

How to Live with History

In Downeast Maine, a rare 1960s home by local icon Emily Muir gets a shipshape renovation.

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The living room of a house on Deer Isle, Maine, designed in 1968 by Emily Muir and renovated by designer Angie Hranowsky with architects Bill Bowick and David Bouffard. Sofa and dining table by RH, Restoration Hardware; cocktail table by Artifort; vintage rattan chair in a fabric by Tulu Textiles; pendant by Naoto Fukasawa; sand paintings by Emily Muir. For details, see Resources.

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aine summers are mythic, its coastal cottages perhaps even more so. There are the shingled behemoths built by 19th-century rusticators, Greek Revival captain's houses clustered in seaside villages, and simple fisherman's shacks strung along the ocean's edge. None of them interested Carolyn Evans as she scrolled through rental options from her Charleston, South Carolina, kitchen in the spring of 2020. "We'd never been to Maine, but friends had moved there to escape the Southern summers, and we were feeling that heat," says Evans, a psychotherapist and author. Those friends happened to be Bill Bowick and David Bouffard, an architect duo who knew exactly what she and her husband, Ray, wanted. The couple had recently traded in a traditional 1840s Charleston "single" for a 1950s midcentury home, all angles, glass, and brick, with an open floor plan. "I just love a straight line," Evans says she realized. "I have a hard time living with a curve."

Which is why the minute she opened an email from her friends with a listing for a rental house on Maine's Deer Isle, she immediately booked it for the month of August. Built in 1968, the home is on 12 acres and overlooks the Atlantic Ocean and Crockett Cove. "It had me at the full glass front," she says. "But the fact that it also sits on a huge piece of granite that hangs over the water? You can slip into nature without disturbing it."

Even better, it was designed by Emily Muir, an artist environmentalist, philanthropist, and self-taught architect whose homes were legendary. Her legacy is bound up in 45 modest cottages scattered in and around Crockett Cove at the tip of one of Maine's storied peninsulas. She was instrumental in bringing to Deer Isle the esteemed Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, designed by the architect Edward Larrabee Barnes. Between them, the pair put down Maine's modernist roots with a shared vision: that every building be a showcase for the landscape. Muir died in 2003 at the age of 99.

Evans eagerly moved in for what she thought was a month's respite. But two weeks into the rental, she learned that the house was going on the market. "Muir's places rarely come up for sale and are almost never as intact as this one," she says. "So we made an offer, thrilled by the fact



Homeowner Carolyn Evans with her daughter, Reese. Outdoor lounge chairs by Houe.

that we actually got to wake up there before signing any papers." The couple and their two adult children, daughter Reese and son Marshall, were all on board with the decision. By September, the place was theirs.

In short order, Evans called Charleston-based interior designer Angie Hranowsky, whom she credits with cultivating her love of midcentury modern architecture. The Maine house took Hranowsky's breath away. "All you can do when you walk through the door is look outside," she says. There was nothing she could do on the inside to compete with that view. So taking her cues from the original architect, she didn't try. "Muir was not pretentious or flashy, and she certainly wasn't extravagant," says the designer, who mostly restored what was there. She added a fresh coat of paint to the kitchen cabinets and covered the counters with new sheets of Formica. Where the floorboards were rotted, she matched new ones to the old. She furnished the rooms in classic Maine-cottage fashion, with a hodgepodge of pieces that seem like castoffs from a primary home. A pair of sofas was placed back-to-back, one facing the water, the other peering into a roaring fire.

It is this sensitivity to environment that drew Evans to work with Hranowsky on the project, their third together. And it is likely what Muir, too, was after. "You can just feel her commitment to working with the land, whether you are looking at the house from the water or looking at the water from the house," Evans says. Indeed, she was so inspired by the house that she relented on her straight-lines rule and left the curved vanity in the bathroom as is. "What was important to Muir," she says, "is now important to me." ■



A vintage Danish modern chair faces a family heirloom, an antique Windsor chair with a cushion in a Martyn Lawrence Bullard print, in the fireplace and TV room. Nesting tables by Gianfranco Frattini, 1970s pendant by Jo Hammerborg.



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LEFT: The stairwell has the original pine shiplap siding, pink granite wall, and rope banister.

ABOVE: The back porch was designed for game playing, dinner, and cocktails. Custom fir table by Brad Rice; vintage pendant.



Hranowsky preserved the home's original kitchen design, repainting cabinets in close color matches. Vintage pendant by Paavo Tynell; Forbo Marmoleum flooring in Berlin Red.



ABOVE: The chair in the primary bath is by Emily Muir. Porcelain hex tile by Casablanca.

RIGHT: The primary bedroom is oriented toward the water. Bed coverlet by Area Home; vintage Wakefield Brothers wicker chair, Deer Isle's Ronald Harte Antiques.

