

## Double Diamond House

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QUOGUE, N.Y.

AUSTIN PATTERSON DISSTON ARCHITECTS





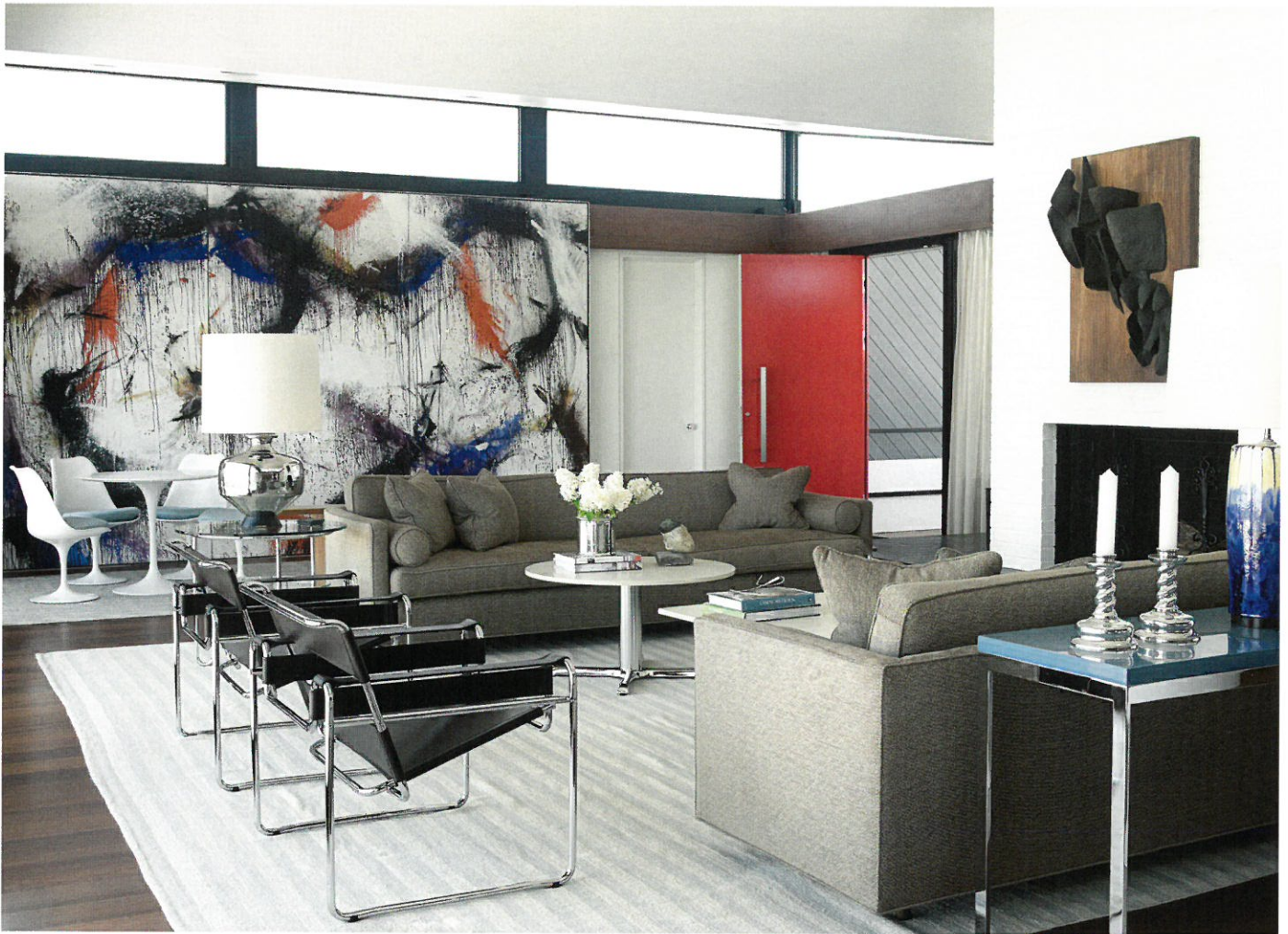
**It's the rare 1960s-era** Hamptons beachfront house that isn't torn down and replaced with something bigger and better when it changes hands. That's especially true if the building is in disrepair and has never been updated. Potential buyers were looking to do just that to this unusual house in Quogue, says Stuart Disston, AIA, who accompanied several prospective clients to the house to discuss teardown possibilities

when it was on the market. So he was thrilled when the new owner commissioned his firm to restore it.

