

**WHAT
MAKES A ROOM
GREAT**

HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

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THESE ROOMS ARE GREAT BECAUSE THEY'RE FRIENDLY

A subtle, casual house on Long Island brings in the colors of sky, sea, and grass

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In the family room of a Southampton, New York, house, designer Steven Gambrel painted walls two vivid Benjamin Moore colors—Cedar Green and Marlboro Blue. The photograph of a blurry building is by Thomas Ruff, from a series of Mies van der Rohe buildings. The epaulets on an old military coat inspired Gambrel's Stanton Club chair, with contrast welting echoing the bookcase grid. He also designed the rug, an antique pattern but sleeker without a border.



WHAT MAKES THIS ROOM GREAT

THE FRESH
BRIGHT BLUE AND
GREEN PALETTE

GREEN WELTING ON
A BLUE CHAIR

BACK-PAINTED
BOOKSHELVES

THE HUGE PHOTO
OVER THE GAME
TABLE

ANTIQUE PATTERN
FOR A MODERN RUG

CONTEMPORARY
FLORAL AND TRELIS
FABRICS



**WHAT MAKES
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VINTAGE MINT-
GREEN CHANDELIER

AN ARMCHAIR FOR
EVERYONE

THOSE ROUND
CHAIR PADS

LIGHT AND DARK
WOODS, MIXED

FOGGY GRAY WALL
COLOR

MIMI READ: Blue and green seems to be one of the most irresistible color combinations, but your twist on it is so fresh.

STEVEN GAMBREL: I will confess that blue and green are colors that the homeowners and I react to in general. But this house is next to the ocean, an inlet, and a lake. Everywhere around it is water, sky, reeds, grass. I tried to take what was given to me via the environment—very pale, atmospheric blues and greens, or as I sometimes say, sky into water into tree.

But what about the bright green walls in the family room? I've never seen a green like that in nature, except maybe in a National Geographic picture of exotic frogs.

In that room you have a Pop Art version of nature—a copper green hitting a true blue. It's easier for me to use colors like these when they're framed. With a raised panel detail, you can use a brighter color because it's broken up by white—and it's framed like a painting, not bleeding into infinity. It gives a punchier, crisp edge to the room. Of course, as soon as the room is painted, you feel like it's too much, but then the colors calm down when you layer them with textiles and furniture.

This house works on many levels. It's relaxed, yet meticulously detailed.

Besides beauty and spirit, my office is really focused on the way a house works. We like to label and organize linen closets. We figure out the way people should hang family photographs in a hallway. Pantries are labeled for products. In the family room, we have antique Belgian bins that store board games. I try to provide the most functional background possible so that my clients can have the freedom to live in the moment. If the weather is suddenly cool and gray, they know they can pull up a table and eat in front of the fireplace.

What makes a room great?

A point of view. This means you come up with an idea for a scheme and you determine what the use of the room is and its overall spirit—and you stick to the concept until you bring it to fruition. You don't deviate along the way, which means you can't buy everything you fall in love with.

What's the deal with you and midcentury modern furniture? There's quite a bit of it here, including classic signed pieces.

I used things from every decade of the 20th century and a few from the 21st. It's not the pedigree I was looking for—it's more about clean and simple. I wanted everything to have a chunky, useful, casual quality to it, and a similar level of detail. I didn't want the contrast of pieces with too much intricacy.

These clean-lined modern pieces mix well with older Belgian furniture, and I also like to use them next to things with more patina. A rustic farm table with a worn surface. Something made of old leather.

All the light fixtures and lamps are so eye-catching.

I've made a conscious decision not to rely on recessed lighting for my projects. That provides more focus on the fixtures. It's a wonderful way of bringing in something unique. I love hardware and I love lighting—they're both jewelry for the architecture.

Why did you use three different kinds of fixtures in the kitchen?

When there's no recessed lighting, you really need all of them. The flush-mounted ones have a utilitarian look and furnish good general lighting. The pendants over the island and sink add additional task lighting. The rope chandelier is more decorative and helps define the dining area as a separate space. I also think they all look really good together.

The way you've used photographs makes them seem like enormous windows.

