

Deciding against selling their New Jersey summer house, Glenn Gissler's clients ask that

he update and redesign the retained residence.

## Housekeeping

CREATING A LOOK of consistent yet stimulating simplicity is, as good designers know, more challenging than cooking up a batch of catchy variance. Plain can be more puissant than plentitude, understatement can trump conspicuous presumption.

Designer Glenn Gissler had come to know his clients, a couple with three children, quite well, first doing a jewelry showroom for their business in New York and then a house as their residence in Brooklyn. Later he went to see them at their 1960s clapboard dwelling in New Jersey. Though initially used as a primary residence, it had become their summer getaway and, just then, was tentatively slated to go on sale. There hadn't ever been a really compelling urge to renovate, the theory perhaps being that if it ain't broke, you don't mess with it. As it was, all was fine. Until, on a cold winter's night, the water pipes burst, leaving the house in shambles. Yes, there was insurance money, but certainly not enough to buy anyone's dream house. Thus the beneficiaries decided to stay put and do things right, meaning that Gissler was →







*Above: Living room, seen from foyer, introduces the prevailing juxtaposition of dark furniture and light upholstery/drapery fabrics. William Morris chair is set against off-white draperies; stool is sample of American Aesthetic Movement. Ceramics were chosen for form and color.*

ARMCHAIR/OTTOMAN, TUB CHAIRS UPHOLSTERY: JOB UPHOLSTERY. UPHOLSTERY FABRICS: DECORATORS WALK; ROBERT F. LEHR; SCHUMACHER. JACOBESAN CHAIR: TOUR DE FORCE; FABRIC: SCHUMACHER. WILLIAM MORRIS ARMCHAIR: MARC RABUN. LAMP TABLE: BRITISH KHAKI. TABLE LAMPS: BUYING THE FARM (WOOD); RUBY BEETS (METAL). TRUNK: JACQUES CARCANAGUES. SMALL SIDE TABLE: ANGLO RAJ ANTIQUES; FRENCH WINE TABLE: HISTORICAL MATERIALISM. DRAPERIES THROUGHOUT: SILBERSTEIN (WORKSHOP); FABRICS: DECORATORS WALK; HENRY CASSEN. SEA GRASS RUGS THROUGHOUT: ABC CARPET. CONSTRUCTION COORDINATOR: PHILIP DAVIS.

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN M. HALL





engaged to upgrade and redesign the house, transforming it from a merely habitable abode into a handsome residence for pleasurable summers.

Partial to *les bon mots*, the designer refers to the 3,600-sq.-ft. house as a "Tara wannabe," as in aspiring to higher social status. More plantation style than Colonial, it sprouts massive columns up front, suggesting a sort of "suburban solution" to genteel housing. But Gissler concentrated on interior architectural corrections rather than a structural overhaul. Some areas were opened up, others closed; erratic corner walls in the living room were squared off so as to fit the norm of proper rooms; excessively ornate stair railings were simplified; pocket-doors were installed; circulation was eased; marble pavers at the entry were excised because "they looked incongruous;" crown moldings, baseboards, and other architectural detailing were applied where "appropriate though →

*Left: Overly ornate stair banisters gave way to simple turned-wood balusters; mirror reflection is of a second William Morris chair.*

ENGLISH TABLE, WILLIAM MORRIS CHAIR: MARC RABUN. LAMP: RUBY BEETS. MIRROR: NELLIE'S OF AMAGANSETT. BASKET: BE SEATED.

*Opposite: Mahogany table in dining room is topped with English antique steel pendants reportedly designed for rustic, not industrial, settings. Mariano Fortuny floor lamp, left, has silk shade; reflected in mirror is a Chinese herb cabinet. Chairs are of Anglo-Indian design.*

PENDANTS: ANN MORRIS ANTIQUES. CUSTOM TABLE, CHAIRS: BRITISH KHAKI. CUSTOM MIRROR: DIEGO SALAZAR. FORTUNY FLOOR LAMP: ODEGARD. CHINESE HERB CABINET: DAVID BARRETT ANTIQUES.











not overly ambitious." Outside, long slim replacement windows lend a look of elegance to the ground floor.

Even more effective in changing the habitat's character was the introduction of simple yet elegantly styled furniture on the one hand and expunction of rather less than charming pieces on the other. "A scary puffy '70s sofa," dining table and chairs were exiled; brought-along seating was reupholstered; and comely furniture, graded not by period and pedigree but rather by craftsmanship and intrinsic honesty, was instated. Materials, woods particularly, were selected for graphic quality instead of rarity and cost. The dining table, for example, is of mahogany; other kinds of represented wood, however, merely repeat the prevailing dark tone. Crispness, calm, contrast, and continuity are quietly expressed by the trig lines of components, dusky hues of furniture offset by light fabrics and walls, and stained-timber or slate-paved floors, both in inconspicuous blackish tints. Antique or near-antique accessories ignore formulaic guidelines, freely mingling with all manner of objects and obviously in good company with furnishings of the classical/contemporary style. Despite the polyglot mix, dignity and decorum prevail. Scarlett would have loved it.

—Monica Gran

*Upper left: Vignette of family room focuses on erstwhile chicken coop topped with glass, and on lamp base, once part of a cast-iron anchor.*

SOFA: WORKBENCH; FABRICS: DONGHIA (SLIPOVERS); HENRY CALVIN; SCHUMACHER (PILLOWS). CLUB CHAIR UPHOLSTERING: JOB UPHOLSTERY; FABRIC: STROHEIM & ROMANN. CHICKEN COOP COFFEE TABLE: DAVID BARRETT. LAMP TABLE: PARIS APARTMENT. LAMP: SAMMY'S.

*Upper right: Breakfast room, replete with bead-board wainscoting, contains objects reflective of the "simple, charming ways of 19th-century living," notes Gissler. Pendant is of antique Holograph glass.*

TABLE: VILLAGE ANTIQUE CENTER. CHAIRS: POTTERY BARN. TRAY: ENGLISH COUNTRY ANTIQUES. CHANDELIER: URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY. SLATE FLOOR: NEMO. WOOD VENETIAN BLINDS THROUGHOUT: SILBERSTEIN.

*Lower left: Lower halves of windows in master bedroom are covered with shutters placed to conceal irregular proportions. Tin lamp next to wrought-iron bed dates to 1920.*

BED: BRANCUSI. COTTON RUG: THOMAS K. WOODARD. BEDSIDE TABLES: RUBY BEETS. TIN BEDSIDE LAMP, WHITE PORCELAIN LAMP: HISTORICAL MATERIALISM. CEILING FAN: URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY.

*Lower right: Bead-board panels reappear in bathroom. Medicine cabinet is custom-made.*

SINK: BELLE EPOQUE. FAUCET SET, TOWEL BAR: SURPRISE SPECIALTY. SCONCE: REJUVENATION.

