



*on
the* **COAST**

WITH ONE EYE ON THE PAST AND THE OTHER ON THE FUTURE, DESIGNER JAMES HUNIFORD RENOVATES HIS 1860s HAMPTONS BEACH HOUSE.

PHOTOGRAPHER **RICHARD POWERS** WRITER **DOMINIC BRADBURY**



Artist Jennifer Andrews' *Circulate* sculpture covers a wall in the den of New York designer James Huniford's Hamptons home. A 'Belcourt' wing chair and 'Varick' sofa, both by the designer for his Huniford label, make up the seating. Huniford's collection of found objects includes a metal globe on the table and metal buoy against the wall. The coffee table is by Danish ceramicist Tue Poulsen. The lamp on the side table was custom-made by Huniford from agricultural equipment. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** a wicker sofa sits in the living room beyond and a vintage barrel doubles as an umbrella stand. **Details, last pages.**

“THERE IS A BIT OF RUGGEDNESS TO IT,
AND I LOVE THE COUNTRY FEEL”





Sometimes only after peeling away the superfluous layers added over many years does the true character of a house shine through. Such a process of sensitive editing and paring back ultimately allowed James Huniford to lay claim to his 19th-century beach house in the Hamptons, on New York's Long Island, and impose upon it his aesthetics and personality.

The house today is very different from the one Huniford, an interior designer who recently launched his own furniture collection, discovered in 2008. The creation of a family home that is soothing, calm and unassuming — yet also sophisticated and considered in its design approach — represents a test successfully met.

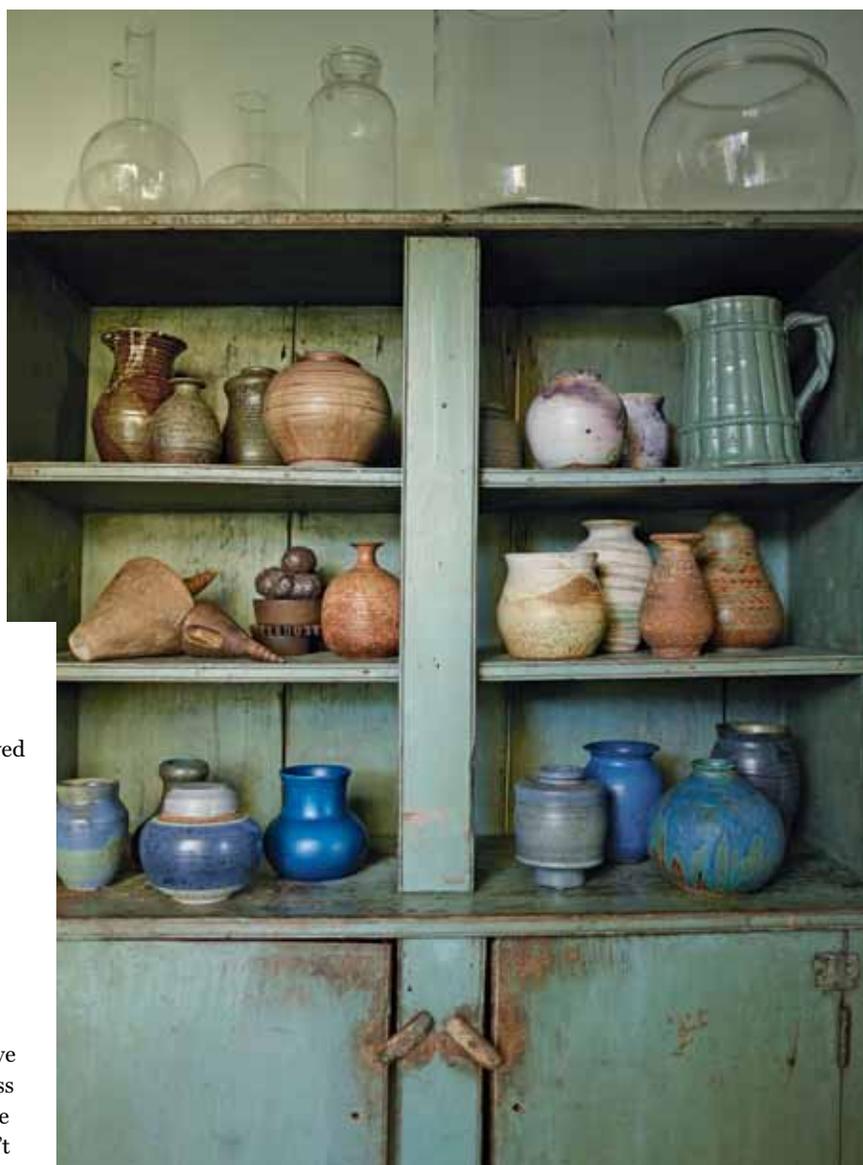
“The greatest challenge for me was to keep it simple and have it feel authentic and pure,” he says. “There is a bit of ruggedness to it, and I love the country feel and the agricultural past of the Hamptons. This house harks back to that rural history. I didn't want it to be Beverly Hills on the beach.”

