



To the four winds

The original house was renovated as the single-level structure on the left to hold the common rooms, and the two-story addition at right includes three bedroom suites.

Creative minds, voices, and hands from all over the Island and beyond came together to fashion this colorful and artistic home on Four Winds Lane in Chilmark.

BY LAUREN MARTIN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT SCHELLHAMMER



Great renovators are not unlike great film directors. Both have to creatively drive a team that spans from the big-money professionals with the glamour jobs to the folks who hammer the nails, keeping track of the techies wiring for sound and the artisans who choose the just-right fabrics. Both oversee the experts in special effects (of one sort or another) who make crazy-sounding ideas become real. Both know details matter. They have strong vision, but draw too from the creatives around them.

It was in this way that Arleen and Dave McGlade took a small place on the rolling hillsides off South Road in Chilmark and made it an arty, well-structured hit. This couple, with a tight collaboration of Vineyard professionals, made a home that works as a series of memorable vignettes within a larger story,

one that artfully uses light, color, and detail to illuminate the lives of the characters that inhabit this charming setting.

It took longer than some blockbuster films, it must be said. Vineyard Haven-based architect Peter Breese shakes his head as he says, "I'm not even sure exactly when we started." Standing outside the screened-in porch and great room that remain of the original structure, Peter adds, "It's been at least three years."

In that time, that cottage above a small, reclaimed vineyard of grapes small and large, red and purple, has grown to a four-bedroom, four-and-a-half bath home with lots of living space (plus a separate garage). The structure seems perfectly situated now: As the land slopes down, the house goes up without soaring; surrounding it are the vines and a hot tub. It takes elegant advantage of some views to the south shore from the master



The entrance to the McGlade home displays the type of old meets new that carries throughout. The view to the great room encompasses the study doorway just past the bench. The open door leads to the powder room, with its unique tap: Zephyr, Greek god of the west wind (facing).

bedroom's deck; the bathtub, placed unusually in that bedroom's bay window, faces a more pastoral view.

But first: Owned by an international tech executive and an artist, who live most of the year in Washington, D.C., the home's interiors are punctuated with color, color drawing you from one space to the next, sliding from history to modernity with whimsy, from the big picture to the niche with simplicity.

The concept

It began with the idea of a modest addition. The McGlades were living in London when they bought the cottage in November 2003, knowing it would need some renovations. "We really liked the integrity of the house," Arleen says. "We originally tried to save the whole thing," Dave continues. "It was like a 1950s camp."

That's where Breese Architects came in. "We started out with a building that was preexisting, nonconforming," says Peter Breese. Navigating Vineyard planning boards, a height restriction, and permit complexities, the plans eventually included what Peter calls two new buildings: The existing house was largely renovated to accommodate the public areas (study/TV room, great room, kitchen, guest quarters), which is enchantingly connected to a new building of three bedroom suites; and there is a new and separate garage with living space above.

"It's very labor-intensive to renovate an existing building,"

Peter says. "It takes longer and generally costs more than building a new building – particularly if you're going to go this far with it." And it is a more interesting, enjoyable, and satisfying project. "All that history is still there."

