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Path To Success
A sinuous brick path leads to Mary Foley's front door in Southampton (THIS PAGE). In the living room (OPPOSITE), a George Smith sofa is covered in a linen from Arabel Fabrics; the armless Halsey chairs are from Ralph Lauren Home. Foley had the circular window frame, a purchase from antiques dealer Liza Sherman, made into a mirror. See Resources.



FOLEY'S OASIS

When decorator Mary Foley decided to buy a cottage in Southampton, she let intuition be her guide

BY MARTHA MCCULLY | PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARILI FORASTIERI



One day Mary Foley stood on the second-floor balcony of her newly acquired Southampton cottage and realized that it was exactly the house her longtime psychic had predicted she would buy. “You will feel like you’re in the woods, even though you’re not,” her psychic had said. “There will be a tiny balcony overlooking a kitchen, and an open living and dining area.” When it comes to truth-telling, it was Foley’s own sixth sense that had told her the place was meant to be hers—soon after her daughter, Kirby, discovered a listing for it online. “I’m very good at knowing what I like and picturing where everything belongs,” says Foley, whose intuitive nature has guided her career as an interior designer, running the company Foley & Cox with business partner Michael

Cox. Having worked together at Ralph Lauren Home, the pair launched their firm in 2002 and since then have created interiors for private residences and even airplanes and boats for clients in New York, Monaco, Nantucket, London, the Bahamas, Florida, and the Hamptons.

Although Foley says she appreciates the bold patterns and colors she chooses for her clients, she’s the first to admit that she didn’t want to live with them herself. In her own home, she opted for an all-white palette to serve as the backdrop for an informal, uncluttered gathering place for friends and family. “White is so simple and clean, it lets me breathe,” says Foley, who left most of the cottage’s architectural details untouched, though she renovated the kitchen, installing Caesarstone counters and Shaker-style cabinets—all in white—for a clean, open look.

Antique Boutique
In the dining room (THIS PAGE), the table, chairs, and cabinet are all finds from Foley’s antiquing expeditions. The white Wedgwood bowl on the table is a gift from her sister, stylist and author Tricia Foley; the wicker planter is from Bloom. The color field painting (OPPOSITE) is by Foley’s friend Daniela Kamiliotis. See *Resources*.





Cozy Lairs

The master bedroom (THIS PAGE) includes bed linens and sheer curtains from Ralph Lauren Home; the table is from Laurin Copen Antiques. The white lantern outside the guest cottage (OPPOSITE) is from the New General Store. The bed linens and pillow fabric are from Ralph Lauren Home; the blue and white dust ruffle is from Williams-Sonoma Home. The chest and cabinet are finds from the Brimfield Antique Show. See *Resources*.

FOLEY APPRECIATES BOLD PATTERNS AND COLORS, BUT “WHITE IS SO SIMPLE AND CLEAN”



Most of the furnishings and accessories in the cottage were either previously owned or given to Foley as gifts. (As a decorator, she is constantly shopping for clients, but tends to get market fatigue when it comes to buying things for herself.) A white Wedgwood bowl is a treasured gift from her sister, stylist and author Tricia Foley. A close friend made the crushed bamboo prototype coffee table that anchors the seating area. An old farm table that Foley has owned for years gets a fresh coat of white lacquer every season. And nearly all the artwork, including a white abstract color field painting, an oil portrait of her dog, Daphne, and a sketch of hydrangeas, was given to her by

her close friend and former Ralph Lauren colleague Daniela Kamiliotis. Daughter Kirby spotted a massive round window frame at the now-defunct shop run by Liza Sherman in Sag Harbor; Foley fitted it with a mirror and hung it above the fireplace. And at a barn sale, Michael Cox bought her a sensational cabinet, now stocked with silver, glass, and “cook-books that I actually use,” she says. In every room, the designer proves that sticking to a simple palette doesn’t mean a place has to be devoid of visual interest or compelling contrasts. The chunky Merida Meridian sisal rug on the living area’s floor adds a tactile counterpoint to the smooth linen and canvas fabrics on the

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Serene Surroundings

On the patio (THIS PAGE), white director's chairs from Telescope Casual surround a zinc table from the Antique & Artisan Center in Stamford, Connecticut. A seductive pool is tucked away on a hill behind the patio, with two white butterfly chairs from Crate & Barrel as a focal point (OPPOSITE). See [Resources](#).

sofa and chairs. A zinc table—a gift from Kirby—on the original brick patio provides the setting for summer dinner parties. The faded bricks lead up a path to the pool and a 19th-century guest cottage, which was moved to the property by the former owners.

The landscape is a wavy sea of mature trees and vibrant plants, including fiery azalea, weeping pines, red maples, magnolias, butterfly bushes, and a rare spiraling ginkgo. A prize specimen is the soft, billowy pine tree opposite the front door, planted by a young boy who lived in the cottage 30 years ago. He had brought the seedling home from a McDonald's promotion.

This natural setting is what Foley craves most when she's away, whether working in the city or traveling for business.

Whenever weather permits, she keeps the large French doors to the patio wide open, creating an extra room for summertime guests. She recalls growing up in a similarly wooded landscape, perhaps another reason this place feels so right for her. Foley's family lived in a rather unusual home on Long Island, designed in 1936 by architect Richard Davison and known as the Canvas Weekend House. At the time it was considered “experimental,” with a flat roof, steel windows, and a cork ceiling. The kitchen was black lacquer and steel, and the exterior was wrapped in canvas. Foley credits her interest in design to having lived in such a striking and imaginative home: “It was the most amazing place I had ever seen,” she says. “It changed my life.” Not surprisingly, the canvas sheathing the exterior was all white. ✿

