

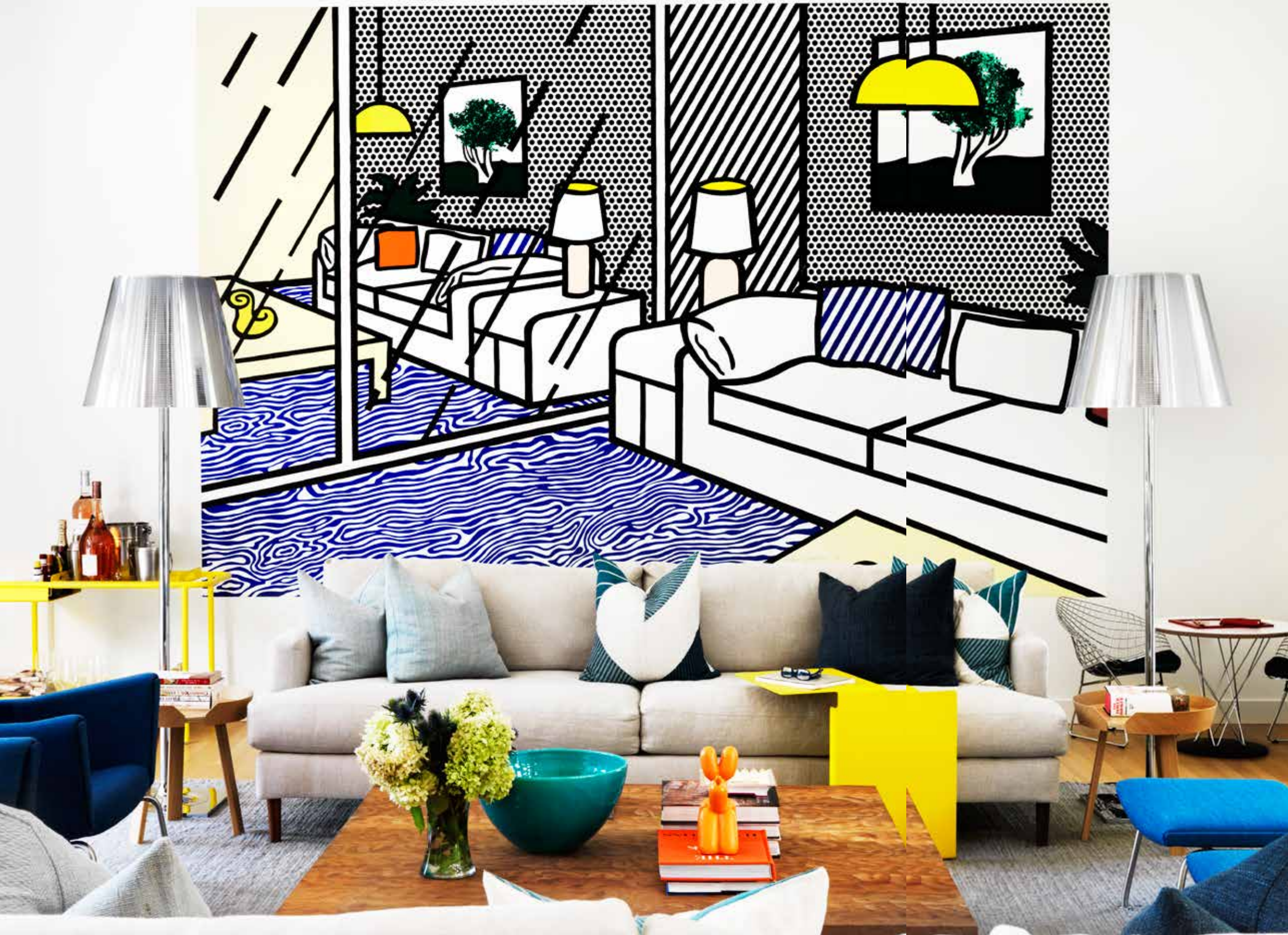
KEEPING IT REAL

Photographs JONNY VALIANT
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The owners called on Melbourne's *Nexus Designs* to bring a grounded sense of style to their weekender in New York state.



The deck is furnished with Restoration Hardware 'Cape Cod' tables and Kartell 'Masters' chairs. 'Montego' lounge chairs with cushions.



These pages A splash of yellow in the Fermob 'Luxembourg' bar trolley and the Classicon 'Diana A' side table echoes the colour pops in the Roy Lichtenstein Wallpaper with Blue Floor Interior. Hans J Wegner 'CH445' wing chair (left). Muuto 'Around' side tables. Flos 'KTribe' floor lamps. Knoll 'Bertoia' child's chairs in the background. Opposite page Knoll 'Womb' chairs and ottomans, FontanaArte 'Tavolo Con Ruote' coffee table. 'Edward' sofa from Hive Modern.



