



# Sparkler

A FAIRFIELD BEACH HOUSE AND ITS DAZZLING DETAILS

RELAXING Philippa in a Fritz Hansen "egg chair" near the driftwood hearth. A coral sculpture sits atop art house books that adorn the foyer's white cement table.



See the video



BY ROBIN H. PHILLIPS // PHOTOGRAPHS BY HULYA KOLABAS



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HEN PHILIPPA AND FRANK POLI decided to move within Fairfield, they knew they wanted a home in the beach area. They loved the feeling of calm found near the water and the year-round natural beauty. Attracted to classic New England architecture, they also hoped for something with a few modern touches. They found exactly what

they were seeking in this cedar-shingled house with its dramatic millwork, moldings and sunset views from terraces or balconies on three levels.

Phlip, as her friends call her, wanted a modern yet warm interior-design scheme that matched her personality, but also one that would be accessible to her young family, which includes her son and two daughters. Phlip met Raquel Garcia of Raquel Garcia Design at a party where Phlip was commenting on the hostess' beautiful home. The hostess introduced the two women and they quickly realized they loved similar styles of architecture and design. What happened next surprised even Phlip. "Raquel immediately understood who we were and what we liked. She exuded the tranquility and calm we wanted in the look of our home," explains Phlip. So began a year-long project that took Raquel abroad and back, and resulted in a design renovation that interpreted the Polis' lifestyle through art, color, fabric, and furniture.

Contemporary design—cutting-edge light fixtures, upholstery, chairs, art, and decorative accents—while often admired, can be a challenge to make warm and inviting. Raquel has a special gift in that she can select the best of modern décor and successfully juxtapose it with eclectic antique pieces from Europe and India.

**GOOD PALETTE** The color scheme begins outside and flows harmoniously inside. Custom-made lavender leather chairs flank the fireplace, and the soft purple blends with the natural wood of the floors and fireplace.

**WORLDLY TOUCHES**  
A dramatic crystal beaded chandelier, hand-made in Belgium, highlights the ten foot ceilings. The cozy study with Indian brass drum tables and mirrored hearth. Hallway view of Jaanika Peerna original.



Reflecting the Poliss' preference for a soothing color scheme, these design elements were enveloped in a nexus of muted greys, creams, silver and gold, which create a refined, yet relaxing living environment.

Like many beach homes, Philip and Frank's home is long and tall, with ten-foot ceilings and floor-to-ceiling windows on every level. When you enter, the layout allows you to see the other end where the Long Island Sound is peeking into the windows. This fact poses a design challenge, since the openness demands that the color scheme flows harmoniously. The first sitting room is cozy, yet Philip wanted it to feel larger, while still maintaining its integrity as a separate sitting area. A technique Raquel employs—using mirrors to reflect light and open up spaces—places an antique-finished mirror strategically on the fireplace. A shaggy white stool invites you to touch it, and creamy white couches, custom made to fit the room and color scheme, are comfy and intimate. In this room, Raquel took the Poliss' love of the beach and showcased it in small touches such as pieces of coral on the shelves. "Designing is a layering process," explains Raquel. "I strive for functionality and to have each room make sense with the next, while each still has its unique pieces." Another clever device of Raquel's is choosing furniture—chairs, tables, stools—that can be taken from one room to the next, as need be, and fit easily into the scheme of another room. The Poliss love modern art, but weren't sure how to incorporate it into their lifestyle. Raquel introduced them to Jaanika Peerna, and some of her original works were selected to adorn the foyer wall and the small study.

A long hallway with classical arches splits the house, lending it a decidedly European feel. This area doesn't receive the same amount of light as the rest of the home and Raquel tackled that problem by placing antique mirrors on opposing walls. "I love mixing old and new," says Raquel. "There is definitely an art form to that, to have something from 2013 near something from 1780, you have to have the right scale and tones."



“I love shimmer and things that sparkle with the changing light,” says Philip. Raquel couldn’t agree more, and it is no surprise to hear that Raquel’s talent for design extends into her own successful jewelry business, where she creates one of kind pieces with natural stones, gold, silver, and various metals. Raquel’s love of these materials can be seen throughout her design. The dining room showcases paintings made with 22 karat gold dust by Japanese artist Takefumi Hori. The antiqued wooden spindle chairs are contrasted with a shimmery python print that has just the right amount of sparkle. A spectacular bowl made of natural crystal is the centerpiece of the table. There are antique brass bar tables and custom made beaded chandeliers and light fixtures. It is as if there is jewelry everywhere, giving this room a magical quality, especially as the sun sets. The main family room holds one of the only elements Philip and Frank kept from the original décor—a driftwood fireplace—that gives a great beachy feel.

True to Raquel there are surprising touches. “I learned quickly to trust her judgment,” says Philip. Custom-made lavender leather chairs flank the fireplace, and the soft purple blends beautifully with the natural wood of the floors, fireplace, and breakfast area table. To complement the shape of the room, Raquel designed the rectangular mahogany table to fit the space right off the kitchen. Above the table is one of the most original and visually stunning chandeliers. Custom-made in Portugal, it gives the appearance of glowing twigs.

The kitchen is sleek and dramatic with its bright white cabinets, marble, and dark-wood surfaces. In the foyer, a minimalist concrete table, so heavy it took five men to deliver, somehow seems light and airy. While the rooms all look perfectly finished, Raquel says she always leaves a space with room to change. “As a family grows and changes, a room can too, so I leave a space just a tiny bit unfinished because I always feel that the perfect addition is yet to come.” ■

IN THE MIX The island is perfect for a quick bite atop lucite stools. Custom Portuguese “twig” lights complement the rectangular table. Raquel and Philip talk design. Wine pantry is as pretty as it is functional.