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THIS OLD HOUSE
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GLOUCESTER HOME

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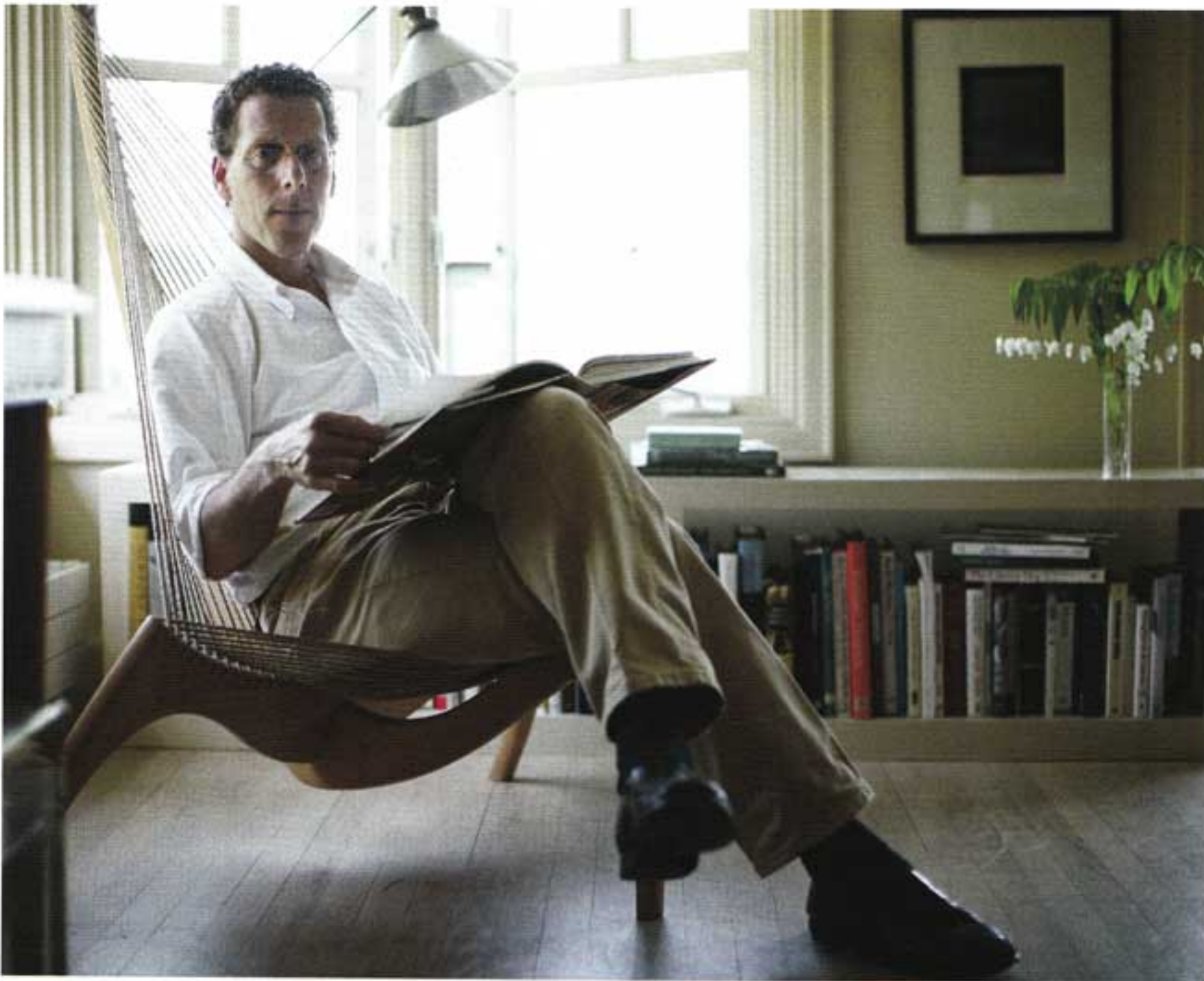
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PAGE 128



Pear chutney from Russell Orchards, Ipswich.

ANTIQUES
DEALER
ANDREW
SPINDLER
APPLIES HIS
IMPECCABLE
TASTE AND
EXPERT
KNACK FOR
INTERIOR
DESIGN TO
CREATE ONE
OF THE NORTH
SHORE'S
MOST
BEAUTIFUL
HOMES.

THIS OLD
HOUSE



By
REGINA COLE

Photographs by
TRENT BELL



Andrew Spindler points to the floor in the entryway of his Gloucester house. Ceramic tiles glow softly in shades of dusty red, blue, and ochre. They flow into the broad living room, where they converge with massive granite fireplace stones, a Jonas Lie frieze depicting Viking ships, and numerous sculptures, books, paintings—not to mention a superb collection of American and European Arts and Crafts furniture.

“These are Mercer Tiles,” says one of the North Shore’s most respected antiques dealers, “like the ones on the floors at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.” Spindler’s reference to Gardner, a legendary Boston Grande Dame and one of this country’s great connoisseurs and collectors, is fitting. To furnish rooms with important art and antiques, as she did in her museum on the Fenway, requires deep knowledge and supreme confidence based in an elevated aesthetic. “The tiles were made by Henry Mercer in Doylestown, Pennsylvania,” Spindler explains. “Today, we prize them as great examples of American Arts and Crafts.”