As its name suggests, New York's Shelter Island is a place of refuge. Isolated enough so that it safeguards its residents against the frenetic pace of their Manhattan city life, it's accessible by a short ferry ride from Long Island. Nestled between the pastoral North Fork of Long Island and the exclusive South Fork of the Hamptons, it is geographically close but worlds apart from the wealthy, ostentatious real estate of its southern neighbour. Often called the 'un-Hamptons Hamptons', Shelter Island's riches come by way of its natural beauty and laidback charm. It comes as no surprise then, that this weekend has some Australian pedigree.

"It has that Australian flavour – it's relaxed and understated rather than over the top," says Sonia Simpfendorfer of Melbourne-based Nexus Design who worked remotely on the refurbishment of the house. "Imagine if they had New York decorators? It would be totally different." She previously worked with the clients on their homes in the Mornington Peninsula and Melbourne, so there was an implicit trust between the designer and owners, one of whom is Australian.

Sonia says the intention was never to mimic the ostentatious mansions of the Hamptons but rather, to produce something more low key. "We didn't want anything that would be difficult to maintain, this was about simple living. It's a weekend that's about a relaxed lifestyle as opposed to showing off."

Embedded in verdant greenery and close to the shore, the house was in good condition when the owners bought it and no structural reconfiguration was needed. It embodies everything that Shelter Island stands for: unassuming, casual and friendly. "For us it was about making the interior fit with the location and lifestyle. Keeping it unpretentious, simple and welcoming. Nothing is so precious that you feel worried about using it. It's a little haven."

The 1999 house had been occupied by a single owner. Inspired by the mid-century Case Study houses with low-lying eaves and stained cedar boards,

"IT HAS THAT AUSTRALIAN FLAVOUR - IT'S RELAXED AND UNDERSTATED RATHER THAN OVER THE TOP."



it appears as a modernist shiplap cabin of sorts. As the original design did not have ceiling lights in the main body of the house, Nexus chose to honour that, using table lamps such as Artemide 'Talak' in the kitchen and illuminating the living area with four Flos 'Bibliotheque Nationale' floor lamps.

"Our scope was to subtly tailor the shell of the house with minimal but effective changes to the finishes palette, the removal of some joinery and the addition of a new Bulthaup kitchen," says Sonia. As for furniture, the brief was for a mix of high-low, including pieces from Ikea and West Elm alongside a vintage FontanaArte 'Tavolo Con Ruote' coffee table bought online. The budget was initially restrictive, but Sonia says it made sense to invest in classic furniture that would ultimately become an "anchor point" for the clients' new collection. We wanted to keep the continuity of recognisable pieces with a design pedigree but do it in a way that wasn't too precious," she says.

Combined, it all makes for a lighthearted celebration of colour. Blue, in particular, was key to the palette and is expressed by way of Knoll 'Womb' chairs and ottomans, Hans J Wegner 'Wing' chairs, and a graphic guest-bedroom kilim. Adding some 'pop' is the Roy Lichtenstein 'wallpaper' artwork, flanked by standing lamps.

The generous front and rear decks have been outfitted with Restoration Hardware's 'Cape Cod' tables and Kartell 'Masters' chairs for entertaining. While the brief was for a beach house, it is used year round. "We love it here during winter when all the leaves are off the trees and the light is different from summer. Even with a foot of snow outside, it's still cosy and bright inside."

The owners are frequent travellers with a hectic life, and the home is a "genuine escape", says Sonia. The location too, exudes a feeling of calm, with slow-paced offerings such as hikes, biking trails and community socialising. "This is a haven for complete relaxation. It's an antidote to the madness of their professional lives. It's how they stay sane." 15

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This page Eames 'Eiffel' chairs surround an Arco dining table with Duramas tabletop by Hive Modern. Hay 'Kaleido' trays. Opposite page, from top Paola Navone 'Pic-Nic' beach towels on Blu Dot 'Skiff' sun loungers. In the kitchen Artek stools are pulled up to the Bulthaup kitchen. Artemide 'Talak' lamp.



SPEED READ

» These homeowners, one of whom is Australian, engaged Melbourne-based Nexus Designs for the refurbishment of their Shelter Island weekender. » Having worked together previously, there was immense trust between client and designer, Sonia Simpfendorfer who has infused the house with a distinctly Australian spirit. » Aiming for a laidback, low-key vibe, she mixed pieces from West Elm and Ikea with high-end designs by Knoll, Hans J Wegner and FontanaArte among others. » While the brief was for a beach house, it is actually used year round, with the owners enjoying the different feel that winter brings.



This page A verdant outlook from the study, furnished with a West Elm rustic storage desk and Eames moulded plastic 'Eiffel' armchair. Flos 'Tab' table lamp. Hay 'Box Box' desktop storage. Rexite 'Centobuchi' pencil holder. Opposite page Kartell 'Masters' chairs surround Restoration Hardware 'Cape Cod' dining tables. Montego lounge chairs with cushions.