"Growing up, I'd always loved the house, sitting there in the dunes with its beautiful abstract geometry," says Stuart, whose family has summered in Quogue for several generations. "The black lines and pure geometry reminded me of Mondrian's work, and the black pines gave it a wonderful look."

Sited near the crest of Quogue's tallest, 30-foot dune, the house has views of both the Atlantic Ocean and Quantuck Bay, and its double diamond roof and zigzag ramp stand out among the area's Shingle-style dwellings. In spite of its sorry state, the house had an interesting pedigree. Completed in the early 1960s, it was designed by New York-based modernist architect Abraham Geller. In addition to synagogues,





*This page:* The house's double diamond roof lends its maximum ceiling height to the living room. Although much of the original building was preserved, much was also replicated—including a new white brick fireplace. Some period furnishings conveyed with the sale and were restored; a majestic mural by Norman Bluhm remained in place.





*This page:* The original kitchen was small and cut off from the view, which supplied license for reinvention. To open it up, the architects annexed space from a former housekeeper's room.

apartment buildings, and single-family houses, he is known for Cinemas 1 and 2 on 3rd Avenue in Manhattan, one of the first multiplex movie theaters in the nation, and Aaron Davis Hall, a performing arts auditorium at the City College of New York.

Fortunately, the house had had just one owner. She was 96 when she sold the house, and “it was like taking the wrappings off and finding something in pretty good condition that hadn’t been bastardized,” Stuart says. Strikingly simple, it consists of two boxes that contain the private/service functions—a kitchen and small bedroom on the east; and a master bedroom, sitting room, and third bedroom on the west. In the center is a clerestoried living pavilion with the double diamond roof. The diamonds form a butterfly shape and high ceilings on the interior, which was wrapped in teak and had hidden doors leading to the kitchen.

### Shell Game

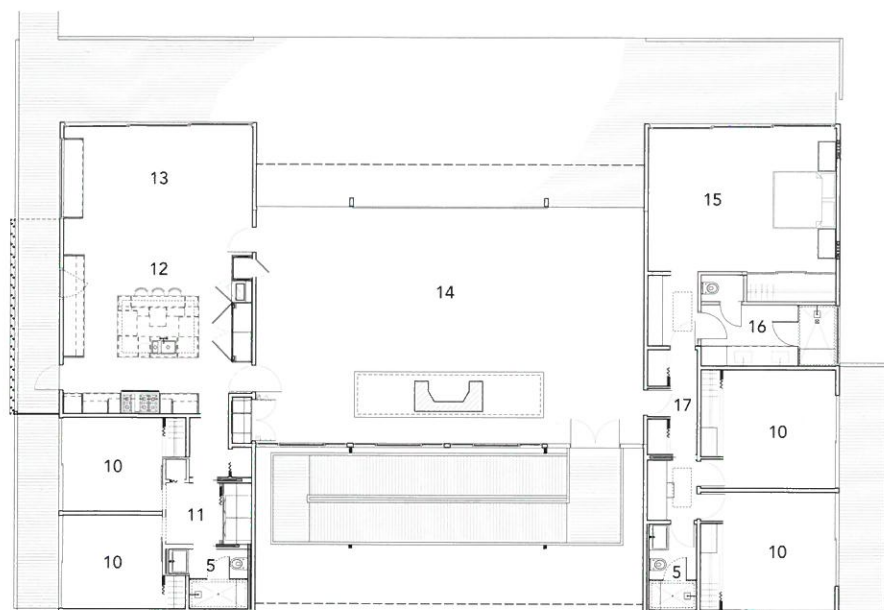
Stuart saw his task as shoring up the house’s existing features, modernizing the building materials, and refinishing the interiors—including the period furniture, which conveyed with the sale. “The materials were not sophisticated. It was a matter of looking at the details and saying, how can we do it better in terms of structural systems, insulation, and keeping it weathertight,” he says.

