

Connection

French

Using a mix of contemporary French furnishings and Paris flea-market finds, PR maven **Harriet Weintraub** fashions a sparse but comfortable family retreat from a classic Hamptons horse barn.

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THIS PAGE:

Harriet Weintraub takes stock. Floor-to-ceiling windows and French doors flood the home's study with daylight.

When Harriet and Ronald Weintraub began searching for a quiet weekend escape on the East End, they knew one thing was certain—they didn't want a rambling seaside McMansion with acres of property to maintain. On the contrary: The couple sought a small, beautifully landscaped place that was just big enough for their family and a few close friends. "We both have very busy schedules, and neither of us wanted to be a slave to running a house," explains Harriet, one-third of Weintraub/Siegel/Coleman, the New York-based public relations firm that represents Burberry and other high-style luxury businesses.

Finally, after months of searching, the Weintraubs found what they were looking for—a small, converted horse barn on 2.5 wooded acres in Water Mill. The only problem, says Harriet, was that the 120-year-old building was really starting to show its age. "The roof needed to be replaced. The plumbing needed to be replaced. Everything needed improving," she says. "In fact, you really had to use your imagination to see the potential of the place."

Working with Southampton architect William Schulz, Harriet devised a plan for converting the tumbledown building that had once belonged to a larger estate into a comfortable 21st-century abode. Out came the old electrical wiring and plumbing. Walls were shifted to allow the cramped first floor to breathe and a new wing housing a new kitchen, master bedroom, two maids' rooms, and



LEFT:

The backyard deck, shaded by one of the property's many 100-year-old weeping birch trees, provides the perfect spot for entertaining outdoors.

BELOW:

The master bedroom's toile-covered walls are classic French; however, the room's overall clean look is classic Harriet.

OPPOSITE PAGE:

Among the owner's favorite works of art are a series of dried palm leaves by an Italian landscape designer.

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several bathrooms was added. "I wanted to experience a new way of living," says Harriet of her new home's loft-like layout. "My place in the city is much more compartmentalized. Much more traditional."

To make the new and old spaces appear as one continuous unit crafted more than 100 years before, the architect borrowed design elements (floor-to-ceiling windows with overhead transoms and paneled doors) from the original structure and repeated them throughout the new addition. He also gave the slightly modern interiors an old-world twist by installing simple baseboards, moldings, and other classic details. "Everything is as original as we could keep it while still making it functional," explains Harriet.

When it came time to dress the interior, Harriet, a self-described weekend decorator, chose to do the work herself. A Francophile at heart, she selected a mix of contemporary furnishings from such well-known French designers as Manuel Canovas and Christian Liaigre and paired them with Paris flea-market and tag-sale finds. "I






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front door you're in a peaceful mood."

ABOVE:
To soften the living room's hard-edged contemporary furnishings, Harriet added a few of her favorite antiques—like this French work table—to the design scheme.

OPPOSITE PAGE:
The oil painting above the antique sideboard in the dining room is by Weintraub's husband, Ronald.

never like to do things in just one style—I like contrast," she says of her eclectic approach to decorating.

Then, to help pull together the mostly open interior, Harriet prescribed a muted color palette of beiges, browns, and khakis for everything from window treatments to floor coverings. "It's all very soothing," she says of the finished work. "Even if you've had a rough day, the moment you walk through the front door you're in a peaceful mood."

And after all, isn't that what owning a weekend home is all about?