

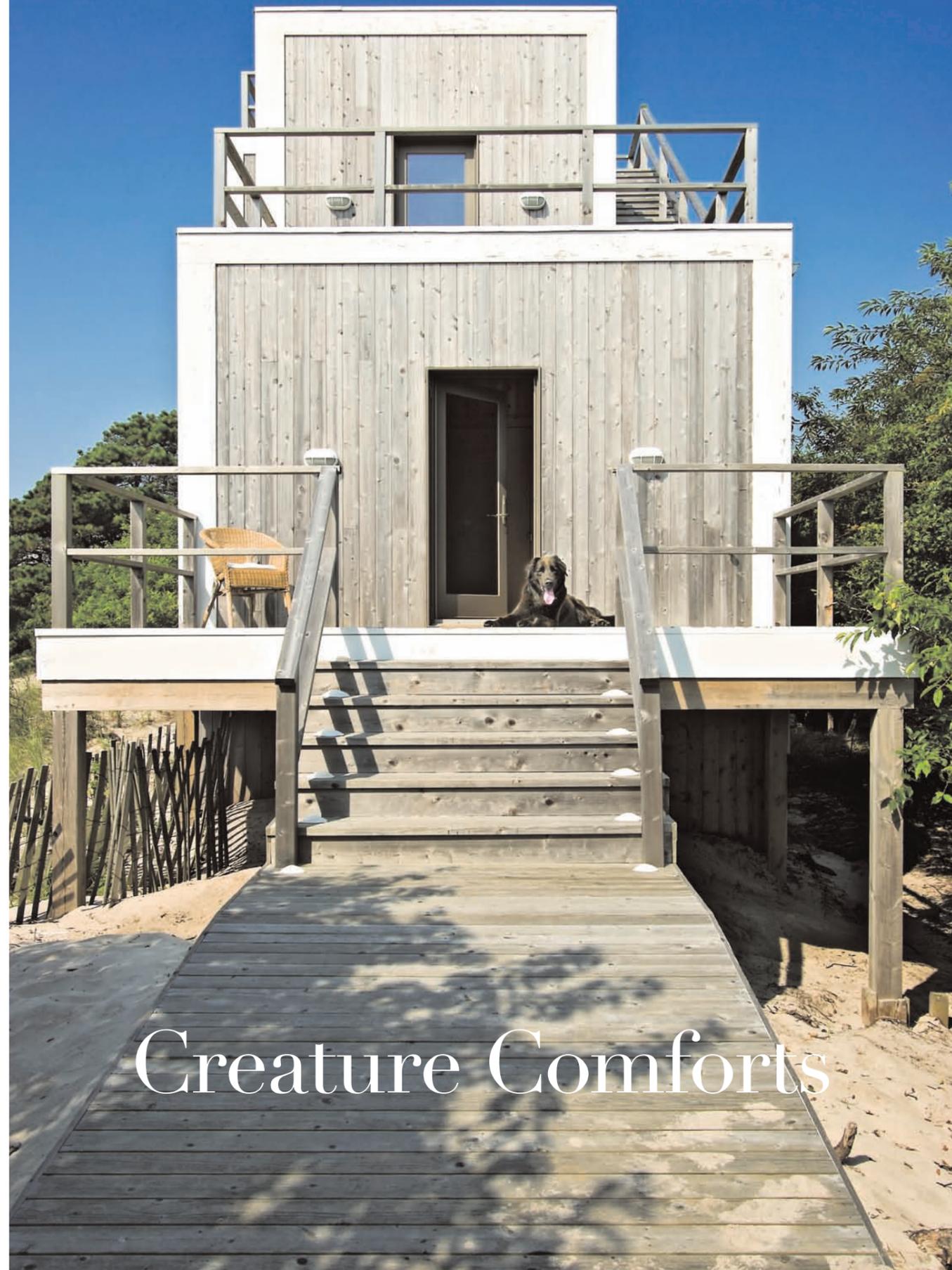
Two Summer Houses on Fire Island Living by the beach conjures up different images for different people. For some, the summer home by the shore is a place for endless days and evenings entertaining friends. For others, it can be the perfect place to decompress with a book, an iced tea, and the sound of ocean waves as a soothing backdrop.

As Florida heats up from June through September, many residents head to the Northeast, either for weekends or the entire summer. Places like Cape Cod, The Hamptons and Fire Island beckon with cool ocean breezes and relaxing beaches.

Recently we visited the Fire Island Pines community to take a closer look at two distinct homes in this summer paradise of boardwalks, lush greenery and a way of life that – like South Florida – revels in living both inside and out.

Contrast on the Coast

PHOTOS MYROSLAV ROSKY



Creature Comforts

Architect David Gauld purchased a buildable lot in the Pines community on Fire Island that proved from day one to be both everything he could want as well as the ultimate design challenge. While the property is situated along beautiful sand dunes that overlook the beach 200 feet to the east, it is also a sliver of a lot that would test anyone's ability to imagine what could possibly exist there. Add to that a struggle with FEMA over an erroneous placement of the highly elevated property in a "Flood Zone" that would have required 50-foot pilings and you have a situation most architects would have walked away from rather quickly.

