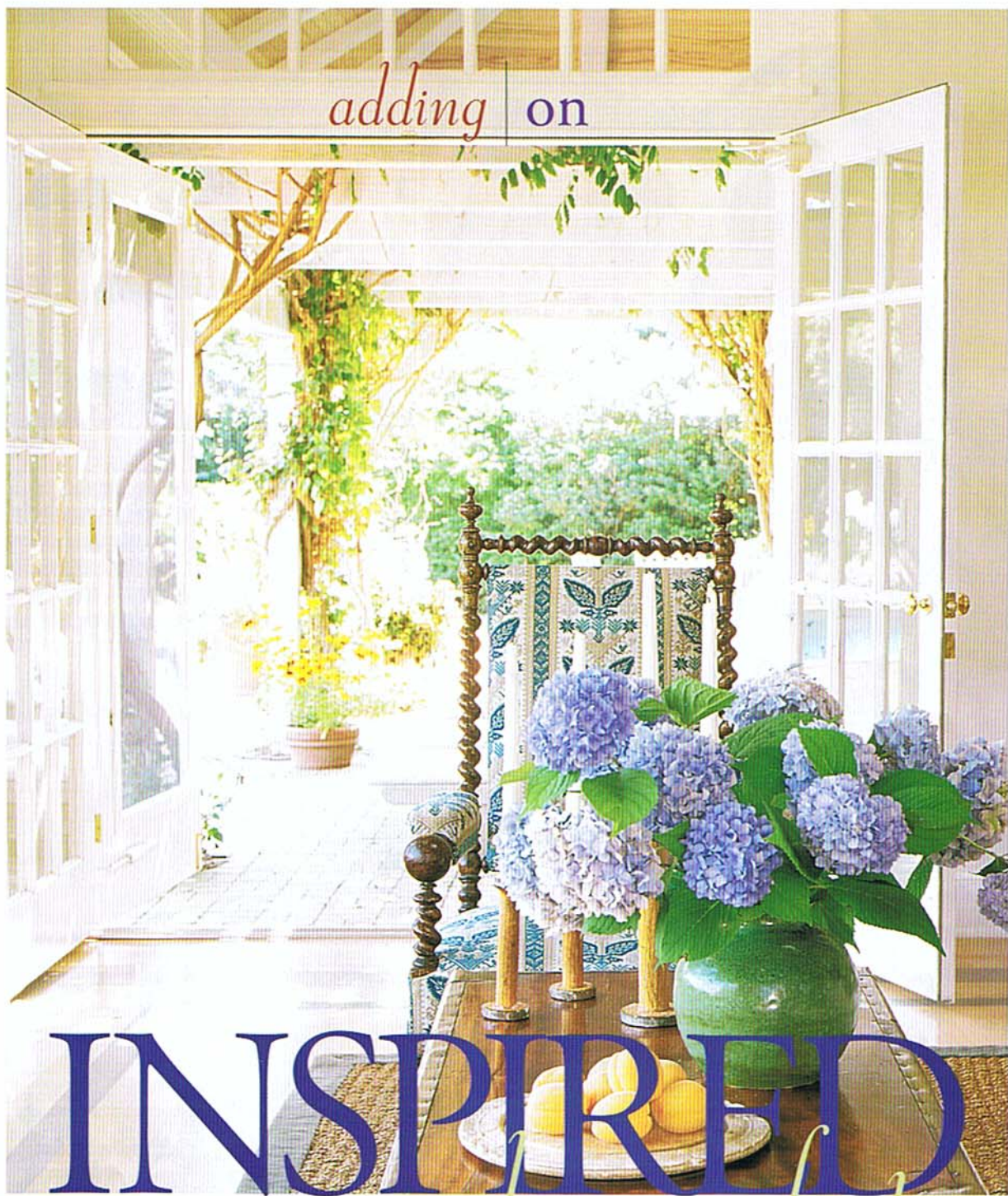


adding | on



**T**he Hamptons may be only a two-hour drive away, but they're a world apart from the crunch of Manhattan. And even though self-described "city people" Ellen and Larry Sosnow have vowed never to give up their Park Avenue apartment, come Friday afternoons they relish each tick of the clock that brings them closer to their East Hampton getaway. "It's so peaceful out there," sighs Ellen. "It's so near the ocean you can hear the waves." The pastoral Hamptons have been soothing the frazzled nerves of city folk for nearly two centuries, and the Sosnows fell under the area's spell in the early 1980s, when they bought a tired '60s ranch and turned it into their summer retreat. Over the years, they've made

