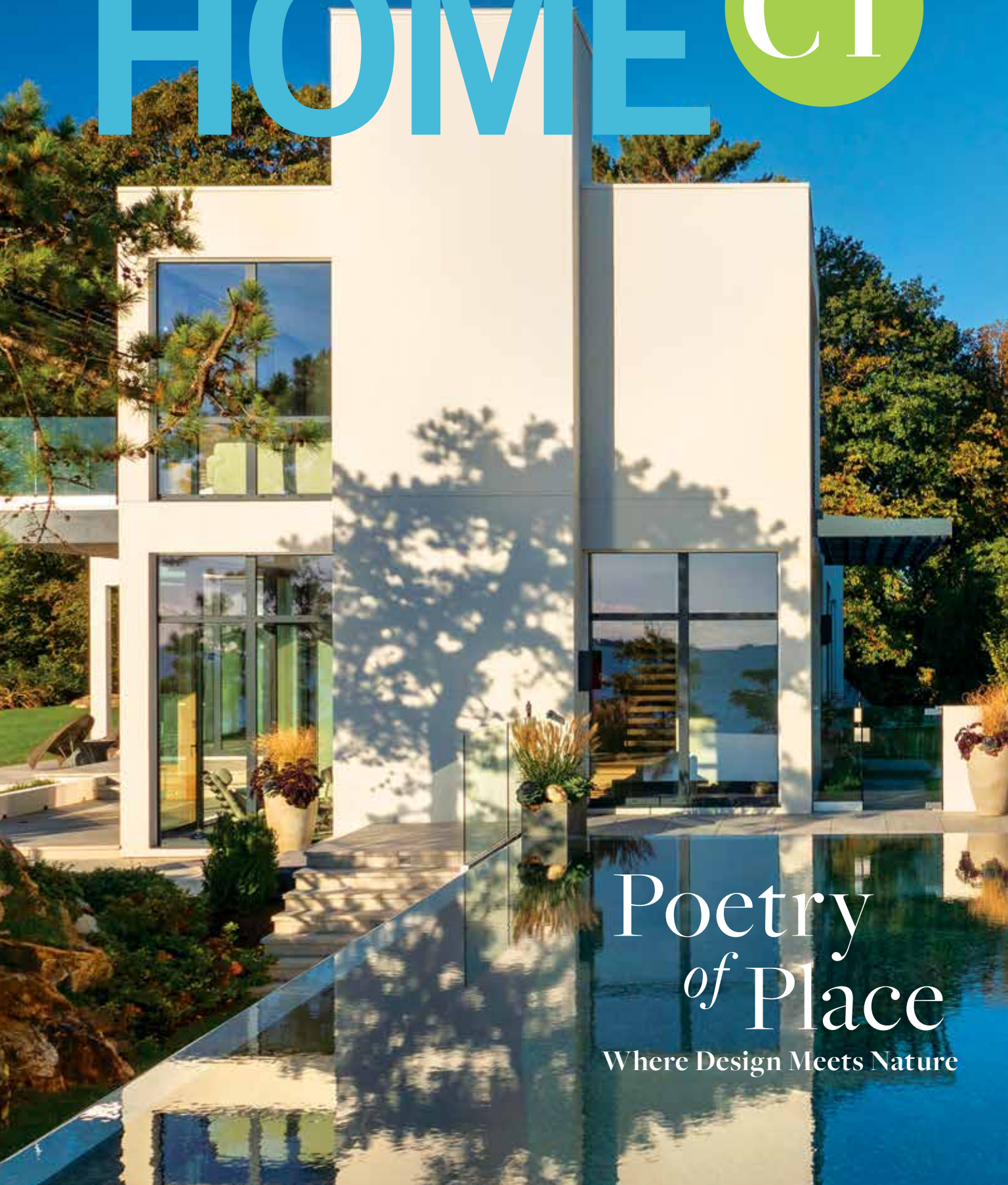


# New England HOME CT



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# When Life's a Beach Read

One designer's ultimate meet-cute leads to a stylish summer retreat.

BY KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS

**W**hen Cassandra Byrnes first began working on her new client's summer home in coastal Niantic, she had no idea it would one day be her home, too. The owner—Chris Lafond—had enlisted the designer, known for her comfortable yet elegant interiors, to work with him on his newly built



**LEFT:** Designer Cassandra Byrnes, principal of C.A.B. Designs, at her summer home. **ABOVE:** Because her husband is an oenophile, Byrnes installed Currey & Company's Vintner Chandelier above the dining table. It's made from upcycled wine bottles "with little numbers on them and droplets in the glass," says Byrnes. "I really try to incorporate personal elements in any design project."



abode on Long Island Sound, in the same area where he'd spent his childhood summers.

Like a backdrop from a Nicholas Sparks novel, the locale provided a picturesque spot to fall in love...and soon enough, they did. "It's this beautiful piece of property on a cove that looks across Niantic Bay with almost 360-degree views," Byrnes says. "You can see the water from almost every room."

A simpatico appreciation for aesthetics aided the couple's instant chemistry. "He has a wonderful eye for architecture and was this really great client," Byrnes says. "We started on the project, and it was seamless, and really went from there..." Now, the home they designed together is a welcoming respite of soft,



**RIGHT:** Byrnes selected a hair-on-hide sculptural chair—the Elka by Bernhardt—to provide texture and an unexpected moment in the foyer; the chandelier is from Shakúff in Brooklyn. **BELOW:** The couple's wine collection is about 800 bottles deep; Robert Young is a go-to label.







*“IT IS A SOPHISTICATED BEACH HOUSE, BUT IT’S ALSO AN INTERESTING MIX OF TRANSITIONAL AND TRADITIONAL.”*

—Interior designer  
Cassandra Byrnes



**ABOVE:** Airy light fixtures keep the focus on the showstopping views. **LEFT:** In the mudroom, Byrnes installed darker elements, from the mesh cabinet doors to the inky tile. “I thought it needed some grounding, plus you can kind of see through them,” she says of the cabinet doors. “It broke up some of the white tones in the room and functionally gave it a little breathability.”

Many of their guests sprawl out on these sofas in the sitting room—they're perfect for a nap or reading session. The chandelier, which is made of wooden beads, adds to the casual feel.



*“YOU CAN SEE THE WATER FROM ALMOST EVERY ROOM.”—Cassandra Byrnes*

sandy neutrals and bay blues that often plays host to getaways for their blended family. (The couple married about a year ago in Florida and has four children between them.) And their timeless summer retreat is sure to wow for generations. “It is a sophisticated beach house, but it’s also an interesting mix of transitional and traditional,” she says.

It was important for Byrnes to source locally

made curios and shop in regional boutiques to give the space a true sense of place. “You can achieve sophistication and elegance and also have it be comfortable, especially in a home like this,” she says.

And comfort is truly key in a residence that “swells with people on the weekends,” Byrnes says. “We go from two people during the week to, on any given weekend, fourteen—when our grown





**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:** In the bunk room, up to nine people can sleep comfortably thanks to the full beds. Byrnes designed the primary bedroom around the reverse-painted-glass bedside tables by John-Richard, which call to mind water and rocks. A deep soaking tub in the primary bath—the Soca freestanding tub by Maax—is a meditative spot for taking in the view; the vintage rug is from Azalea Home & Gift in Niantic.



children bring their friends. And I think the memories just keep being created as our children grow and we enjoy them as adults.” In other words, they all lived happily ever after.

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** For details, see Resources.

**INTERIOR DESIGN:** C.A.B. Designs

**ARCHITECTURE:** Peter J. Springsteel Architect

**BUILDER:** Tier 1