But Gauld, who now heads his own firm, David Gauld, Architect, saw it all as a chance to roll up his sleeves and solve a series of problems to the best of his ability.

What emerged from his work is a jewel box of a summer home with a dynamic arrangement of spaces, an elegant, modular organizing system, and interior that cuddles the owners and their guests. We recently spoke with the architect about the final result.



HOME: Tell me about the restrictions of this lot that dictated the configuration of the house.

DAVID GAULD: Well, it's a narrow lot of about 60' x 120' long. It was designed to accommodate a pool at a later date, and I'm going to have that built this winter. I wanted to do that without any variances, and was able to design it to fit. But then of course, there are the required setbacks.

HOME: What is the maximum buildable area on a lot here?

D.G.: Thirty-five percent is the maximum. So when you take a 60-foot lot, and subtract the setbacks, it becomes quite narrow. In order to accommodate a lap pool and a deck, the house needed to be as narrow as possible.

HOME: How narrow is it?

D.G.: It's only 16 feet wide. I started with a 15 foot width and found myself struggling, so I gave myself another foot, on the other hand, end-to-end, deck-to-deck is 70 feet

HOME: From the east, beyond the dunes, it appears very impressive in size ... but when you come around the side it almost disappears.

D.G.: I know, it's a "Hollywood front" I like to say.

HOME: It's rare to find a buildable lot out here. Who did you buy it from?

D.G.: The former owners were here before the Pines was even developed. They were here in the 1940s and had built a little cottage and were nudists.

When the Pines was developed in the 50s, they were given or sold some of the lots. They

ended up with a lot of property they never built on. Eventually they started selling it off.

My neighbor, Alice Thorpe, was one of the original owners. She is now 103 years old, I believe. My partner and I bought from her sister-in-law. We were lucky to get it.

HOME: What we found really interesting about this house is the mix of the white grid and silver cedar on the exterior.

D.G.: It's a 10-foot cubical grid... actually 16 feet deep, but 10 feet on the façade. The whole house is conceived of as a series of cubes or blocks. Like building blocks laid one on another; it was an organizing device.

It started as a pure grid, and then I started to manipulate a bit. In the dining room, for instance, I needed more room and wanted a bay with views up and down the beach, so I pulled that cube out. I made a cube on the west and a screen porch....

HOME: A transparent, indoor/outdoor cube?

D.G.: Exactly. I wanted to have lots of different kinds of spaces. Covered outdoor space, open outdoor spaces, enclosed spaces ... all of them. They can work for different times of the day, different times of the year, or just to suit a mood.

HOME: You have such simple, elegant ideas. What was your experience before starting your own firm?

D.G.: Before starting my own firm, I worked with Arata Isozaki, the Japanese architect who did the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. That was before I started working for

OPPOSITE: From the side, the house is only 16 feet in width. The home is organized by cubic volumes and accentuated by white trim which contrasts with the faded cedar.
THIS PAGE: Interior cedar walls provide a warm backdrop for a red polychromed driftwood lamp.

A second-floor living room leads to screened-in space with views of the Atlantic beyond. Painting above the fireplace is by local artist Mark Beard. BELOW RIGHT: The 70 foot length of the house as seen from the dunes below. The house is named Sugarhill House as the sandy swale in front of the house was always known as the sugar bowl.



him, but while I was there we did the Guggenheim Museum in SoHo, the Science Museum in Columbus and the Bass Museum of Art in Miami Beach.

HOME: *Your design for this residence has a sort of understated, quiet quality about it ... very peaceful, quite the contrast from many of Fire Island's more dramatic statements. How did you arrive at this language, if you will, for a beach house?*

D.G.: I grew up by the beach in a way, in Mobile, Alabama, very close to Gulf Shores. I spent my childhood there, and I had a sense of what it was like to be at the beach from that experience. This was long before the condos ... it was nothing but little cottages on a beautiful, pristine beach.

To me the beach was, and is, about informality and being cozy and casual ... lots of afternoon naps. I wanted to create that more comfortable feeling. It's something I do in my architecture in general ... I like cozy. I like modern, but want to contribute something to the modernism which is sometimes cold and too minimal. I like to give it a feeling of comfort.

HOME: *Can you give us an example?*

D.G.: For instance: I don't use floor-to-ceiling windows. Although that can be very dramatic, it doesn't make you feel *contained* in the space.

HOME: *Your interior walls are all finished in wood as well which seems to be part of the vernacular out here.*

D.G.: Well yes, that's true. I was also trying on the exterior to relate to the beach vernacular of New England where you have the natural shingles turning grey and the white trim that is constantly peeling but constantly being refreshed with a new coat of paint.

If the house is all cedar, it starts to look shabby, but with the freshness of the white trim, it looks crisp. It's a little trick ... you don't have to paint the whole house, just the trim, but it always keeps it fresh. ■

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