Huniford's main residence is two hours' drive away in Manhattan, where his design studio is based. For many years he also shared a period home in upstate New York, which was restored and renovated. Then he started thinking about a place by the beach for himself and his two young children.

“About eight years ago I started renting a house in the Hamptons,” he says. “There are a handful of residential projects for clients here so it was also quite practical for me. I found this house when I was driving down this street in Bridgehampton one day and saw a sign that read ‘for sale by owner.’”

Back then the house, which dates from 1865 and is around 365 square metres in size, was coated not in timber shingles but aluminium siding. The original floors were hidden under wall-to-wall carpet and false ceilings concealed the timber beams. Yet Huniford could see the potential and was drawn to its private location — a walk from the beach and the centre of town — and large back garden. “It's very relaxed here and more low-key than some other towns in the Hamptons,” he says. >

OPPOSITE PAGE: flanking a timber settle bench and wicker chair from Old Hickory Furniture Co. in the 'plant room' are a hanging sculpture made of pharmacy receipts by Huniford and a French timber corbel. **THIS PAGE, FROM ABOVE:** an 18th-century cabinet displays Northern California pottery; the kitchen, with a blue 1940s school chair, vintage Old Hickory chairs and 18th-century French provincial children's chairs.





“THERE ARE QUITE A LOT OF RECLAIMED AND SALVAGED PIECES — I’D HUNT FOR THINGS ON LONG ISLAND BUT ALSO UPSTATE NEW YORK”



On a landing are nautical maps of Long Island, wall lights by Huniford and a vintage door shutter that covers a vent in the ceiling. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** on the wall of the sitting room is a Giant Dixon Ticonderoga Pencil, while above an 18th-century English timber-backed settee is a work by German artist Ingrid Pitzer. Antique painters' stools and a potting stand are repurposed as tables, the latter in front of a Huniford 'Reade' sofa. The arrangement above the fireplace is by Huniford.





< “I love being able to walk, hike and cycle and not having to jump back in the car all the time. The children were a big factor in buying it. I love getting out of town on the weekends and they really enjoy it, too. I have some close friends nearby and we all see one another on a regular basis.”

Huniford uncovered the original floorboards and beams in the main living room, including a large steel crossbeam that had been introduced at some point. A number of walls downstairs were removed to create a more free-flowing and informal layout, while a two-storey addition at the back of the house doubled the number of bedrooms from three to six.

“The bedrooms are not big but they are comfortable,” he says. “We wanted to bring in some beautiful old bathtubs and sinks for the bathrooms, which I was able to find. There are quite a lot of reclaimed and salvaged pieces — I’d hunt for things on Long Island but also upstate New York.”

Huniford opted for one paint colour throughout, which lends the interiors a calm cohesion despite the eclectic choices in furnishings and art. He began experimenting with his own colour mixes and finally opted for a custom shade he christened ‘Foggy Summer Squall’. “It was an overcast day when I was mixing and I came up with this particular blend,” he recalls. “When the sun came out, you could see the celadon and pale blues within it and I thought it would be great for the house. Sometimes the colour reads differently, depending on the light and proportions of the room.”

He designed a number of furniture pieces especially for the house, while others were selected from his Huniford range. Self-authored pieces include the sofa in the sitting room and a rustic-looking table and benches in the dining room. There are also a number of designs in the den — including the bookcases, wing chair and settee — plus a series of bespoke lamps. The assembly of furniture also includes antiques such as a Belgian jeweller’s table at the sitting room window in the shape of a jigsaw piece. It is a particular favourite.

Many found pieces, including vintage buoys, globes and oars, add another layer of interest and resonate as much as artworks or sculptures. In the dining room, a series of French diagrams for light fixtures are mounted on the wall, while reclaimed wood and circular discs in the kitchen and sitting room have become wall sculptures. The house also includes pieces by American painter and sculptor Robert Rauschenberg among other artists.

This individual blend, set against a carefully restored and revived backdrop, helps to make the house engaging. “It was about uncovering the real character of the house,” Huniford says. “But it’s also a kind of laboratory for me: a place of creativity and for trying out new things.” **VL**

To see more of James Huniford’s designs, visit huniford.com.



MANY FOUND PIECES, INCLUDING VINTAGE BUOYS, GLOBES AND OARS, ADD ANOTHER LAYER OF INTEREST



A Huniford 'Bristol' table and benches take up the dining room. Above the map chest are French diagrams for light fixtures from the early 20th century. Either side are 18th-century American chairs. The dome is by Huniford and the seaweed sculptures are vintage, artist unknown. **OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP;** seen just to the right of the 18th-century Belgian jeweller's table under the living room's bay window is a Robert Rauschenberg work called *Autobiography* (1968). The lamp base is a French globe and a collection of vintage nautical buoys sits on the floor; hanging behind an Italian 19th-century bed in a bedroom is a chain from a boat yard in San Juan Islands. On the wall are western New York state tree trunks from the 19th century. **Details, last pages.**