



# Homeward **BOUND**

ASIAN CONTEMPORARY MEETS NEW  
ENGLAND POST-AND-BEAM WHEN A  
DESIGNER COMES HOME TO MAINE

by Rebecca Falzano • Photography Irvin Serrano

One of the biggest architectural challenges of renovating this 1980s home was updating the space while keeping within budget. The solution was to change only a few select windows and keep all of the structural changes within the existing exterior walls.

# A

fter spending the first 18 years of her life in Maine, Tamson Hamrock lived on airplanes. That is to say, she traveled. A lot. Her international career—first with Irving Trust, then Citibank—took her to many corners of the world: London, Singapore, New York. But Maine was where her heart was, particularly Yarmouth, the town where she grew up and where her father, Erv Bickford, was a fixture in a community he adored and that adored him.

After 35 years of living “away,” the boomerang effect took hold of Hamrock, and she knew it was time to come back to Maine. It was her father who found her the property: a wooded lot on Cousins Island with a deepwater dock and 180-degree views of Casco Bay and the mainland. The house, built in 1988, was a post-and-beam structure with six bedrooms. It had served a large family well, but Hamrock and her husband, Henry, would need to renovate it to meet their needs: Trading bedrooms for more open space. Knocking down walls to bring in the views. Bringing the interiors into the current decade.

in Manhattan and Connecticut. The renovation of this house would be a family affair—Hamrock as the designer and her father as the structural engineer, working alongside builder Jamie Goduti and architectural designer Joe Waltman, formerly of Anastos and Nadeau.

For Hamrock, creating not just a look but a *feel* for her home was important. “The view was the key design element,” she says. Using the Asian principles of wabi-sabi and feng shui, Hamrock set out to open up the house to the views and improve energy flow. “Wabi-sabi is the beauty of things imperfect,” says Hamrock. “I think of it as the tension between organic, simple and refined. And alignment of energy is the essence of feng shui.”

The first order of business to meet Hamrock’s goals, according to Goduti, was exposing the house’s frame. “Many of the details of the post-and-beam construction were diminished due to several in-fill walls,” he says. “The selective removal of these walls [eight in total] improved the sight lines and revealed

the true nature of the post-and-beam structure.” The renovation also included creating an open gallery on the second floor that can be enjoyed from the main floor below, as well as three discrete bedroom suites, each with a bath and sitting area for the Hamrocks’ frequent guests.

According to Waltman, one of the biggest challenges was updating the 1980s feel of the house in keeping with the budget. The solution was to change only a few select windows and keep all of the structural changes within the existing exterior walls. In addition, the team added two banks of French doors

to the lower level, improving the relationship of those rooms to the outside.

The centerpiece of the renovation involved transforming the closed “tunnel” stairway to the second floor into the architectural focal point of the home. Removing the stairway

## ***Using the Asian principles of wabi-sabi and feng shui, Hamrock set out to open up the house to the views and improve energy flow.***

Just as Hamrock realized she belonged in Maine, she realized her passion belonged in design. In 2002 she retired from her banking career and began to use her project management skills and life experience moving and creating homes (15 times in 35 years) to open Kismet, a lifestyle gallery and design business

The screened porch features an Angela Adams rug and cedar paneling. The room’s artifacts include a ceremonial Tibetan drum and an Indonesian rain drum. The two stools in the foreground were made in the Philippines from woven twigs.





Looking over the dining room is an eighteenth-century Tibetan wooden sculpture of Kwan Yin (above), the goddess of compassion. On the adjacent wall hang second-century BCE poles made of schist, a bedrock of Maine and Manhattan.

In the library (opposite), a Donghia couch is upholstered in a fabric called Story Stones. The room also features an Angela Adams rug, an eighteenth-century Chinese folding chair, and a light fixture from Simply Home in Falmouth. The mirror on the wall was a gift from renowned interior designer Albert Hadley.

along with the other walls on the main floor provided improved visibility and energy flow. The new open stairway was built out of large fir stringers compatible with the post-and-beam look, sipo-wood treads in a dark stain to match the sipo trim, black iron rails with stainless-steel balustrades, and risers of birch-twig Lumicor—a translucent resin sheet product with twigs embedded inside—a nod to the woods surrounding the house. The stair is the house's statement feature and, incidentally, was one of the biggest challenges. Built mortise-and-tenon style, the risers were routed in between the treads. "It was not the easiest of tasks," says Hamrock. "There were no nails, so the builders had to install riser/tread by riser/tread while inserting into the routed-out stringers."

