

## Borough and the Beach

HAUTE HABITATS [alana bracken](#) | JULY 3, 2018

The beachside abode is made for entertaining, with an open-plan first-floor living space, a master suite on the second floor and attic bedrooms for guests staying over.

Modern design is not a typical go-to aesthetic when constructing a beach house. But [Stonewater Architecture's](#) latest seaside endeavor is far from the ordinary shore house. “The home is a year-round residence. It allows [the owners] to frequent the city, and they are a short ride away from the airport for the winter weekends when they fly to Miami or other warmer destinations,” said Stonewater’s operations manager Rachel Vierschilling. This duality also defines the Belle Harbor abode’s aesthetic. Despite its Queens zip code, it melds vacation getaway vibes with modern design elements. Clean, crisp lines and walls of windows put ocean views on center stage—as any respectable beach house should.

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#### What were the initial goals for the design, and how did it match the client’s lifestyle needs?

The main design goals were to maximize the living area, views and natural light. Lifestyle-wise, the home was constructed to allow for Sunday dinners for the owner’s large blended family to gather and enjoy each other. Plus it’s a great destination for the owner’s children and grandchildren to visit and enjoy the beach. Because we needed to raise the home’s living area above the post-Hurricane Sandy flood requirements, we could fulfill the owner’s request to store six cars under the home on two car lifts.

#### Speaking of Hurricane Sandy, how did the storm’s wrath alter construction?

Sandy made many people embrace building better at the beach. The home has a solid concrete deep foundation with upper floors constructed of structural steel, light gauge steel and concrete floor slabs. This method allows for window bracing to mitigate the building flex that occurs in hurricane winds. The windows are impact windows to prevent damage during a storm, and the home has a full sprinkler system to prevent fire.



Modern yet cozy furniture invites guests to relax and let the beachside views take center stage.

#### How was the color scheme devised?

The exterior of the home was to have contrasting colors to delineate the front and rear walls from the smaller sidewall. We wanted the darker walls to appear as if they were wrapping the smaller side wall. The charred oak (shou sugi ban) siding was always a must, but we did go back and forth on the lighter side walls being clear blonde cypress or a turquoise blue stained cypress. In the end we selected the clear blonde cypress.

The living room wood color came from the opening ski lodge scene in the *Kingsman* movie. The owner was watching the movie one night and texted me the images of the room. From there we designed the interiors based on that image.

#### How did you enhance the modest floor plan?

We removed the interior walls to entirely open the first-floor plan. The stairway was treated as a secondary smaller element—as opposed to a celebrated design element—freeing up additional space.



The goal of the home was to bring in as much natural light into the space as possible.



#### How does natural light play into the design?

The windows were a must to take in the views of the ocean. The wall of windows allows for a steady stream of light into the space, and with the narrow width of the home, the interiors always have natural light, even on an overcast day. The first-floor wall of windows allows everyone a view of the ocean and the beach. The second-floor wall of windows allows for natural light to fill the master suite, while the side walls block out direct sunlight to the closet area and bedroom. The hall wall is also lined with crystal chandeliers to reflect the sunlight.

#### How did you create a sense of warmth within the modern space?

It was achieved by pairing the natural woods, stone and plaster work. The floor is honed marble to eliminate sun reflection with radiant heat to warm feet. The walls are in a weathered blond oak to contrast the dark exterior, while the fireplace is a polished black marble. The ceiling complements these contrasts with a finely textured plaster.



The galley-style kitchen features a large indoor grill, 10-burner stove, ovens, refrigerator drawers, warming drawers, beverage drawers and lots of workspace, all with a commercial grade exhaust hood above.

#### How was the kitchen's unique character actualized?

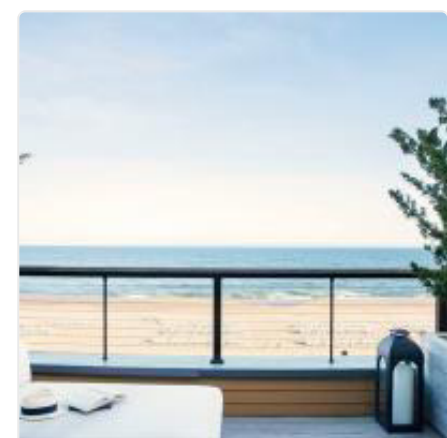
The kitchen was designed to be functional with a small footprint that would allow the ocean view to be the focal point of the living space. The tiger wood cabinets were a stark contrast to the owner's previous home where he had fire-engine-red lacquer cabinets.

We used a maple butcher block counter to tie the wood grains of the walls and counters together. We also used stainless steel around the grill area and tied in more of the polished black granite from the fireplace.

#### What were some challenges you experienced while designing this space?

Externally, this home is half of a duplex. As a result, not only were we trying to create something different and modern, but we also had the added challenge of this home being attached to its neighbor. Because of the storm damage, we had to reinforce both homes before essentially separating the two and rebuilding the home you see today.

Inside, the challenge was finding how to define that sense of individual living space in the completely open floor plan of the first floor. The built-in benches on two walls and the marble fireplace on the third wall define the living room. This U-shape then establishes the area for the living room furniture. The dining room is bracketed by the glass stair wall and the glass wall to the ocean. And the kitchen is separated by the low soffit concealing the commercial grade exhaust hood.



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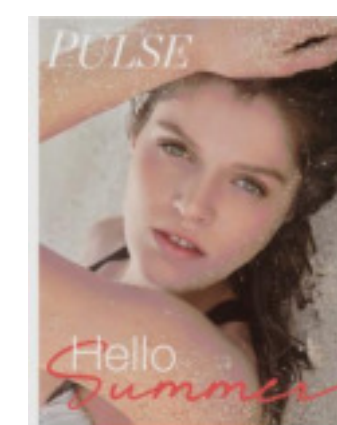
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