation feel which suggested itself here. This was achieved with a neutral palette, an open furnishing layout, and the introduction of rich, dark woods that give the room a graphic quality.





Nothing here is too precious, fancy, or pretentious, and by not over-furnishing, what is here "reads distinctly and has a graphic quality." Notice the little footstool, an example of the nineteenth-century American aesthetic movement, opposite the white tufted chair and the William Morris Liberty chair with the rush seat.

Also, keeping all upholstery neutral gives the dark woods clarity and punch, and spotlights all of the interesting objects integrated in the room. The living room's bare wood folding screen turns an empty corner into a place of visual interest and creates pleasing shadows across the floor in the afternoon sun. The mahogany pedestal table in front of the screen and the nearby lamp share a wooden barley twist on their bases as a distinguishing detail. The wood floors were stained dark to keep the room crisp.

To accommodate parties, a custom mahogany dining room table can expand to seat fourteen. The cane-seated wooden chairs—Anglo-Indian style—represent the perfect balance of formality, informality, and style. Antique steel lamps from England light the table; a floor lamp brightens conversation as well as a corner. The teardrop silk lampshade is an hand-painted creation of Mariano Fortuny. The custom-made, beveled-edge mirror reflects the rich reds of the table and chairs as well as a nineteenth-century Chinese herb chest that hangs on the opposite wall.

Gissler designed a sleek storage area below the mirror which is topped with honed stone that maintains a graphic quality. Shuttered windows, a wooden ceiling fan, and an antique-style iron bed carry the plantation feeling through to the bedroom. The details of the antique bed and painted trunk stand out opposite the stark white bed linens.

(opposite) The master bedroom carries the plantation feel with its wooden ceiling fan, shuttered windows, and antique-style iron bed. A pair of cotton checked rugs in green and white are set over the dark stained hardwood floor. And, as in other rooms, choice antique pieces complete the design.





(above) Nothing here is too precious. If more seating is needed, the Tibetan trunk—usually serving as a coffee table—can be used. With the exception of a few chairs, furnishings are slipcovered for easy cleaning.

(opposite) To accommodate dinner for fourteen, Gissler designed this big, wide mahogany table and chose casual Anglo-Indian cane chairs to frame it. The antique steel lamps are from England and add another casual touch to the decor.

Photo: John Hall