BY JOHN RIHA PHOTOGRAPHY BY TRIA GIOVAN PRODUCED BY BONNIE MAHARAM



improvements to the property, including a major renovation in 1990 that opened up the house and allowed Ellen, an interior designer, a fresh canvas upon which to express her personal style—an airy country palette framed by the gentle sea breezes and tranquil surroundings.

Yet something was missing. At 3,200 square feet, the house was moderately generous, but it offered no natural gathering place for friends and family—the kind of warm and inviting room to which all would readily gravitate. “We had a big kitchen that we sort of used as a den,” explains Ellen, “but we really didn’t have a nice room where we could all hang out.”

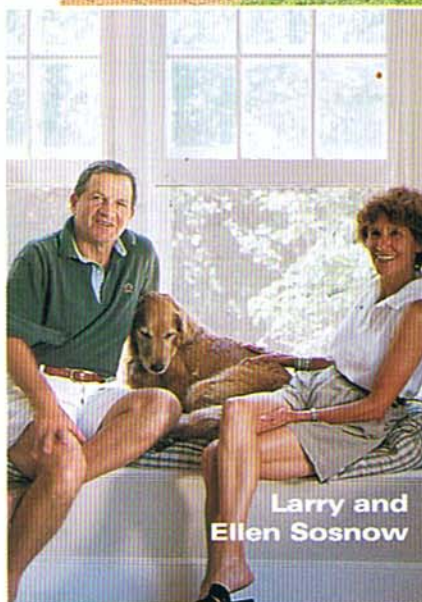
The Sosnows decided the best solution would be to build an addition, and promptly conjured a wish list full of opposites—a room that would be both simple and grand, large and yet intimate, a place that balanced winter’s need for cozy, curl-up spaces with summertime’s preference for open doors and windows. It would also be a transitional structure, adding architectural flair to the rather ordinary ranch house and becoming a portal to the expansive backyard.

“We imagined something from the start that would be full of light,” says Anthony Di Sunno of Di Sunno Architecture, who had helped the Sosnows renovate the main house and who was now asked to design the new room. “Something a little more contemporary than straight traditional.”

Based loosely on the shingle style that characterizes the houses of the Hamptons, Di Sunno’s solution was one large room, about 26 feet square, with a hipped roof topped by a cupola. By snuggling the addition up to a corner of the living room, the new space was at once an extension of the existing space and a distinctly new entity.

The location also incorporated a backyard arbor, turning the freestanding structure into an attached pergola, that in summer forms a wisteria-covered tunnel. In keeping with the vernacular, the addition features projecting bay windows and is clad with cedar shingles stained slate blue and set off with white trim. But because the 10-foot walls of the new addition are so much taller than the 8-foot walls of the main house, Di Sunno added a few tricks.

“One thing we like to do is mix different materials on the exterior,” he explains. “By introducing different materials, the scale of the larger addition has an alignment with the existing house.” Accordingly, a horizontal band of white trim at the 8-foot level is topped by tongue-and-groove, rough-sawn cedar installed horizontally and stained dark blue.



**ABOVE:** With plenty of glass and a jaunty cupola, the squared family room addition is a bold and inviting interpretation of the local shingle-style architecture. It attaches to a corner of the living room and extends far enough to allow an existing arbor to be used as an entryway.

**Rooftop marvel** The cupola is a relatively modern architectural development, making few appearances on early Colonial buildings but becoming fanciful, room-sized embellishments of Gothic and Italianate Victorian houses built in the United States during the mid-1800s. In Northeast coastal towns, variations were often referred to as “widow’s walks,” named after the worrisome vigil wives might keep while waiting for a husband’s ship to return from sea.