Inside and out, the gut-renovated house looks virtually the same as the original except for a few well-placed moves: The design team reversed the zigzag entrance ramp so that the lower section folds to the outside rather than the inside. They also opened up the kitchen to the former housekeeper’s bedroom/sitting room and views of the ocean. “I have some regrets about opening the kitchen; it was completely original, including the 1960s clock

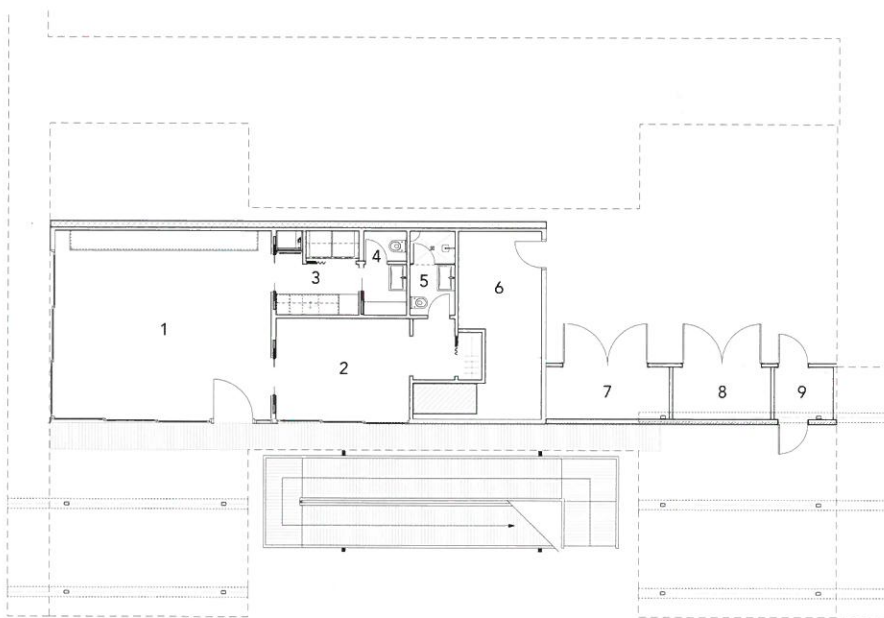




## SECOND FLOOR



## FIRST FLOOR



FLOOR PLAN | 1. Living Room | 2. Guest Bedroom | 3. Cabana | 4. W.C. | 5. Bath  
6. Mechanical Room | 7. Bike & Kayak Storage | 8. Storage Lockers | 9. Garbage Recycle Area  
10. Bedroom | 11. Laundry | 12. Kitchen | 13. Sitting Room | 14. Living Room  
15. Master Bedroom | 16. Master Bath | 17. Hall

built into a soffit above the range,” Stuart says. “But today we don’t have housekeepers doing the servicing. We wanted to see the view from the kitchen.” Downstairs, the unconditioned cabana room was replaced with guest quarters that serve as a hangout space for the pool. And a new enclosed outdoor shower gives beachgoers a place to wash off before entering the house.

Structurally, it was a different story. The house had to be virtually rebuilt because the base of its steel supports had rotted through, including the supports holding up the diamond roof, and some of the roof framing was missing. While FEMA flood regulations did not require

“It was a matter of looking at the details and saying, how can we do it better?”

—Stuart Disston, AIA

the house to be raised on its foundation, the entire building was jacked up to make it plumb and level, and reinforced with structural steel. “With modern homes there is little tolerance for anything not truly level or plumb,” says builder George Vickers. “We made sure everything we reworked was true within an acceptable tolerance. The house in general was a pleasure to work with.”