Asian details were injected throughout in Hamrock's selection of materials and finishes, and her use of organic, natural materials wherever possible further connects the outside with the interiors. A rare-wood dealer who supplies boatbuilders like Hinckley and Morris, Hamrock's brother-in-law Rich Simon helped her choose the sipo, an African mahogany, for the trim. Solid-core flush fir doors were installed throughout as well. All were enhanced

with a custom stain blend providing a dark, rich-looking Asian aesthetic juxtaposed against the posts and beams. "The palette is a study in contrasts," says Hamrock. Warm oak floors, matte black window surrounds, and organic gray slate in the powder room and mudroom complement walls in subtle shades of gray-green. Benjamin Moore's Coastal Fog is the anchor color and is used throughout all the open-plan spaces. The interiors are filled with the homeowners' collection of art and antiques from their world travels; creating space to highlight their collection was a major design consideration. Now, the house is filled with Asian art, with some Maine work mixed in.

Although this house may be finished, Hamrock's work is not. She recently purchased the house next door and has undertaken what she calls an "honest" restoration of the space. Part of it includes the relocation of a turn-of-the-century coal-weighing station from the center of town. The two buildings form what she calls the Artist Cottage and Studio and are available for artists of all kinds to rent for retreats. Her hope is that creative types will find inspiration in the beauty of the surroundings in the same way she has. "Everyone





The living room's contemporary lacquered furniture is Snapdragon, available through the homeowner's design studio, Kismet. The yellow chairs are 1950s Gio Ponti.



The centerpiece of the renovation is the stairway (left), built out of large fir stringers compatible with the post-and-beam look, sipo treads in a dark stain to match the sipo trim, black iron rails with stainless-steel balustrades, and birch-twig Lumicor risers. At the top of the stairs is a painting by Kuang Jian called *The Sunshine of Pamir*.

(Opposite, clockwise from top left) The family room off the kitchen features an original Georgian tapestry chair, above which hangs a painting of a Monhegan fish house by Lyn Bickford, Hamrock's mother.

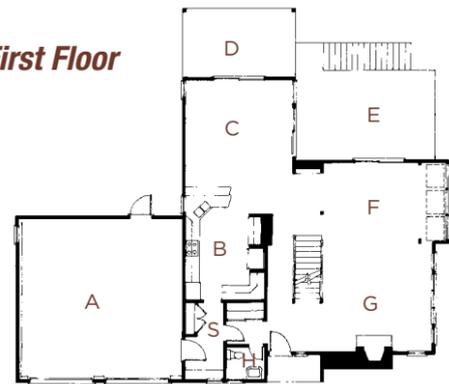
The existing brick fireplace was reconfigured to accept a modern ribbon gas fireplace with stone surround. Next to it sits a carved-wood great blue heron by a Maine artist.

A detail of the stairway's birch-twig Lumicor risers. The translucent resin sheet with twigs embedded is a nod to the surrounding woods.

Outdoor living areas make the most of the landscape and waterfront site.



### First Floor



- A Garage
- B Kitchen
- C Family Room
- D Screened Porch
- E Deck
- F Dining Area
- G Living Area
- H Bathrooms
- I Bedrooms
- J Master Bedroom
- K Master Bathroom
- L Walk-in closet
- M Library
- N Open to Living Room Below
- O Reading Room
- P Utility Room/Laundry
- Q Media Room
- R Sailing Room/Bar
- S Mudroom

### Second Floor



### Lower Level





Although each is configured differently, the bathrooms (above) feature identical materials: custom sipo cabinets, fossilized limestone floors, and concrete vanity countertops by StoneCraft in Gorham.

Above the guestroom bed (opposite, top) hangs an eighteenth-century gravestone rubbing from the Song Dynasty. The painting on the side is a watercolor by a Vietnamese artist of tribal women in traditional costume.

In the reading room (opposite, bottom left) the large, colorful “Kandinsky-esque” painting is by an Indonesian artist by the name of Faizal.

The house sits on a steep slope (opposite, bottom right) that runs down to the ocean.

who comes here says how wonderful it feels. It is magical when the energies of the earth, home, and people who live there are in harmony.”

That harmony comes not only from a thoughtfully considered design but also from the harmony of the team who worked on it—particularly Hamrock and her father, who collaborated hand-in-glove and had the opportunity to spend much quality

time together during the project. Bickford passed away last May, but not before getting to see the house completed and his daughter happily settled in. “This home is a tribute to my dad,” she says. “I could not have done this without him—he was the yin to my yang. His spirit fills the house.” **MH+D**

*For more information, see Resources on page xx.*

#### BRIGHT IDEAS



- Integrity of the original structure was conserved rather than razed
- Beams and salvage materials reused in “new” structure
- A feng shui master was an integral part of the design team from inception to completion
- Used many craftsmen/suppliers in Maine for everything from concrete countertops to fireplace stone to carpets and exotic woods
- Energy-efficient appliances and low-flow toilets