In the Southern states, the cupola was known for its ability to help cool a house in warmer months. With the cupola open and all but lower windows of the house shut, naturally buoyant warm air migrates up and out of the house, pulling in cooler air behind. The principle is appreciated today by architects who value energy-efficient designs. Additionally, the cupola presents roofed-over, vertical glass surfaces that deny summer’s hottest overhead sun but allow ambient light and winter sun to flood interiors with daylight.

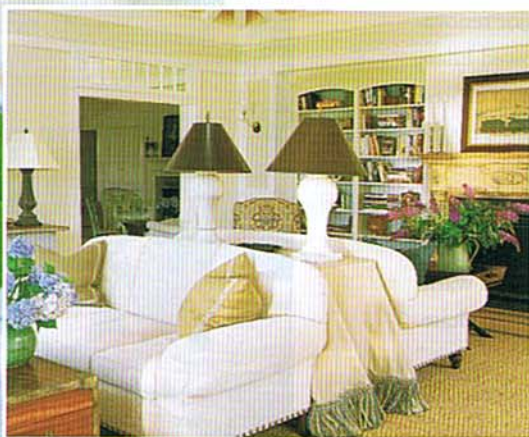




Ten-foot-high walls, generous bay windows, and a ceiling that vaults to a light-filled cupola make for a bright, spacious interior. The beamed ceiling is a detail borrowed from the kitchen to establish harmony between the new room and the existing main house. ABOVE: Pairs of lamps and matching sofas give order and symmetry to an eclectic collection of furnishings featuring floral prints that are quietly country in spirit.





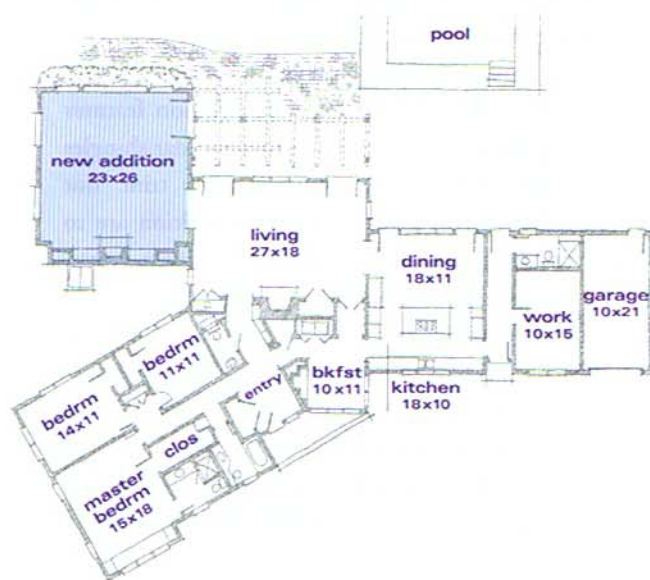


**TOP:** Ellen divided the space into two groupings by placing back-to-back sofas at the room's center.  
**ABOVE:** The gas fireplace avoids the need for a chimney. The mantel was antiques to look old.

Inside, Ellen borrowed elements from the main house to unite the new with the existing. Maple floors match those in the living room, and the open-beamed ceiling with its white-washed wood planks echoes the ceiling of the kitchen. "The original living room has a painted floor using a pale celadon," adds Ellen. "And for the new space, I used a painted stripe of teal blue, which is richer in color and helped give the room a stronger feeling. There's so much light in this room, I felt it could stand to be just a bit darker, a bit more serious."

There's really nothing solemn about Ellen's gracious interior scheme, however. Back-to-back couches at the center of the room divide the space into two seasonal spaces. One seating area focuses on a fireplace and bookshelves, while the other offers views of the garden. "It's so comfortable," she says. "You can lie down almost anywhere in the

room—there are window seats and sofas everywhere. Because the ceilings are so high, it feels as if we have this huge amount of space, which is so luxurious after being in New York [City]. It's our room for all seasons." □



ARCHITECT: ANTHONY DI SUNNO  
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 BUYING GUIDE ON PAGE 122.