

The Sweet & Lowdown

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE CLIENT IS YOU?
WITH THE HELP FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS, A MANHATTAN ARCHITECT UNBUTTONS A BIT,
CRAFTING AN EASY-GOING BUT ARTICULATE BEACH GETAWAY

BY SOPHIE DONELSON | PHOTOGRAPHS BY BART MICHIELS



Board Games | A long deck (THIS PLACE) runs alongside the home's public rooms; the stairway leads to the lower level guest suite and a boardwalk leading to the beach. The teak table and benches were designed by artisan George Smith. **Hover Craft** | The house (OPPOSITE), which is built with old growth cypress, cantilevers over a concrete base.



IF IT'S POSSIBLE FOR A HOME TO TIPTOE, the Tamarkin house does just that. Inspired by the early modernist houses of architects like Marcel Breuer, Paul Rudolph and Eliot Noyes, the cypress home hovers weightlessly over grasses and low shrubs on the southwest shore of Shelter Island. The home may tiptoe but its inhabitants certainly don't. On a holiday Monday, the Tamarkin kids, Eli and Lucy, were bounding up and down stairs, whacking around ping pong paddles. Cary Tamarkin, an architect-developer, and his wife, Mindy Goldberg, a producer whose credits include films like *Junebug* and *Gigantic*, say the house is the antithesis of precious, but rather a sturdy pavilion happy to withstand drippy towels and sandy feet. A guy's weekend, hosted by Tamarkin, comprised playing music (he plays guitar and mandolin); under Goldberg's reign the itinerary was nonstop cooking.



First Impression | A breezeway (BELOW) takes the place of a traditional foyer. To the left is a door to the living areas; to the right, bedrooms. Straight ahead is the deck and stairs leading to the shore.

From The Water | Boaters catch this glimpse (OPPOSITE) of the house. Edwina von Gal extended the dunes toward the home, replacing what had been lawn.



The home's carefree spirit was born only after years of scrutiny; the family lived in the down-at-the-heels shack that once stood on the property while Tamarkin drafted a dream home. "The idea that most architects see a site for a day or two," Tamarkin says, trailing off. "I'd put the family to bed and stay up till two a.m. sketching and thinking about things. No part of this house hasn't been looked at 112 times." His study of this small lot considered not just the sun and sweeping views of the Peconic Bay, but sensory elements like the swish of breaking waves. "The waves sound different at four feet above the ground versus eight feet high," he says. "I'd listen to the waves in the middle of the night and wake Mindy and say, can you hear the difference?" (She couldn't—or at least couldn't be bothered.)

Tamarkin eventually settled on the right height, which informed the overall design, placing living areas upstairs, and guest suite and laundry below. The home's interior and exterior is old-growth cypress, a material used by a handful of mid-century architects, but rarely seen today. Sections of the steel window grid are imbedded with a cement board that's painted bottle green. Inside are smooth, cool polished-concrete floors. Overall, Tamarkin says he tried hard to pare it back. "It has an under-architected, cabin-like quality to it," he says.

The architect went so far as to remove an entire room from the home—this isn't unheard of. Tamarkin, whose Manhattan firm builds high-end condos, is credited with bringing loft-style living into the mainstream back in the '90s. Unlike some of his city projects, this home has plenty of rooms, save for a traditional foyer. Instead, a breezeway separates public spaces from the media room and bedrooms.

Take Your Pic | The kitchen, dining and living rooms share an open space (TOP LEFT). **Paper Moon** | A Noguchi-designed ceiling lamp (BOTTOM LEFT) hangs above the dining table. **Hide and Seek** | Reed Karen of Wainscott built the cabinetry in the kitchen (OPPOSITE TOP) and throughout the house. Tamarkin says the material was ordinary-marine-grade Douglas fir plywood-but was handled "with the care and skill of a master furniture make." **Double Vision** | Twin beds in a kid's room (OPPOSITE MIDDLE) form a makeshift banquette. **Kind of Blue** | Designer Suzanne Shaker says a work by fiber artist Sheila Hicks inspired the sofa's chambray-blue hue (OPPOSITE BOTTOM). The braided abaca rug is from Aronson's Floor Covering.

The first winter, Goldberg lovingly nicknamed the breezeway the freeway. "We could've had a normal house with a foyer and you could get up and get a drink of water in the middle of the night," says Tamarkin. "But we thought, let's have an adventure."

The breezeway became one of the home's best assets. Transom windows above each door allow air to circulate without diminishing privacy—no A/C required. Plus, the indoor-outdoor fluidity has a sensual side effect: an olfactory mingling of salt, flowers and wood.

Suzanne Shaker, a friend of the family who shares Manhattan office space with Tamarkin and a neighbor on Shelter Island, collaborated with Goldberg and Tamarkin on the interiors. Her treatment was lean: a handful of modern and mid-century-style furniture, braided abaca rugs and linen upholstery in beachy blues and purples (some swatches were pulled from the beach, just 100 feet away, which is littered with scallop shells).

Against cypress walls, the rooms are reminiscent of a Scandinavian cabin. Tamarkin was influenced by another tidy design tradition, what he calls "the brutal honesty of traditional Japanese construction," manifested in sliding wood-screen doors and built-in sofas, which Shaker outfitted with custom cushions. Example: dusky purple linen button-tufted ones in the family room. No hardware necessary, the cabinet and closet doors feature circular cut-outs—just enough room for a finger to reveal the storage.

Goldberg, whom Shaker praises for her great taste in textiles, recalls that at the time Tamarkin was drawing the plans, "he was really into stargazing." So the would-be roof on the terrace of the master bedroom features a large aperture, allowing unfettered viewing from an outdoor lounge and nearby shower. Goldberg's requests were a bit more practical. "I insisted on a laundry shoot," she says laughing. "I'm not a laundress, but it's the best feature of the house," she says, only really half-joking. "I've studied architecture for 17 years and that's the best feature of the house?," he asks, defeated.

Favorites aside, the most trafficked spot is the deck that runs along the kitchen and living room and affords glorious views of the Peconic Bay and the North and South Forks. The family's across-the-street neighbors aren't denied this pleasure either—standing on tiptoes, the home's design allows them a slice of blue, too.





Exposed | A private deck off the master bedroom (this page) includes an outdoor shower. Tamarkin worked with Wright & Co. of Bridgehampton.
Friendly Neighbor | A view of the home which is in the island's Silver Beach are. **Rain Shadow** | The unglazed porcelain tiles in the master bath (opposite left) are from Nemo Tile, a source the architect says he uses for every project. **Open Season** | The master bedroom (opposite right) and has an over-door transom window that aids air circulation.

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