This couple has collected amazing contemporary photographs, and the scale does make them look like windows. In some cases, it's also the subject matter and the colors. But it's the glass, too, which is something we all reference as windows. If there's a room that lacks windows, I often suggest that people hang photography or works on paper under glass. If it's a windowless kitchen, we put in cabinets with mercury glass panels.

How did you come up with the idea to paper the wall in the boy's bedroom with maps?

Ever since he was really tiny, he's been interested in maps, and extremely adept with them. They lived in London for years and he was able to learn all the subway routes. He does the same in New York—charts the subway routes and keeps records of all the different options. I liked the idea of using local nautical charts. They're 32 inches by 42 inches. You just cut off the edges and paste them on the walls. Obviously, to anything, there's a certain art. You want to keep the values of the blues and yellows consistent around the room and not end up with a boring stretch of beige.

What's the point of view in the master bedroom? To me, it's the decorative equivalent of pure oxygen.

The owners wanted it to be a little more luxurious, so it has wall-to-wall carpeting. We have clean, contemporary furniture and some tailored custom pieces, such as the bed, which is very fitted. That seascape over the bed has a quiet spirit, and it helps keep things soft and airy. After all, you're upstairs, and it's less about earth, more about sky.

A 1950s Italian light fixture mixes easily with a black walnut Bron table from BDDW and eight vintage Alexandria chairs by Edward Wormley. "They're all armchairs," Gambrel says. "And it's a round table, so it's very democratic—there's no head." The seat fabric is Wet Martini from Keleen Leathers. The rug is Linen Chevron in Camel from ABC Carpet & Home.



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1. A bar area opens to the eat-in kitchen. 2. In the family room, Gambrel's Glover sofa is covered horizontally in John Robshaw's Gent's Stripe. 3. A seating area in the living room. 4. For the floor and tub ledge of the master bath, Gambrel chose the most highly veined pieces of Calacatta marble; subway tiles are from Waterworks' Architectonic line in Shadow. 5. In the living room, a beach scene by Massimo Vitali reads almost like a view. 6. Gambrel wanted the foyer to communicate that "dogs, kids, and bare feet" are welcome. The sculptural spotlight by the stairs is a vintage English ship light from R.E. Steele. 7. Walls in the boy's bedroom are papered with nautical training maps from New York Nautical. Gambrel designed the trundle bed, for use when friends visit. Blue desk chairs are reissues of a Josef Hoffmann design. Chair and shade fabric is Catwalk in Ocean from Lulu DK. 8. The screened dining porch has a comfortable banquette and Venetian side chairs from Brown Jordan.



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“We’ve all seen gorgeous white kitchens, and there’s a place for them. I was trying to create something modern and clean. But I thought bringing in the colors of nature—silvers, grays, oysters, driftwoods, and sands—would be more appropriate.”

STEVEN GAMBREL

WHAT MAKES THIS ROOM GREAT

THAT ROPE CHANDELIER

THE MIX OF LIGHTING FIXTURES

OPEN SHELVES

BLUE LEATHER CUSHIONS ON THE DINER STOOLS

NAUTICAL LATCHES AS HARDWARE

A WOOD FLOOR WITH A NATURAL FINISH

Classic Norman Cherner plywood chairs surround a vintage stone-topped table from ABC Carpet & Home. The 1940s rope chandelier adds a nautical note “without being hokey.” For casual dining at the Gascogne Blue limestone island, Gambrel covered bar stools from a restaurant supply store in blue leather. Pendant lights from Urban Archaeology; flush-mount lights from Remains.



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THE GIANT PHOTO,
LIKE A WINDOW
WITH AN OCEAN
VIEW

THE WAY THE BED IS
DRESSED

A TAILORED LOOK IN
DREAMY BLUES

OLD SCIENTIFIC
LAMPS SHAKE IT UP

A photograph by Marine Hugonnier adds a magical ocean view to the master bedroom. Gambrel designed the trim Glover bed and 1940s-style club chair; custom linens from Schweitzer Linen. Bedside tables are Paul McCobb mahogany side tables from Elan; the Stiffel lamps are from Laurin Copen. The 1930s French Art Deco side table by the window is from Karl Kemp; on it are vintage scientific cage lights. The Manderly Square carpet from Beauvais adds quiet softness. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES