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March/April 02

Display until April 30, 2002

US \$3.00 Canada \$4.50

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# Seaside Style

Less is more with this stunning example of minimalist design.

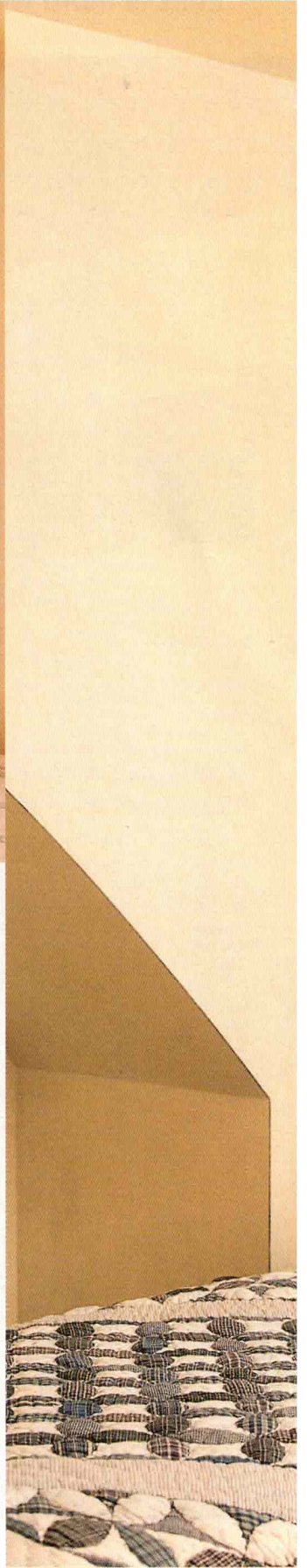
Story by Terry Littlefield

Photographed by Richard Haynes





LEFT: Exterior view of the LeSaffre home. ABOVE: The stairway with metal rail. RIGHT: The living room which opens to a deck on the beach.



LEFT: The upstairs bathroom. ABOVE: The guest bedroom with a view of the ocean to awaken to. RIGHT: The curvature of the roof can be seen in this bedroom.



**D**own a short seaside street, overlooking the ocean, is a lovely little bungalow that incorporates both traditional and contemporary design elements. Owned by the LeSaffre family of North Andover, Massachusetts, this Rye, New Hampshire home is a place where family and friends can come to relax.

For about 10 years, the LeSaffres—Peter, Mary Lou, and their children Jeanne and Luke—rented the Rye house every July. When it was eventually put up for sale, the family purchased the property because their children were familiar with the neighborhood and the LeSaffres had made friends in the area.

When it became theirs, the LeSaffres were eager to modernize. They chose architect Tim Techler of Techler Design Group, Inc. of Boston, Massachusetts, to help them develop a new, more contemporary design.

The LeSaffres wanted to create an informal place for friends and family—one that could take the rough-and-tumble lifestyle of seaside life. They also wanted the house to be low maintenance and environmentally “green.”

Says Techler, “The problem was to design a small house with generous, ocean-side living space, four bedrooms, and three and one half baths within a 1150-square-foot footprint and tight setback restrictions. The clients requested an open, informal plan with a kitchen that would not dominate the living area. They also requested that the interior spaces open directly out onto usable outdoor spaces for entertaining.”

“In order to integrate,” continues Techler, “the use of interior and exterior spaces, the overall design, was considered as a composition of overlapping indoor and outdoor ‘rooms.’”

A stroll around the house and yard shows the successful results of the Techler/LeSaffre collaboration. The elements of wood, metal, concrete, and plaster used inside and outside the residence create a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere. As a result of the successful combination of traditional and contemporary design ideas, the bungalow fits neatly into its surroundings. ▶▶▶



TOP LEFT: The family room opens to a deck to enjoy those warm ocean breezes. TOP RIGHT: The master bedroom with deck. OPPOSITE PAGE: Wax coated concrete countertops.

The home is topped by standing-seam metal roofing and sided with white cedar shingles. Electrically controlled Kevlar shades protect the large windows at the back of the house. When the shades are open, those inside the house enjoy a panoramic view of the Atlantic.

Inside, open space welcomes family members and guests to the ground floor. The living room, dining area, and kitchen blend harmoniously and conversation flows throughout the space.

The walls are yellow-tinted plaster, and Peter LaSaffre says they take on different hues as the light changes in the room during the day. The plaster is waxed for protection and durability. According to Techler, this natural coating should last for at least ten years without maintenance.

In keeping with the “green” theme, the only paint in the house covers a metal beam and support posts that span the downstairs ceiling. No polyurethane was used in construction. Instead, oil protects all wood surfaces.

The living room fireplace, kitchen, and pantry counters are made of concrete and, like the walls, are coated with

wax. Kitchen cabinets and other built-ins were fabricated from Sitka spruce and preserved with tung oil. The refrigerator and stove are stainless steel faced in harmony with other elements of the space. Special low-voltage lights give a cozy feel to the kitchen.