The floors are not the only distinguished architectural element of the rambling 4,500-square-foot Shingle-style house, built in 1937 according to plans by local architects Phillips and Halloran. Perched on a bluff to gaze at Bass Rocks, Salt Island, and the Twin Lights on Thatcher’s Island, the house is hidden from view. Just below, cars follow Route 127 as it winds along Gloucester’s Back Shore, but here, all is private and tranquil.

“The house was built for a Mr. and Mrs. Taylor of Boston,” Spindler explains. “This was their summer home. It perfectly represents this area in 1937; the house is strongly Arts and Crafts, with some elements of Modernism.”

Hallmarks of Arts and Crafts styling include the beautiful floor tiles and varied siding materials, from granite on the first floor to deeply scalloped shingles on the second. The original metal windows represent Modernism’s embrace of clean lines and new materials. When Spindler bought the house in 1992, however, they had deteriorated past the point of no return, so he replaced them with new wood windows. “All 36 of them,” he sighs. He points to torpedo-shaped door hinges as another Modernist touch.

“The house design is wonderful in the way it connects to the site,” Spindler says admiringly. “With wood, stone, and beautiful windows, it makes the view important, while seeming to blend into the surroundings. It’s really like nowhere else,” he continues. “The house is individualistic, with a strong sense of self. Before I did anything, I asked, ‘What does the house want to be?’”

To belong to an antiques dealer and collector with superb taste is the house’s apparent answer. Comfortable and stylish rooms showcase important art and furniture without the stuffiness and excess often on display in the homes of collectors. The living room, while filled with beautiful and rare pieces, is comfortable, spacious, and filled with light. Along one wall, French doors open onto a broad stone terrace that Spindler added. “One of the Cape Ann quarries was still operating, so the granite of the terrace matches that of the first story,” he says.

The terrace acts as an extension of the living room. It is also a gallery for some favorite sculptures, including a large bronze by Walker Hancock, one of the many famed artists drawn to Gloucester during the 20th century. The French doors, the deep overhangs shading the windows, and a screened porch at one end of the house all contribute to a cleverly designed natural airflow, negating the need for air conditioning.



Dealer Plates: Spindler’s living room features Arts and Crafts chairs, an Asian chest, contemporary bronzes, and a 19th-century Venice scene. A red-and-black Directoire chaise stands out in the master bedroom, opposite.







Spindler dates his interest in art and antiques to childhood, when his father, an engineer, designed the family home. After graduating from Yale, Spindler headed to London to attend Sotheby's unparalleled antiques education program. "It was very intense," he says. "We did everything, from research to conservation." While he speaks warmly of his London years, Spindler paid his dues when he went to work for a high-end New York antiques dealer. Spindler refers to these as his *Devil Wears Prada* years.

"But in the end, I learned so much," he adds cheerfully. "I had already learned a lot about English antiques. The experience helped me to define my career. I learned that I wanted two things: to be independent and to be creative."

Spindler bought and sold antiques on his own while he extricated himself from his Manhattan job, then he moved to Gloucester. In 1998, he launched his eponymous store in Essex. "From the minute I opened the door, the business was successful," he says. "The economy was strong; the location was good."

Spindler's refined approach to selection and display won him a loyal following, even when the economy turned downward. Many customers wanted more than his antiques; they yearned for his eye and esthetic.

"Even now, people come into the shop and ask for interior design help," he says. "While I don't work as a decorator, I try to tell them that the store represents my personal taste and sensibility. It is curated. I know that's an overused word these days, but it works here."

But Spindler's success isn't exactly the luck of the draw. "The things I sell transcend time and where they were made," Spindler continues, adding, "because I focus on form and surface. Also, I leave plenty of room around objects so that people can see them properly. I know that's the opposite of what you're supposed to

do in a store," he admits, "but without light and space, objects are not beautiful."

Spindler's home is proof positive of this philosophy. Elegant and curvaceous Federal Era furniture, Italian iron lighting, a 1968 Danish Harp chair, and a massive 19th-century mahogany bed could not be more different from each other, but each looks perfectly at home in an environment that honors them without taking them too seriously. The house may be historic, but that didn't keep Spindler from applying intense azure blue or kelly green to the walls. Stainless-steel kitchen counters spell sleek function, while the kitchen walls are treated to a deep, luscious aubergine. In this house, historicism does not fight contemporary tastes.

Years of experience have not diminished Spindler's passion for his work. He gives time and expertise to boards and committees at the Museum of Fine Arts, the Cape Ann Museum, and Historic New England, particularly at Beauport on Gloucester's Eastern Point. He organizes his work and volunteer activities around the one week per month he spends in Houston, where his husband, Hiram Butler, owns an important art gallery.

"We have a bicoastal marriage," Spindler says, then smiles. "He comes to Gloucester one week per month. We met at a dinner party in Annisquam and got married four years ago." The couple's wedding took place in one of the North Shore's transcendent historic spaces, Amesbury's Rocky Hill Meetinghouse. "We are both so fortunate because our vocations are our passions," Spindler explains. "Our careers in art and antiques complement each other perfectly."

He sums up his life, his work, and his love in this way: "I take enormous pleasure in all forms of beauty."



Vintage Appeal: A saturated green forms an appropriate backdrop to a period bookcase. Other bedroom walls are azure blue and golden yellow. A stone garden house is romantically unimproved, inviting those craving solitude.