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MINIMALIST MAGIC

SIMPLE FORMS AND A PALETTE OF NATURAL MATERIALS ENSURE THAT THIS CALIFORNIA MODERNIST-INSPIRED HOME IS ALWAYS READY FOR A GATHERING



BY JORGE S. ARANGO | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANASTASSIOS MENTIS



IF MIES VAN DER ROHE'S ADMONITION that form follow function and his belief that "God is in the details," seem hackneyed concepts in our design-savvy times, it's only because they were so central to the birth of modernism that we now take them for granted. Respect for the integrity of materials is also a Miesian ideal, as is an appreciation of old building methods, about which he famously observed, "There was meaning in every stroke of an axe, in every bite of chisel." To him, intention and purpose were everything.

The 2,800-square-foot Water Mill home of Mimi and Lorin Reisner is an embodiment of these principles, one that enables the Reisners' rich and active family life to unfold with order and spontaneity. The house

they purchased a little over two years ago—revamped and redesigned by architect Carol Di Cicco Vinci and project architect Anne Corvi—was a slightly Frenchified ranch on an acre lot. From the start, says Mimi, "It was clear that the structure should remain on one level and that the scale should feel long, lean and proportional to the acre."

This was music to Di Cicco Vinci's ears. "Mimi really didn't want to overbuild on that site," the architect recalls. "I loved that because she was thinking architecturally, she wanted it to be about form and detail."

Other programmatic requirements: there should be a strong inside-outside relationship and the building elements should reflect the setting. "For me, it's always about the tactile nature of materials," Mimi says.



Modern Luxury | Mimi and Lorin Reisner's Water Mill home (PREVIOUS SPREAD) started out as Frenchified ranch on an acre lot. Architect Carol Di Cicco Vinci transformed it into a minimalist masterpiece by seamlessly blending stone, wood and metal inspired by some of the best modern houses on the East and West Coasts. The two lower masses contain the private quarters—the children's and guest's rooms are in the cedar-lined structure, the master suite is in the quartzite one. The simple and elegant landscaping was under the direction of John Leutbardt, who had worked on Mimi's parents' gardens just down the street. **Metal Polish** | The original house had an inset in the façade for the front entrance, which they kept (OPPOSITE LEFT). However, to keep the front plane of the house visually clean, Di Cicco Vinci devised the metal trellis. **Garden View** | The sliding glass doors that lead from the living and dining rooms to the backyard (ABOVE MIDDLE) are made of industrial storefront glass. When open, they create a 14-foot portal to the outside. **Tête à Tête** | With their clean lines and low profile, the Knoll sofas are an appropriately modernist addition to the living room (ABOVE RIGHT). The transom windows used throughout the house meet the ceiling and make the roof seem like it is floating. In addition to adding natural light, they create an open feeling in the formal entertaining areas. See Resources.



Open for Entertaining | The Saarinen dining table, topped by a 96-inch marble oval (ABOVE LEFT), is illuminated by a David Weeks lighting fixture from Pucci. Mimi covered the chairs in a Knoll fabric that reminded her of sea creatures. **Clean Kitchen** | The kitchen storage is contained in the islands designed by Di Cicco Vinci and in the wall of quarter-sawn walnut (ABOVE MIDDLE). **Hidden Beauty** | The island that separates the kitchen from the dining room contains a sideboard (OPPOSITE RIGHT) that can be pulled out. **Private Screening** | In the master bedroom, a Deco-style Chinese bamboo screen is used as a tall beadboard (BELOW LEFT). Mimi likes the juxtaposition of the lacquer in the bedroom and the natural wood of the trees outside. **Well Lighted Place** | Another David Weeks fixture hangs in the den (BELOW MIDDLE), making two more Knoll sofas a relaxing place to enjoy a good book or an undisturbed conversation. **Round Here** | Ben, the Reisers' nine-year-old son, opens custom metal plate doors in the entryway (BELOW RIGHT). The curvilinear pattern, adapted from a textile Mimi liked, adds a welcome counterpoint to the home's square and rectangular geometries. See Resources.





