

(four acres) facing northwest over the water (just right for summer sunsets). There was a large old house already on the site, but Burns had his own plan. A longtime fan of the work of Hugh Newell Jacobsen, renowned for creating elegant multibuilding residences, Burns hired Jacobsen's firm and collaborated with the architect's son and partner, Simon, to formulate a scheme that eschewed the traditional style of the shingled mansions that proliferate on the island.

To that end, Jacobsen conceived the home as a cluster of 12 small structures that have the look and feel of classic Nantucket cottages but provide, overall, a generous amount of square footage. With the exception of a 1.5-story guesthouse, which sits at a lower elevation, all of the buildings are one level, the tallest measuring 26 feet high. Each has its own dedicated purpose: living room, kitchen, dining room, office, etc. There's a casual lounge area called the Friends Room. Two structures—one for the bedroom, another for the bath—make up Burns's spacious master suite. From across the water, one might easily mistake the property for a group of summer rentals.

Arguably, few people who come to Nantucket to build their dream house would embrace such an unconventional configuration. But Burns insists the setup is practical. "Sure, you can have a grand home," he says, "but people are drawn to smaller spaces. At my place in Florida, if I have 35 people over for drinks, they will all squeeze into the library."

As for the decor, Jacobsen and Burns rejected the weathered-brass ship fixtures and glass fishing buoys that are so familiar here, opting instead for stark, modern settings. In most of the rooms, the furniture is arranged in the middle of the space, with nothing against the crisp white walls. The furnishings—urbane, clean-lined pieces largely designed by Jacobsen—underscore the off-island vibe.

"Our architecture is based on refined geometric forms, so when we do interiors, the goal is never to soften things up with a lot of fluffy stuff but to design furniture that truly complements the structure," Jacobsen explains.

Not that the rather minimalist aesthetics give the estate a spartan or solemn air. The grounds include a long lap pool, a koi pond, and an often-used tennis court. There's also a luxurious home theater. But given that every summer weekend brings different friends to stay, it's just as well that Burns has options for everyone, including himself. Making the most of this patch of seaside perfection takes a village—or at least a compound. □



A tapestry by Jan Voors and a series of the artist's charcoal drawings add graphic punch in the living room. A Mies van der Rohe daybed by Knoll is grouped with a pair of Christophe Delcourt sofas from Ralph Pucci International; the Kevin Reilly table lamps are from Holly Hunt.