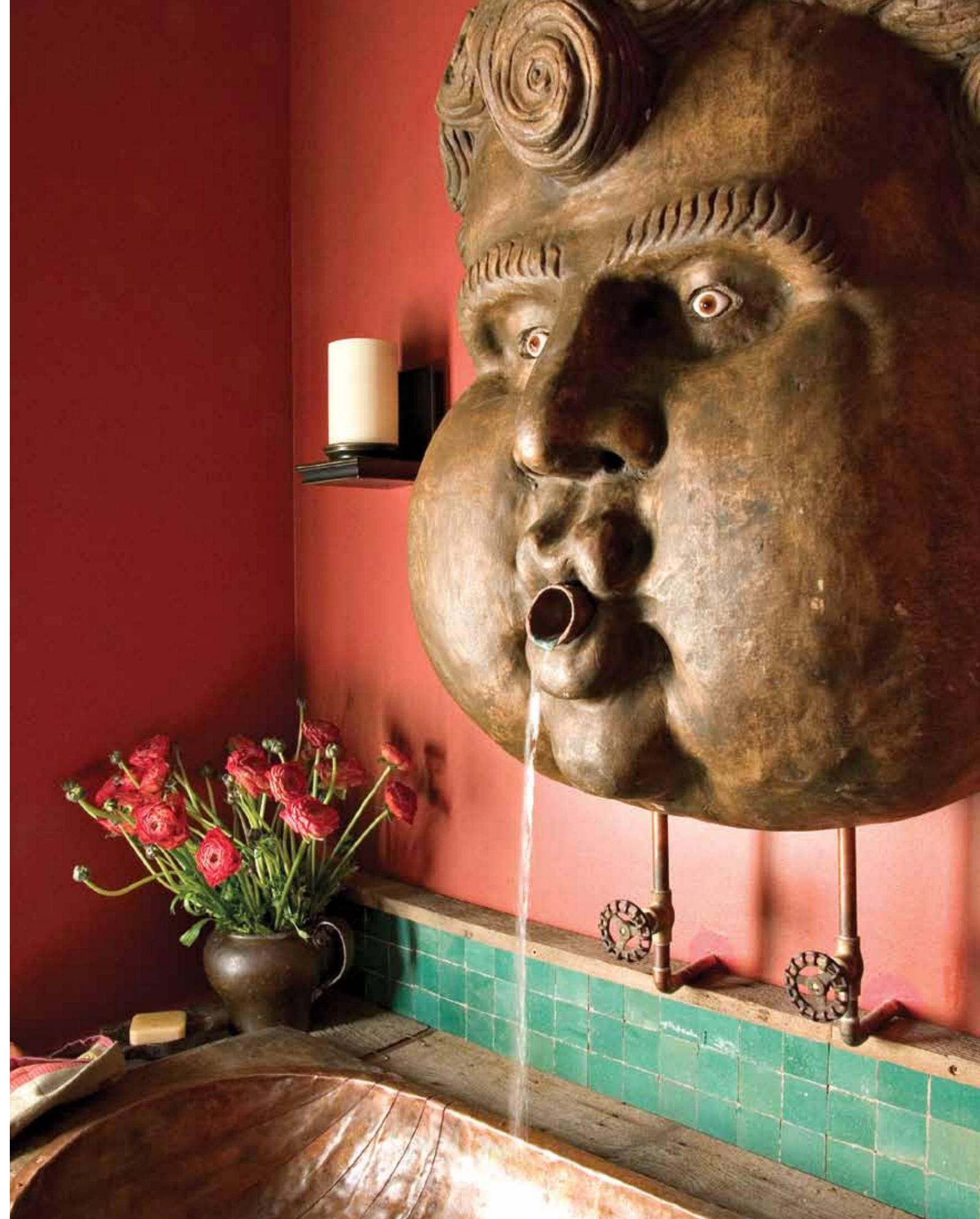
Dave and Arleen's history on the Island goes back more than twenty-five years; they have been coming here together since they were in college. "Every time I came I had this sense of peace; I felt like it was home," she says. "There was always something pulling us back to the Vineyard," Dave says.

The force aesthetically behind this, their first Vineyard home, was Arleen. "She just wanted to experiment with all these different bits and pieces; it wasn't thematic," Peter says. "It wasn't trying to be one sweeping, encompassing idea."

"There really were so many parts to it, so many Vineyard people working on it," Arleen says. "I think the ideas and debates, and sometimes the friction, made it a much more interesting result."

The collaboration included interior designer Mary Rentschler and contractor/builder Laurence Clancy, among many other Island professionals. "And driving it all was Arleen being extremely creative," Dave says. "We would push things, and they would push things – and the result is a really dramatic and fun place."

Mary Rentschler enthusiastically agrees as she stands inside the front door, where sunny, saturated yellow walls are lit





Old things new: Part of a beam found on the beach became the mantel of the great room fireplace, which was repaired and rebuilt with new stone- and woodwork. The oversized sliding barn door leading to the study is recycled wood, its handle a vise that broke during the remodeling.

