



## BRUCE D. NAGEL & PARTNER ARCHITECTS

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There are preconceived notions about the style of Hamptons homes. Today, most think of the traditional shingle-style that has helped to define the landscape of the various villages. Stating that he does not have a signature style – it is not his job to – architect Bruce Nagel likens this to the style of the Hamptons, sharing there is not one single style as many may have previously assumed. He should know, too, as he has been designing homes on the East End for the last 34 years. Having designed a number of styles of home for numerous clients with different wants and needs, Nagel aims to create something that is timeless and will look as new today as it did when it was built decades ago.

“One of the great things about the Hamptons is that there is no style,” Nagel explains. “A lot of people like to pretend there’s this shingle-style and that’s what the Hamptons is, but if you’re a historian and really understand and think about the question, you can find styles that were appropriate to every period, from the 1890s to the 1990s. Architecture is reflective of the current fashion of the time.”

Nagel pinpoints the development of the Hamptons to be around the 1990s, which many can look to in terms of a specific style. On Lily Pond Lane in East Hampton, many homes were built just before and after the Great Depression. A challenge buyers have when purchasing these homes today and want to do renovations is that at the time they were built, lifestyles were different. People didn’t think about having a swimming pool in their yards because those didn’t exist yet and backyards were not used for such leisurely activities.

75% of Nagel’s projects are in some fashion a renovation. “The really great sites and locations that exist in the Hamptons more than likely already have a house on them,” he says, adding very rarely is a blank piece of property found that can be purchased. “The setting is a big factor. If there’s an existing structure there and someone bought it for \$5 million, there’s a good chance we’re not tearing it down.”

How Nagel came to the Hamptons is a somewhat

similar story to many others that started venturing out east for the summer. He was born in San Antonio, Texas, and earned a Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Texas at Austin. Nagel received his Master of Architecture degree from the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University. He worked in New York City after school and started coming to the Hamptons in the summer. He loved the environment on the South Fork and was thinking about starting a family. He did not want to be in the city raising children.

"Not a lot of places in the United States have a small community like the Hamptons where an architect can survive," Nagel shares. "Usually it is urban, big cities where you can do buildings. The Hamptons represented an opportunity to be a successful architect and live in an area that is conducive to family life."

The firm has evolved over the years, mostly in the area of technology, which is more than just computers. Materials like plywood, windows, shingles, and nearly every facet of the bones of a piece of construction has been touched by technology. Nagel shares energy efficient construction is a phenomenal result of technology, leaving as small of a carbon footprint as possible, something that was not done in the 1990s. Technology has also changed the homeowner's role in the design process. Thanks to the internet they can now research and choose from thousands of styles of faucets, tiles, windows, and everything in between. "This has created more of a rich opportunity, but creates more problems because there are almost too many choices and can be difficult for the client to choose," Nagel says.

It is important for Nagel that architecture is a reflection of the client and the setting. Each project has its own definitions that are heavily influenced by the client's vision and desire. "I'm not designing my house for you, I'm designing your house for you," Nagel says. "If a client comes to me and says they want to have a glass box, that will start to influence the style I will then create for them. If they want a shingle style Hamptons cottage that will influence the style of what I design for them. It's all client-driven."

The relationship between architect and client is collaborative. With the benefits of technology in mind, Nagel's clients are asked to prepare both written and photographic examples of what they are looking for to keep communication open and clear. Nagel says it is important in his practice to not create the same style house for each client, joking that he is not normal himself and doesn't do normal things. It is a theory that has worked for him over the years.

Nagel has earned many accolades over the course of his career. He was honored in 1993 by the Long Island Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (A.I.A.) with its newly initiated ARCHI Award - Young Firm Award, as well as an ARCHI Award for Residential Architecture. He was honored again in 1994 with the ARCHI Award for Institutional Architecture. Nagel also won Dan's List Best of the "Best for Best" Architect 12 times and made Hamptons Magazine's list of "The Best of the Hamptons" consecutively from 2001 to 2009.

The Hamptons office is located in East Quogue, though the firm recently expanded from residential to include hospitality, retail, and international projects. To help lead these new ventures, Nagel enlisted the help of partners Judith DiMaio, David Walker, and Chris Scorgie. In 2016, Nagel opened the Architect's Gallery in Westhampton Beach to hold conferences and meetings, and also display years of architectural work and personal photography.

To achieve such longevity, Nagel says it's about good, timeless design. "I have houses I did in the early 1980s that look as current as those that have been built yesterday," he shares. "If you're a good architect you make beautiful buildings and they are kind of timeless. Since I don't prescribe to a signature style, I am a chameleon and evolve with the client's requests. Stylistically I have not had a transition over the years either. I'm still building what reflects the client's desire."

RACHEL BOSWORTH

