

INTUITIVE DESIGN

aspire
design home

THE
NEW
MIND
SCAPE

*a panorama of imagination,
a realm where thoughts and
ideas exist*

HAWAII FRANCE SWEDEN BROOKLYN CALIFORNIA SOUTH AFRICA BALTIMORE DALLAS

[Fire Island Architecture]

Matthew Miller
of StudioLAB



Photography by Matt Kisday

a conversation

Building on Fire Island is not for the faint of heart. With no cars or easy deliveries, much of the construction process unfolds through the power of human grit. But for architect Matthew Miller of StudioLAB, a reverence for place and a creative rapport with long-term clients (this was their fourth project together!) was a winning mix. Miller designed an ultrachic, Salk-esque summer retreat on Fire Island that beautifully integrates with the surrounding landscape. Built on a double lot, the five-bedroom, 4800-square-foot home makes room for a generous pool, an essential element that serves as both a focal point and a functional extension of the architecture. An Ipe deck wraps around it and through the breezeway, strategically linking the spaces and providing the clients with the programming they wanted: multiple spaces to cater to entertaining a family of six, along with family and friends.



What was it like to work on a new build on Fire Island?

It's tough. I refer to it as the "Wild, Wild West," akin to stepping back in time to the 1800s. Cars aren't allowed on the island, so there isn't any heavy machinery either. Constructing a new home is basically just manpower, ropes and pulleys. That said, one of the island's enduring charms is the hodgepodge of architectural styles that extends from house to house and encourages expression of design.

How did the island's climate and location affect the design?

The island is known for its harsh coastal weather, and these particular lots were located in a flood zone. We built the home on piles, with the first floor 14 feet above sea level. The materials, such as the metal roof, the cement panel siding and Ipe wood cladding that make up the home's exterior, were selected for their durability and ability to withstand the coastal climate with minimal upkeep. A rain-screen system and integrated gutters assist with drainage and ventilation, offering aesthetically pleasing protection.

What are some of your favorite aspects of the finished project?

The outdoor breezeway, which seamlessly links the two interior spaces, and the roof deck with sweeping 360-degree views of the Atlantic Ocean and Great South Bay. I also love the living room, which we call the "jewel box" of the home. While somewhat private so the parents can entertain in peace, it's part of a grand, single-story volume, so we introduced some warmth and visual interest overhead with wood beams and attractive red cedar paneling that is lightly stained to enhance its natural grain. The ceiling is purposely sloped to draw the eye outward and establish a quiet architectural hierarchy within the space, while two Poliform Bristol sofas face each other for easy conversation and added intimacy. The room's color palette draws inspiration from the summer foliage visible through its floor-to-ceiling windows, reinforcing the sense of a seamless connection between indoors and out. The detached den – connected by the breezeway – is also a win. The clients' teenagers can blast their music without fear of disturbance.

– NICOLE HADDAD