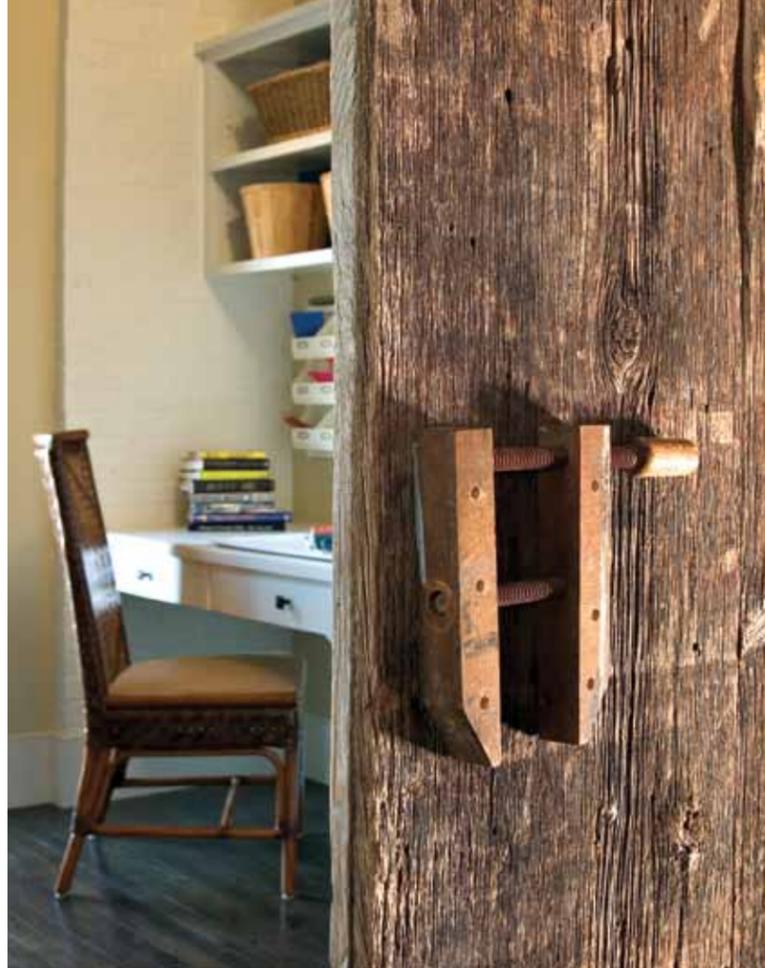
from above by two rounded red lanterns. “Here, the color leads you places,” she says, glancing to her right toward the great room, warming in its soaring natural tones. “All these dramatic views.”

The common rooms

To the left of the main entrance is the corridor connecting the renovated house with the new building; it is what design people call a “transitional space.” It could be just a hallway. Instead it’s a perch. On one side, looking out over the backyard, are Breese’s huge, well-proportioned glass doors and square windows with snug window-box seats. On the wall opposite is a series of six art boxes. Lined up along a common black metal track, each box is faced with a recycled wood door with a small peephole. The doors slide open to reveal, under tiny fiber-optic downlights, piles of rocks, found objects, even a little painted sign that reads, aptly, “Trust your crazy ideas.”

“We wanted it to be a special space, to be used for something to enjoy every day, almost like a gallery, with children’s artwork, rocks you just found at the beach, surprises of the every day,” says Arleen.

Architecturally, the space has two purposes. “It’s a way of getting you into both the addition and the main house,” Peter says. “But the power of that space has to do with making an axial connection.” Standing at the main entry, looking



toward the right through the airy, renovated great room, he adds, “There, you can see all the way into the kitchen.”

Dave relishes it. “I often like just walking around the house,” he says. “I don’t do that in my other house; I don’t care.”

He loves walking through the oversized sliding barn door to the study, which is ahead, immediately off the entry. This door, like the art boxes, is made of recycled wood from the Vineyard’s South Mountain Company. But its handle is most unusual – it’s a worn-out vise – and it’s part of the house’s own story. Dave: “One of the men that worked for Laurence Clancy, Dan, he would come to me with his own ideas and say, ‘How about we finish it like this, or that.’ He had these antique tools from his father that he used on the house, and [this vise] broke. He said to us, ‘This tool broke here; it deserves to stay here. Let’s use it [as the handle].’”

Inside the room, which serves as a TV room as well as a study, there’s a desk and a tiny loft. Opposite are bookshelves, painted a bright teal within; above them fits a beam from the original house. Above that again hang more old tools Dan offered for the cause, a great look – the past overseeing the present. “Arleen loves any call to the past,” says Mary. “Anything that brings forth the old house.”

The past presented some challenges in the now-spectacular great room. First, the existing fireplace was not notably spectacular and needed repair. “We made the decision to save it,”



The connector hallway was designed to be used and enjoyed daily. On one side, a wall of windows and doors looks down the hill; opposite are six boxes along a black metal track. Sliding open the recycled wood doors reveals myriad surprises, such as this winning painting and rocks (right).

says Peter. “So Arleen asked Atlantis [stonemasons] to go in and face it in stone, while we built out a chimney form in the wall to make it read vertical, and we did the woodwork and wainscoting around it.” The stonework mantel fits around an old beam Mary found on a beach, a beam she thinks may have come from the old Oak Bluffs ferry wharf. “Just because of the way it’s rotted and has these big bolt holes,” she muses. Mary and Arleen got the architect, builder, and others to help them drag it off the beach. It was originally much longer; the part that was cut off from the piece used to fit the firebox was then cut into four equal pieces, which became legs for a table made of an old door, now in the study.

