

SUMMER SAFARI

Though inspired by South African grassland camps, this outdoor pavilion on the New England coast is a permanent vacation





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THREE YEARS AGO, CAPE COD ARCHITECT JILL NEUBAUER STOOD ON a scrub-oak hillside and had a vision of the South African veldt. “I’d seen an image of a luxurious safari where the guests cooked, dined, and slept in a large beautiful tent of canvas and billowing screens,” she says. “It glowed in the evening, and it was a memory that seemed to fit the inspiration for this project.”

At the time, Neubauer’s husband and frequent collaborator, landscape architect Stephen Stimson, was working on a master plan for the long-term growth and grooming of a 35-acre working horse farm/vacation compound. “The family wanted to consider the entire property, and part of that program included a pool with supporting spaces,” Neubauer says. They wanted outdoor living with kitchen, dining, and socializing spaces, and indoor living with a prep kitchen, bathroom, and changing rooms. “The pool and pavilion would dovetail with the greater equestrian elements — the paddocks, stables, barns, the lunge ring, and training arena,” Neubauer says.

Under Stimson’s charge, this combination of field, pasture, woodland, gently winding driveways, and rolling hills would play no mere supporting role in the evolution of the greater project. The

BILLING SHEER CURTAINS (LEFT) give the poolside pavilion a romantic ambience. The outdoor kitchen includes an island with a honed soapstone countertop and sink. The view from the terrace **(ABOVE)** to the pavilion and pool beyond is framed by shaggy-barked river birch. At the lipless end of the pool **(RIGHT)** a waterfall cascades down the bluestone wall. In the background, horses graze outside the farm’s paddocks.





landscape would be far more than simply decoration. “This opportunity allows for a master plan to create the direction for the project,” Stimson says. “We then recommend to the owners an architect who would be well suited to take it on. It’s a very rewarding kind of collaboration.”

The bathhouse and dining pavilion would ultimately sit on the very hillside where Neubauer first envisioned the African inspiration for them. “Part of Steve’s goal was to make that slope useful as well as beautiful,” Neubauer says. “It was our goal to make the building grow out of the site and hill and be fully integrated with the greater landscape.”

Integral to the success of both directives was a backbone of bluestone. The material serves to terrace the hillside with walls and walkways, and Neubauer incorporated the stone into the pavilion’s walls, floor, hearth, and appliance surrounds. The terrace walls hold the hillside at the outdoor pavilion and then grow to create the stone building. “Characterized by simple forms, clean lines, and that rich palette of natural



THE POOL CAN be viewed across the hillside terraces (ABOVE) that landscape architect Stephen Stimson defined with bluestone walls, steps, and walkways. Looking from the pool area (LEFT), the runnel adds to the geometry as well as to the aural experience of the scene. Along the walkway, ancient Chinese limestone statues guide the way.

kitchen

materials, the bathhouse and pavilion almost seem to grow out of the lower bluestone wall,” says Christopher Harris, who served as Neubauer’s project manager.

Guiding visitors and family down from the main residence to the pavilion is a collection of 1,000-year-old limestone statues the family imported from China. “Taken together,” Neubauer says, “it all works with both a little formality and a little whimsy.”

Mindful that the bathhouse and pavilion would serve double duty as the family’s “home away from home,” Neubauer crafted the 950-square-foot space with enough amenities to make trips to the main house few and far between. In addition to the partially sheltered outdoor living, dining, and cooking areas, the structure holds a prep kitchen, full bath, changing areas, and a laundry. A shower, spa, and infinity-edge pool highlight the exterior features, all unified by the solidity of the bluestone.

Pairing the physical essentials of the project with the natural elements of both the site and Neubauer’s playful design sense required a deliberate eye and ear. She and Stimson incorporated foot-wide copper runnels recessed into the grass heading down the slope from the main residence to the pavilion. The running water suggests the presence



of a hillside brook, and the addition of shaggy-barked river birches further whispers water. The runnel detail continues to the pavilion’s hearth, where a stream of water appears to cascade like a waterfall behind the burning chamber.

Neubauer chose materials whose patina would, over time, continue to mature and develop. Natural slate for the roof, copper cladding for the chimney, pickled fir for the pavilion ceiling and columns provide both low maintenance and durability.

THE POOL HOUSE grows out of the bluestone site walls. The copper and teak selected for the structure guarantee that it will age to a tapestry of subtle colors.

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- A detailed floor plan of a pavilion structure. The plan is elongated and includes a large rectangular pool area (1) at the top right. Below the pool is a living area (2) with a sofa and chairs, followed by a dining area (3) with a table and chairs. The kitchen (4) is located below the dining area. To the left of the kitchen is a prep kitchen (5) and a bathroom (6). Further down are two changing rooms (7) and an outdoor shower (8). At the bottom of the plan is a spa (9). The entire pavilion is surrounded by a series of trees, represented by green circles of varying sizes. A legend on the left side of the plan lists the numbered areas: 1 POOL, 2 LIVING AREA, 3 DINING AREA, 4 KITCHEN, 5 PREP KITCHEN, 6 BATHROOM, 7 CHANGING ROOMS, 8 OUTDOOR SHOWER, and 9 SPA.
- 1 POOL
 - 2 LIVING AREA
 - 3 DINING AREA
 - 4 KITCHEN
 - 5 PREP KITCHEN
 - 6 BATHROOM
 - 7 CHANGING ROOMS
 - 8 OUTDOOR SHOWER
 - 9 SPA

IN ADDITION TO the sublime setting, the abundant amenities, including the full outdoor kitchen, indoor and outdoor showers, changing rooms, and a spa, allow the family to spend a day at the pool without venturing back to the main house.

A band of teak windows set high on the wall of the bathhouse allows natural light to filter into the pickled-fir, limestone, and copper-clad interior spaces. Teak-framed screening allows both light and ventilation. As tough as they are handsome, the countertops and sink are made from honed and oiled soapstone imported from Brazil. Neubauer added bronze strap lights to the posts to illuminate the fir ceiling. “Our idea was to choose cohesive, symbiotic materials whose shifts in color over the years would continue harmoniously,” she says.

At one of the first languid dusks of summer, when the air and light might match the feel of that African tableau Jill Neubauer first imagined, the distant paddocks, pastures, and barns are lit up with an amber gold. A pair of mares trot by in the distance, kicking up a veil of dust and pressing their silhouettes into the view. The estate’s caretaker is busy with some final plantings and tidying around the pavilion.

“The whole family comes here early in the morning, stays here all day and into the night with lots of laughter,” he says. “It’s their sanctuary, and I don’t think there’s any better compliment for the creators of this place than that.” ■

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