

Architect Marta Hansen builds her dream house
on Maryland's Whitehall Bay

WATERFRONT IDYLL

Text by JULIE SANDERS Photography by DAVID BURROUGHS



Previous spread: From the living area, a quiet inlet is visible through a curved wall of windows. Hansen mixed eras and styles, combining a Chesterfield sofa and an iconic Barcelona loveseat on an Afghan rug. A wall of books frames paintings by Jeremy Mann. The living space is anchored on one end by the kitchen (right), which showcases an oil painting by Kevin Fitzgerald. In the dining area (below), a live-edge bubinga-wood table by BOVA is surrounded by classic café chairs. The entry (opposite) features convenient hooks for belongings, another painting by Jeremy Mann and books galore.



At a rocky outcropping on the edge of Whitehall Bay near Annapolis, a panoramic vista encompasses the open waters of the Chesapeake in the distance. There's a sense of drama on this windswept spot, where expansive water and choppy waves lure sailors itching to race.

While designing a client's house nearby, Marta Hansen was captivated by this postcard setting. The architect, who had been looking for a waterfront site where she could design and build a home for herself and her husband, investigated a "for sale" sign one day—and discovered one that fit the bill perfectly.

"I design mainly waterfront houses and I've seen all types of 'waterfront,'" she says. "When I saw this, I said, 'It doesn't get any better.' It faces south, which I had wanted, it offers privacy and it's actually on the water."

Sandwiched between the bay and a swath of wetlands, the

Architecture + Contracting: **Marta Hansen, AIA, LEED AP**, Hansen Architects, Annapolis, Maryland.

1.3-acre property came with permitting requirements. Fortunately, the previous owner had been granted a variance 10 years back for a small shack, so Hansen was allowed to replace that ramshackle structure with another one as long as its footprint remained small.

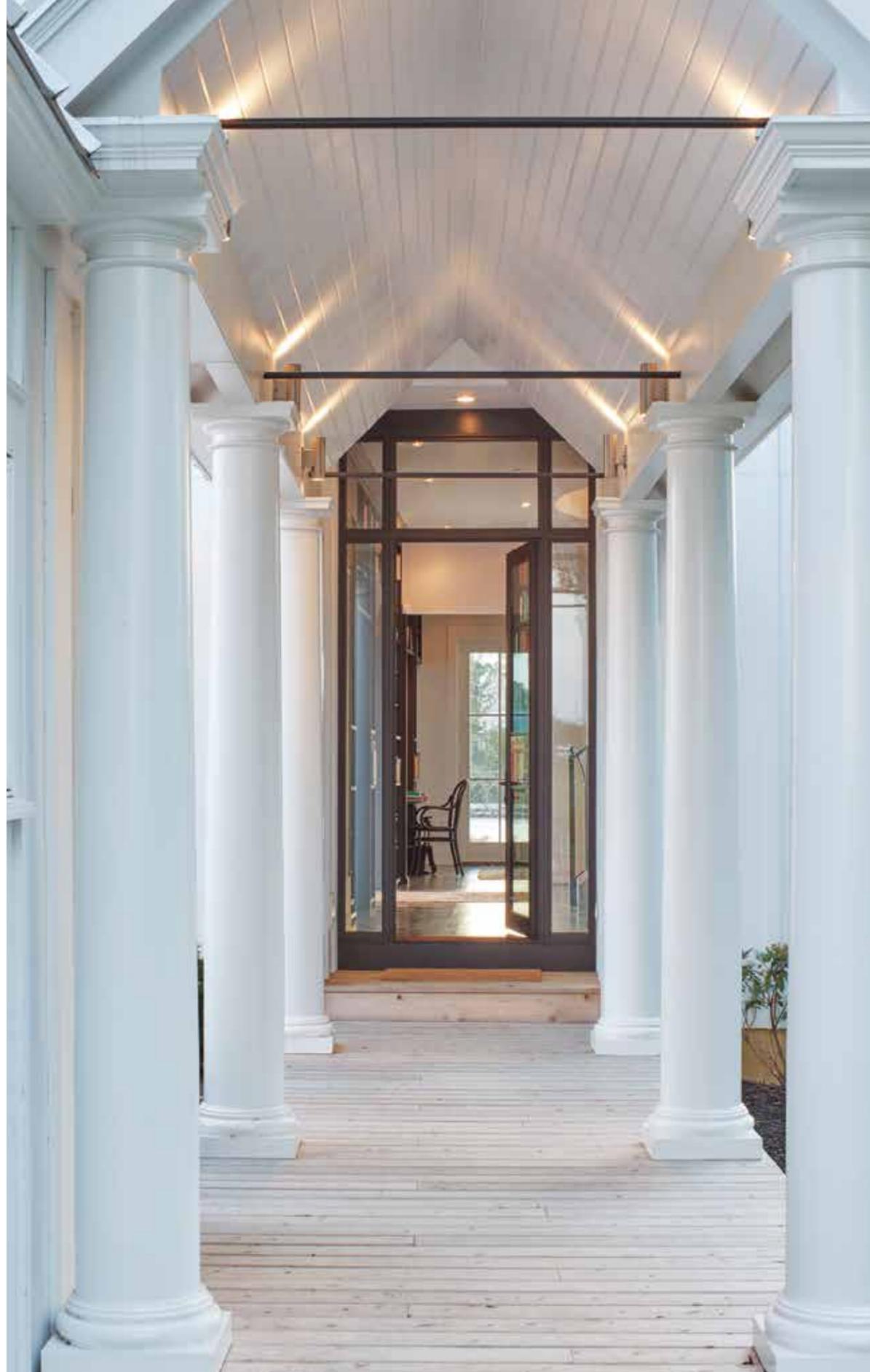
She conceived a house covering only 1,000 square feet of land, but rising three-and-a-half stories to provide the desired space and take advantage of the views. An inlet on one side creates a pretty beachfront; on the other, a vacant lot that Hansen and her husband also purchased separates the site from its neighbor.