Along one wall of the living room, a daybed beckons. Beneath it, large drawers provide plenty of storage for beach gear and additional items. The furnishings are casual and upholstered in durable fabrics. Wheeled chairs provide mobility. Floor coverings made from recycled plastic bottles clean easily outdoors with a hose.

The wood flooring used throughout the house is tongue and groove Canberra (an Australian wood similar to mahogany). When oiled, the wood’s finish gives it warmth. This low maintenance material ages gracefully with time and the application of sandy feet.

The ceiling and ceiling beams are of Douglas fir. The doors and windows are also trimmed in fir. Dampening material between the downstairs ceiling and upstairs floor cuts down on noise.



A zone of utility rooms serve the open living spaces that overlook the ocean. According to Techler, the daybed, kitchen, pantry, powder room, stairs, and fireplace wrap around and define the main living area with “yacht-like” efficiency—an idea he and Peter LeSaffre discussed.

A den just off the main room contains comfortable couches, an entertainment center, and a wall-mounted, flat-screen television. The room opens out onto a curved, screened-in dining porch.

Decoration throughout the house is minimal. For example, downstairs there are some interesting lamps, a stool and table carved from blocks of wood, and objects on shelves flanking the fireplace. Paintings by Peter and Jeanne LeSaffre hang on living room and den walls. Still, decorative items are hardly necessary with the rolling ocean just beyond the windows.

After a busy day at the beach, everyone retires upstairs to comfortable accommodations. The master bedroom features a platform bed, covered with a plump white comforter under a white ceiling fan. A black bench rests at the foot.

On either side of the bed are built-in shelves and tables. Clothing is stored in built-in cabinets along the wall by the master bath, where, as in the kitchen, concrete is used as flooring in the shower and as the sink vanity. The shower walls and ceiling are Corian.

The open-air master bedroom deck echoes the curved shape of the screened porch below, providing a quiet place to sit and think.

Down the hall is a cozy guest room. The simply decorated space contains twin beds with floral pattern quilts, a small chest that serves as a night table, and a lamp. Daughter Jeanne and son Luke have similar rooms at the end of the hall.

One of the cleverest features of the LeSaffre home is the upstairs bathroom. The room has essentially been divided in two; a shower and sink are located on one side of a dividing wall, while a toilet and sink take up the other. “That way,” says Peter, “someone can take a shower without tying up the entire bathroom.” Each side contains unusual sinks from Finland—

CONTINUED ON PAGE 39

## Seaside Style

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29 white wash-basins rest on dark, shiny metal cylinders.

No visit to the LeSaffre home is complete without a tour of the grounds. In accordance with their wishes, landscape elements extend the interior space out-of-doors. A covered porch is an extension of the living room, the fencing bordering the property serves as a decorative screen, and an outdoor sitting area at the front of the house provides a quiet place to talk or read.

Perhaps the most striking thing about the covered porch is the spun-aluminum columns that hold up the roof. These unconventional supports were made by a flagpole manufacturer. Aluminum was also put to use in the awning along the south wall of the house. Grating of the type used for walkways or fire escapes reduces glare from the sun without blocking all its rays.

To ensure a long life for the porch floor, Techler chose Ipe wood. Ipe (pronounced ee-pay) is a hardwood found in Central and South America. This extremely durable material weighs approximately 70 pounds per cubic foot and sinks in water. The heartwood color is light to dark olive brown. It is often used in boardwalks, decking, industrial flooring and more.

The porch provides an excellent place to sit, relax, and check out the view. According to Peter, his wife has even been known to bring her easel out to the porch and paint. And, if bugs become a problem, there's always the screened porch off the den.

In the small yard, concrete, like that used for countertops and shower floors inside, is deployed in a more traditional way. A concrete terrace surrounds a small grassy area, bringing an indoor element outside. Bushes, which line a privacy fence and a portion of the terrace, are surrounded by beach sand instead of the usual cedar shavings.

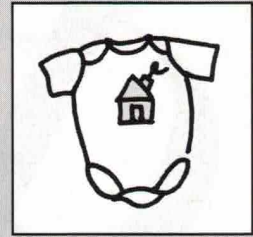
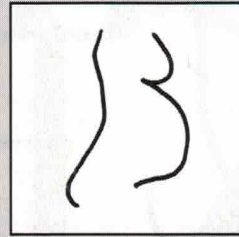
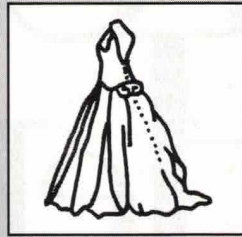
Another outdoor amenity is a shower to remove salt and the day's sand. The same fenced-in area provides a safe spot for Peter's sports car.

Working together, the LeSaffres and Techler have created a space of comfort and openness. It is, as the owners wished, a place where the indoors extends out to the porch, then to the terrace, and finally to the beach itself. ⇄

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