Obstructing the great room space was a steel column that ran down the center of the room between the kitchen and living areas. “The existing house had a wall here,” Peter sighs, waving his hand under the now high-reaching pitched roof ceiling. “Nothing was symmetrical, nothing was straight. So we engineered a huge steel truss across, covered it with wood, and got rid of the post,” he adds, making it sound easy. “Engineering it was initially a challenge for the builders...but the significant part of it was really the owners deciding that taking out that post was essential to getting the most out of that space.”

Great rooms can be overpowering; this one manages to feel comfortable. Overhead is an oversized ceiling fan made of, in part, fishing rods that rotate around a bicycle sprocket. “We



needed something graceful and huge,” Mary says. “So we used big pieces down low to counteract that big space.” A low table, once used for drying bricks, is central, decorated with found objects. A bar from the Vineyard Haven store Midnight Farm serves as handy storage for entertaining.

Under the sisal rugs lay handsome dark floors that set off the light-colored furniture. “The floors were a huge decision, a huge deal to do,” Mary says. There is layer upon layer of ebony stain on oak. The effect is to ground the rich accents and natural colors throughout.

The kitchen

“There is an elegance to it,” says owner Dave of the kitchen–great room flow. “Those beautiful floors...I love coming out of the kitchen, with its lower ceilings, sloping up and opening up into the great room.”

Peter explains that the organization of the kitchen is particularly strong. “It has a very clear structure, a symmetry that allows for a variety and richness of finishes; the core organization still reads.

“There’s a lot of interesting stuff here,” he says. A compact Aga stove. Intense green Moroccan tiles. Strong green paintwork above white wood cupboards and cabinetry, some faced with wire.

Then, in the middle of it all... “I must say, our office would



The great room opens onto the kitchen with its high table, large island, green Moroccan tiles, and lower ceilings.



The centerpiece of the kitchen is an island unto itself, with a remarkably creative sink – which has great potential for entertaining.

not have spec'ed this," Peter says, smiling at the extraordinary second sink, one that snakes through the middle of the capsule-shaped island he designed around it. Arleen found the sink: "It's a fun piece I wanted to have in there."

"Aesthetically, we've got a unique form to the island," says Peter. "Many are static, just another rectangle. But because of the sink came the idea of making it more dynamic, a shape people can move around...which is also why the table is not squared to the room."

Mary turns on the tap and watches the water slide down the sinuous curves of the stainless steel sink within the island. "Can't you just see, on a hot sultry day, you fill this with ice and Heineken and littlenecks, and that's your serving piece."

The bathrooms

The McGlades also have a home in Colorado, which is where Arleen found one of the most extraordinary objects in this house on Four Winds Lane. It's Zephyr, "the Greek god of [the warm west] wind," laughs Mary, nodding at the copper-looking fiberglass cheeks of a giant face. It is puffing out from the red wall, beneath a metallic green ceiling, in the powder room off the great room. But it was not designed to be a tap above a bathroom sink. "This," admits Arleen, "provided one of the biggest challenges in the house."

"We had to calibrate water properly so it wouldn't come shooting out," Mary says, showing off how the water now flows gently from a pipe in the mouth of the god. Then, they found an antique dough bowl that made a compatible sink shape to go beneath. Island metalwork artisan Whit Hanschka lined the bowl with copper, sectioned along the curves like the hide of an armadillo. To stop splash, barn wood was tied onto a frame with copper cords. And above the toilet is a carefully placed mirror, allowing Zephyr to oversee any secret men's business

from the opposite wall.

Downstairs in the addition are two bathrooms that connect two bedrooms. The addition of a simple pocket door between the compact bathrooms – designed for the McGlades' teenage daughters – opens it all up. It allows the four smaller spaces to seem airy. One of the bathrooms has a tub, the other a shower, but the tiny tiles installed in each echo the other, creating a feeling of calm connection. Simple trim provides shelving for the space.

From the terrace outside these rooms is the path to one outdoor shower, off the garage, where a sculpture of pipes, with a big copper rain showerhead in the middle, juts up above the wooden stall. It's the kind of small detail Breese has incorporated throughout.

(Nearby, above the garage, is a weather vane typical of the serendipity throughout this renovation; Arleen commissioned it in London, and it turns out the artisan had trained with the late Travis Tuck on Martha's Vineyard.)