The architect envisioned a style she calls "classicism with maritime references" for the new, 3,500-square-foot abode. Hardy cement board-and-batten-style siding, a metal roof and a cedar shingle-clad stair tower reminiscent of a lighthouse conjure a nautical feel, while a traditional roofline, ornamental columns and white siding and trim convey a classic aesthetic. A two-car garage connects to the house via a breezeway.

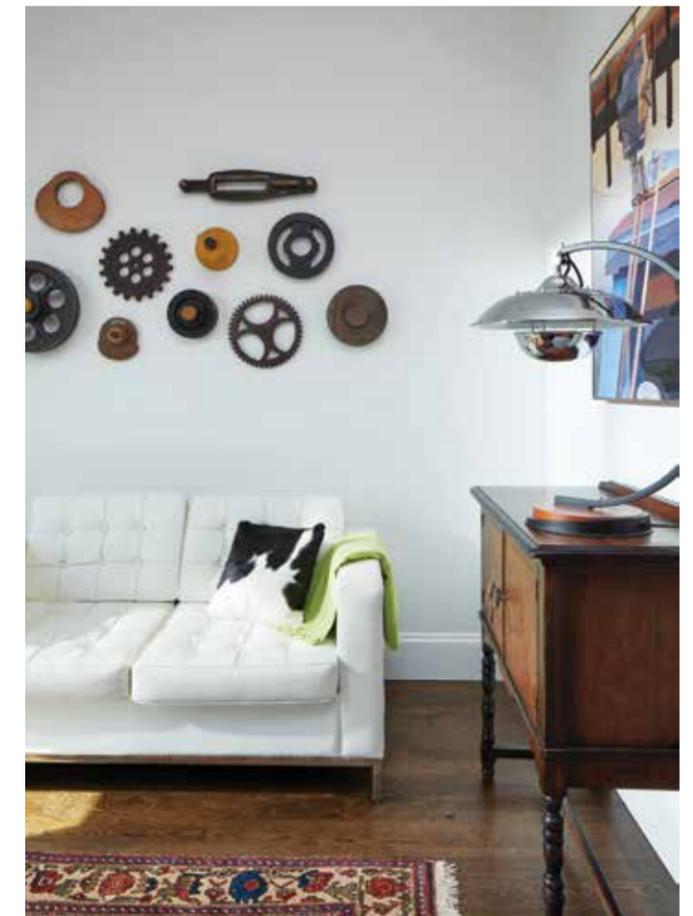
Inside, 11-foot ceilings make the interiors feel large and airy. A wall of black modular shelving by Saah Furniture bisects the open main floor, extending the length of the house and



Guests arrive via a breezeway (this page) that connects the garage with the house. Through the glass-and-metal front door, Hansen's home office is visible. It features a desk built into the bookshelf (opposite, left) and a Le Corbusier sofa with antique wood factory parts as decoration on the wall above (opposite, right).