The Reisners—Lorin, an attorney; Mimi, a homemaker active in various charities; and their children, Ali (13) and Ben (9)—also entertain frequently. “We have a large extended family and visitors are constantly running around,” Mimi explains. “There’s always activity and a lot of serendipitous drop-ins.” This implied a need for casualness and flexibility but, she observes, “I wanted the house to have a very structured, sculptural feel.”

For inspiration, Mimi and Di Cicco Vinci looked to the West Coast, specifically to the works of Richard Neutra, Rudolph Schindler and other modernists. Certain signature elements of the California modern style—a cantilevered roof, lots of glass, rectilinear forms—do make an appearance, and the quartzite of the façade was specially cut to the proportions of that period (1950–60s). However, Di Cicco Vinci says, “We didn’t want to be slavish to it.” So the architect tweaked the model in interesting ways. Cedar cladding, a staple material out west, went on horizontally rather than vertically, empha-

sizing the “long and lean” profile Mimi wanted. The ceiling in the main living area is also higher than you’d expect.

Even the use of glass was adapted to the peculiarities of the location: Hamptons hurricane and energy-efficient building codes limit the amount of glass that can be used on new constructions and the shallow setback from the occasionally noisy road makes glass an impractical choice for privacy. The architects responded to both restrictions by reserving glass primarily for the back of the house, thus effectively walling off sounds from the street and opening the residence to the backyard (through 14-foot-wide storefront glass-and-steel doors), where most activity usually happens.

Thoughtfulness of materials is the main theme inside. Mimi wanted monochromatic spaces that evoke the seaside locale. For the kitchen’s inner wall, Di Cicco Vinci suggested a silver travertine marble with a figuration, according to Mimi, that “was so much like the ocean, with those pale blues, beiges and grays.” Plywood



Ready to Party | For July Fourth celebrations, a white aluminum table from Kartell in SoHo is pulled out to the middle of the yard for serving (OPPOSITE LEFT). **Sweet Patriotism** | The Reisners wanted their home to be the ideal place for parties, ranging from formal affairs to cupcakes for the kids (OPPOSITE MIDDLE). **Creative Team** | Lorin, William Vinci and wife Carol Di Cicco Vinci, and Mimi (TOP RIGHT) enjoy drinks by the pool. **Twilight Beauty** | Di Cicco Vinci positioned the horizontal section of the patio's roof support parallel to the pool line (BELOW LEFT). The vertical post is at the pool's dead center. The furniture in the kitchen, dining area and living room create a balanced symmetry. **Blending In** | The modern majesty of the house can be appreciated best from the backyard (BELOW RIGHT), where the seamless transition between materials ties together the indoors and out. See Resources.



was slightly bleached to look like driftwood and used on three kitchen islands. Kitchen storage is restricted to the islands and the wall. "I didn't want to have any visible above-counter wall cabinets," says Di Cicco Vinci. Mimi adds, "I'm very clutter-free: all clean surfaces and everything behind closed doors. There may be a mess, but you won't see it."

Di Cicco Vinci devised an impromptu pullout sideboard in the island that separates kitchen from dining room, an ingenious solution tailored to the Reisners' entertaining needs. The kitchen storage wall and the floors—all quarter-sawn walnut—mirror the leafy surroundings. An epoxy aggregate that mimics pebbled surfaces hints at the beaches nearby while providing a non-skid surface that moves from patio and pool into a backdoor vestibule. Where van der Rohe found meaning behind every

axe stroke and chisel bite, here there is meaning behind every material.

This sedate palette is orchestrated seamlessly. "It's all about how the materials come together," notes Di Cicco Vinci. Everything was meticulously calculated to fit precisely; no cornices, moldings, or other trims hide clumsy joinery. The ceiling of the main space, for example, sits directly on the transom windows above the sliding-glass doors, giving the impression that it's floating. On the façade, meeting points between cedar, quartzite and steel are impeccably flush.

A mix of vintage and re-issued midcentury-modern pieces and contemporary lighting pulled together by Mimi make the house handsome and functional. With apologies to another famous modernist, Le Corbusier, this home is a lean "machine" for living and entertaining. 🌟