Up the hill outside the connector hallway is the main, unenclosed outdoor shower. Here, letters spelling "RINSE" – which Arleen collected from an old pub in England – hang around the plumbing. At your feet is a simply stacked pile of rocks the masons added at Arleen's suggestion – perfect for placing your foot or a cake of soap.

A pile of smaller stones sits in one of four recessed niches in the white walls of the spa-like master bathroom, continuing the theme of altar-like art spaces throughout. This room is quietly sensational. "Everyone loves that room," says Dave. It works around the central toilet and shower area, each enclosed only by sliding screens made of climbing reeds embedded in 3Form recycled plastic. The shower is open to the window and the view.

Arleen: "I remember standing there on wood planks before the house was very advanced, looking at the water, saying, 'This spot is where I'd like my shower to be, and open to the view' – and we worked around that."

Almost within reach of the shower is a bar fridge; the room does open to the deck after all. A carved Southeast Asian goddess statue with green detail stands to the other side of the shower, next to two sinks made of concrete. "This looks like lichen on the trees in the forest," marvels Mary at the color of the rough-hewn concrete work, beautifully imperfect beneath brushed-metal fixtures and Italian blown-glass lights. "The concrete looks like it came out of an old castle," says Mary. "It has an ancient feel."

On the cabinets below, the handles are made of smooth black pebbles. "It's about natural, timeless, low maintenance," she says. "Simplified."

The bedrooms

The deck outside that stunning shower connects with the master bedroom – the one with the bathtub. Tall and small, the tub sits on a landing in a bay window opposite the bed. Its exposed taps don't look like plumbing; they look like jewelry.

"I look at that as something which is very serene," Arleen says of the bathtub. "I love taking baths, and to have it on its own little spot was a very nice way to have that space revered."

Mary says, "But it was looking lonely. First we added bureaus in the corners below. Then Arleen found these old wooden pillars, which we were going to use for the bed." But the pillars ended up flanking the tub. "Connecting old and new," says Mary.

The color of the bedroom is gutsy blue. The first blue they tried was a bit gray, a bit colonial, a bit blah. Now, in a niche



Steps lead to a spot of serenity in the master bedroom: a tub nestled into a bay window.

recessed above the bed, Mary is trying out a painting of all water, a trademark work from Clifford Smith, an artist represented on-Island by Etherington Fine Art in Vineyard Haven. The effect of the entire master bedroom washes over you like a gentle wave.

The master suite comes off a half-flight of stairs up from the connector; a half-flight down from the connector are the girls' bedrooms. Both their headboards are made from the doors of the original house, again exploiting the history of the place. The rooms appear simple and serene. They have high walls and eight-foot doors. "That gives the lower level more light so it doesn't feel you're sunken in," Peter says. Plus, he added an unusually high window in one room above the base foundation wall. Then Mary suggested trim midway up, and detail on the walls above that, so the room didn't seem too tall. Both rooms open onto the terrace covered by the master deck above.

The finished product

On that deck last summer, Allen Whiting stood, painting the view. His finished work will hang in the study, marking this stage in the house's evolution. The landscaping will mature. A pool may go in. But the McGlades have made a home they love.

"What we tried to do is make it playful," says Arleen. "Something artful...a little bit of art, a little surprise in every corner."

So is it The End? "The integrity of the house is done," Arleen says. "The guts of it."

This collaboration is so much fun, she won't say it's reached the final cut. But there is already a happy ending, she says: "Watching this process was just so much joy." ♦

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Breese Architects (Peter MacLean, lead designer/manager) Architect
Rentschler and Company Interiors Interior design and decoration
Clancy Construction General contractor/builder
Carly Look Design Landscape design
Atlantis Hardscape Stonemasonry and landscape construction
Traditional Woodworking (Piermont, NH) Cabinetry
Dana Thornton Electric
Martha's Vineyard Plumbing and Heating Plumbing
Martha's Vineyard Tile Company Interior stone and tile
Bianchi's Tile and Marble (Falmouth) Tile installation and stone fabrication
Paco Santana Painting
Singular Spaces Decorative painting
Island Window Design Window treatments
Mary Louise Koch and Valerie Reese Design and Interiors Custom sewing and upholstery
MacDonald's Rugs and Carpets Rug and runner installations



The master bathroom's shower, open to the view and watched over by a carved Southeast Asian goddess, uses sliding, recycled plastic screens for a hint of privacy. The bed has its own water view in the dynamic painting by Clifford Smith.