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separating the open kitchen, dining and living areas from the entry hall, stairwell and Hansen's small home office. The move creates both small and large spaces. "It's like a symphony," the architect says. "Some parts are loud and some are quiet. It amplifies your experience."

The shelves house an enormous collection of books belonging to Hansen's husband, a retired philosophy professor. Large niches in the shelf system display canvases by a favorite artist, Jeremy Mann, in the living/dining area as well as on the other side of the wall near the front door, where a section is also equipped with hooks that keep jackets and bags at the ready for quick jaunts outdoors.

A wall of windows curves to frame water views on two sides of the living area; the kitchen anchors the other end of the room. "I tried to make it less kitchen-like since it's all one big space," Hansen notes. "There are no upper cabinets and storage is all along

the [shelf] wall." Extending into the kitchen area, the bookshelves frame a black Jenn-Air refrigerator, chosen to blend with the black-painted shelving and adjacent cabinetry. Peripheral counters and a backsplash of richly veined quartzite top white cabinets. In another nod to classicism, Hansen positioned ornate marble corbels found at In Home Stone at the base of the island, which is topped with black granite.

A wide opening to the hallway frames the staircase. Designed by Hansen, "the stair rail is an abstraction of the wetland reeds," she explains. Made of gracefully bent, welded steel, it extends up all three flights of stairs, curving gently at each landing. Complementary orb-shaped metal chandeliers by Hubbardton Forge blend into the design; Hansen purchased four and hung them so one graces each floor beside the open stairwell.

Throughout the project, Hansen applied contrast for effect.



Architect Marta Hansen (above) poses on a cedar deck that wraps around the back of her four-story house (right). The structure is clad in cement panels that create a board-and-batten effect and topped with a metal roof. The adjacent wetlands are undergoing restoration.





The second-floor master bedroom (top, left) boasts water views in two directions. The luxurious master bath (above) combines St. Laurent marble tile floor, a dark-stained wood vanity and a soaking tub from Signature Hardware overlooking the neighbors' picturesque dock. A circular shower enclosure (bottom, left) is clad in marble mosaic tile.



Hansen designed the stair rail (opposite, seen from the family room) as an abstraction of wetland reeds. On the top floor (left and above), a ribbon of clerestory windows admits light into the airy loft, with its barrel-vaulted ceiling—reminiscent of a ship’s hull—and curved window facing the water. Baci, the couple’s poodle-maltese mix, perches on the sofa, which faces Hansen’s husband’s guitars and sound equipment.

Outside, the weathered-cedar deck and pergola are juxtaposed with ornate, white-painted columns. Inside, black shelving and white walls form a neutral backdrop to colorful Persian rugs, strong-hued artwork and ornamental stained glass—found at auction—that adorns the windows near the stairs. Even the stairwell, Hansen says, “borrows from modernism using big sheets of glass, but has grids that offer classical scale and definition.”

The furniture is an eclectic combination of styles and eras. “I gravitate toward classics by famous modern architects,” Hansen observes. “I mixed those with classical pieces. What they all have in common is fundamental qualities of design—balance, harmony, scale, proportion, color.” In the living area, a Barcelona chair by Mies van der Rohe is paired with a Chesterfield sofa, while a contemporary hoop light by Kovacs hangs overhead.

The second floor houses the master and guest suites, and the third is a family room. Hansen outfitted the fourth-floor loft, what

she calls “the top of the lighthouse,” with a barrel-vaulted ceiling of dark-stained beadboard reminiscent of the hull of a ship. In lieu of an attic, this level—a man cave that features her husband’s extensive guitar collection and workout equipment—also provides extra storage.

Ample windows at each level reveal astounding—and ever-changing—bay vistas. “Each floor has a different view,” Hansen marvels. “As you get higher, the ground disappears and it really feels like you’re on a ship. I find it amazing.” ■

SOURCES OF NOTE

Windows: Windsor Windows through thesanderscompany.com. Front Door: Western Window Systems through thesanderscompany.com. Dishwasher, Oven & Microwave: geappliances.com. Downdraft Cooktop & Refrigerator: jennair.com. Outdoor Sconces & Stairwell Chandeliers: hubbardtonforge.com. For a complete list of sources, see homeanddesign.com.