

# INSIDE THE FANTASY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADRIAN GAUT  
WORDS BY CAMILLE OKHIO

● There are a few places in the United States where fantasy and reality converge. East Hampton is one of those places. It has attracted artists and aristocrats, socialites and psychopaths, great men and grifters. It is quintessentially American in that it contradicts itself. If the place were a person, it would believe its own myth. Interior designer Martin Brûlé took that fantasy and ran with it, updating a summer family home counterbalanced with historic elements and a minimalist attitude that roots it firmly in the present.

\* \* \*

“When you walk into this house, you really feel that fantasy of what a house across the street from the beach in East Hampton should look and feel like,” says Martin Brûlé. “It is a true old-school summer country house, while functioning comfortably as a family home.” Three generations of the same family use the house. They brought Brûlé on for a light overhaul. It is an important property, roughly 10,000 square feet (930 square meters) and designed around 1910 by Arthur C. Jackson, the same architect who built the Bouvier family house down the road, where Jackie Kennedy Onassis spent her childhood summers. The decor had remained unchanged for the most part since the current owners bought it in 1972. Brûlé reinterpreted the lush, traditional Long Island thread that ran through the original scheme, paring back here, freshening there and making the home a contemporary version of its old self.

He responded to the Arts and Crafts architecture of the house with a fanciful, lighthearted spirit. The palette—light greens, pinks and creams—is much the same inside as it is outside.

The house is wrapped head to toe in English ivy; it peeks through the occasional window pane, filtering the strong natural light through a verdant green layer. The current owners maintain a minimal pruning policy.

Brûlé has worked on several projects with the family and thus was given carte blanche. The only absolute requirement was a card table in the living room—the matriarch of the family has played cards every Thursday, every summer, with her four closest friends for years. Brûlé used his carte blanche to flex his country muscles: most of his firm’s projects are city-based with 20th-century design leanings. Across from the Bonacina wicker card table and chairs in the living room, Brûlé installed a custom pink cashmere velvet sofa with a silk brush fringe and slipper chairs in Pierre Frey’s classic Braquenié fabric, which appears elsewhere on a pair of custom sofas.

The dining room veers slightly Regency. Brûlé refinished a 19th-century mahogany table and chairs from the homeowner’s collection, painting them white and placing them under a Murano chandelier. The designer had the floors in this room, along with those in the entry, painted in a combination of green-gray, white and black. The more intimate spaces follow the same visual language: printed box pleated valances and matching curtains envelop deep, inviting window seats in some bedrooms; plush wall-to-wall carpeting encourages casual comfort, and lights turn on low, filtered through shell-shaped sconces.

A night here and you start to become part of the fantasy yourself. Innumerable rose varieties ramble through the garden and find their way into bud vases inside. On any given summer afternoon, laughter filters in from the swimming pool and tennis court outside. “This is a very surreal place with an idealistic feeling,” Brûlé says. “Once you are there, you don’t want to leave.” **THE END**