Building technology has come a long way in the last six decades. New drains were installed to get water off the reverse roof pitch. And to satisfy the client’s request for a relatively maintenance-free exterior, the cladding consists of composite materials. The white diamond parapets are covered in an Azek PVC system. “The diamond roof set the style of the house, and the Azek panels allowed us to bond the parapet wall seamlessly, which we believe was the original intent if they could





*This page:* Architect Stuart Disston had long admired the eye-catching house on visits to the area as a child. It stands in striking contrast to the Shingle-style houses in the beach community,

have used this material,” Stuart says. Initially, the crew had also installed PVC—colored gray—on the flanking rectilinear volumes, but it soon became clear that the gray surface would absorb far more heat than the white surface and could therefore become unstable. “Temperature rises can cause problems with PVC products,” George says. “Because of the temperature differential over its lifetime, we would have had more movement than we wanted to see. We ended up using a Boral fly ash system for the gray areas.”

The graceful, 70-foot entry ramp was rebuilt with structural steel and ipe decking, and the sides, formerly marine plywood, were wrapped in white PVC so they look like solid masses in keeping with the architecture.

The update also took advantage of today’s more sophisticated glid-

ing window systems. The builder installed larger expanses of cast aluminum-framed glass on the ocean side—wall-to-wall this time to honor the restorative views and the original design intent. New insulation and a hydro-air heating system keep the house comfortable in the off-season.

### Midcentury Mood

Walking into the house is like stepping into a *Mad Men* stage set. Original and custom-made items included in the sale were carefully restored, including indoor and outdoor furniture, a fireplace sculpture, lamps, vases, books, and a large painting by abstract expression-





ist Norman Bluhm that hangs on the living room wall. The construction crew rebuilt the brick fireplace to match the original. They also restored some of the wood furniture, the living room's teak flooring, and the distinctive handmade teak wall with a vertical routed texture that separates the living and dining area from the kitchen. New versions of the original wall-washer can lights were sourced and installed.

"We essentially modernized everything, approaching it with an aesthetic that would match the spirit of a 1960s modern beach house," Stuart says.

"We used a lot of synthetics, trying not to get overly fussy." In place of traditional midcentury 1x3 baseboard trim and window and door casings, the trim sits flush with the Sheetrock, separated by a thin channel or riglet.

Despite its good bones and breeding, the house has a laid-back vibe befitting its place in the sand, and the clients have fully embraced it as a summer residence. They even tend the restored vegetable garden tucked into the side of the dune.

"The owners love it and are there as often as they can be," Stuart says.

—Cheryl Weber



*This page:* The exteriors were in various states of disrepair, typical of less durable materials of the period. The team replicated key elements with cutting-edge, weather-worthy substitutes. An outdoor shower is a new addition.



## Double Diamond House

Quogue, N.Y.

**PROJECT SIZE:** 3,830 square feet

**ARCHITECT:** Stuart Disston, AIA; project manager: Josh Rosensweig, Austin Patterson Disston, Southport, Conn., and Quogue, N.Y.

**BUILDER:** George Vickers, George E. Vickers Enterprises, Westhampton Beach, N.Y.

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Giovanni Foronie Lo Faro, Bridgewater, Conn.

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Susan Leitner, New York

**PROJECT SIZE:** 3,830 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 2.1 acres

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Tria Giovan

### KEY PRODUCTS

**CLADDING:** Boral TruExterior and Azek PVC

**COUNTERTOPS:** Glassos

**DISHWASHER:** Miele

**FLOORING:** La Moda Tile

**KITCHEN AND BATH CABINETRY:** Henrybuilt

**PAINT:** Benjamin Moore

**OVEN/RANGE/COOKTOP:** Wolf

**REFRIGERATOR:** Sub-Zero

**ROOFING:** EPDM

**SINKS:** Kohler

**WINDOWS:** Fleetwood