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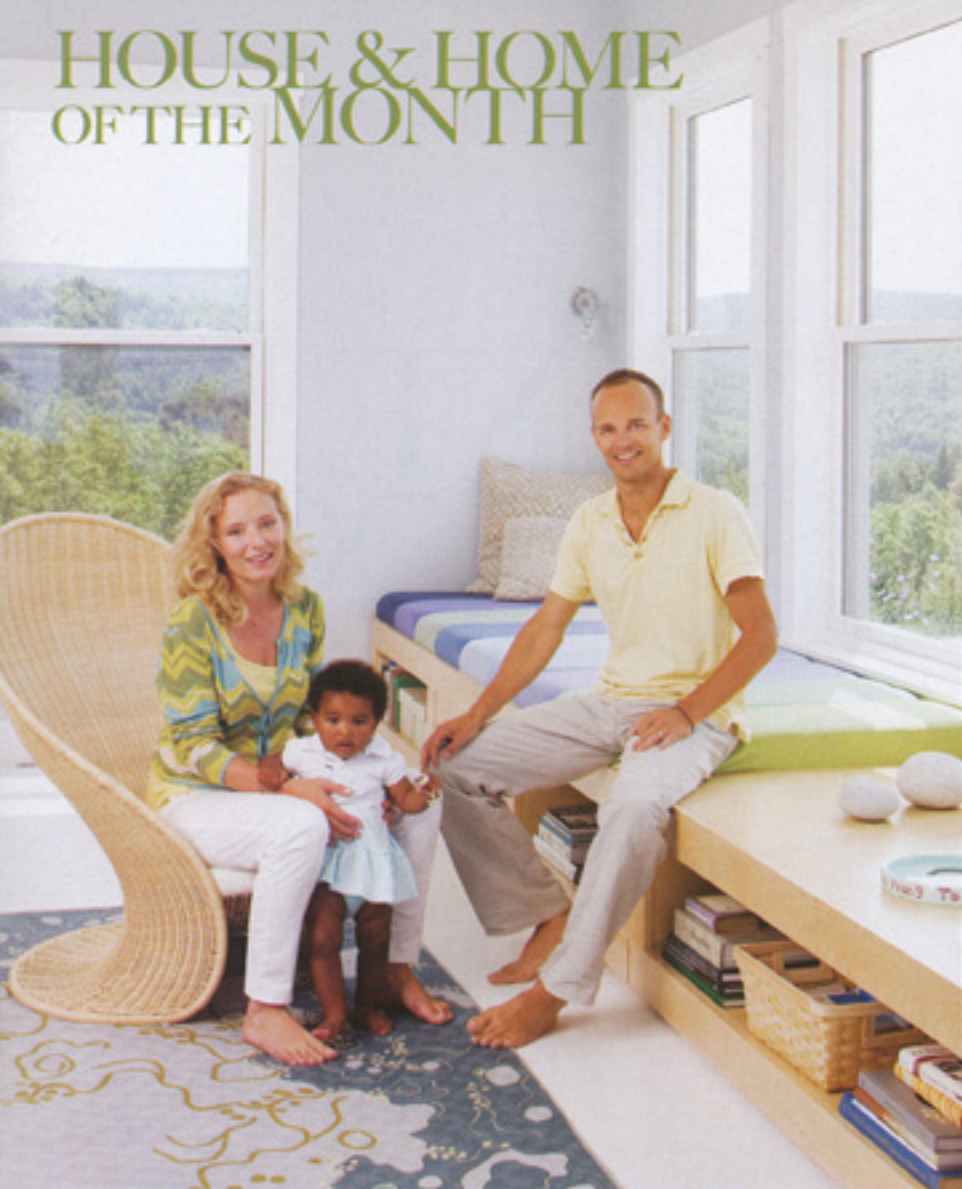
New for the Grill
East Meets West

**SIMPLE FAMILY LIVING
ON CAPE BRETON**

Display Until June 7 \$5.95



www.houseandhome.com



The first time they visited Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island 15 years ago, L.A. design and lifestyle phenoms Eliot and Alexandra Angle were awestruck by its spectacular scenery. "We watched the sun set one evening and agreed it was the most beautiful place we'd ever seen," recalls Alexandra, who, with Eliot, runs successful L.A. interior design firm Aqua Vitae Design, creates quirky furniture, penned the popular entertaining guide *Cocktail Parties With a Twist* and has hosted TV party specials for the Food and Fine Living networks. Little did the pair know that all these years later this was where they'd craft their own modern summer house, a spare yet family-friendly saltbox where they'd pass the summer months quietly with daughter Elefe, now 21 months.

Five years ago the couple — he's a Manhattan native; she grew up in Vermont — were looking for a vacation home and returned here to see if the area's rugged splendour was still as appealing. It was, and in addition, its remoteness offered a pleasing reprieve from their fast-paced life in California. Their initial plan was to look for a charming farmhouse in need of a loving facelift. That went out the window when they stumbled upon this 52-acre

Back to Basics

SWEEPING
WATER VIEWS
PLAY DRAMATIC
BACKDROP TO
AN AIRY MODERN
SALTBOX COTTAGE
ON CAPE BRETON
ISLAND.

*By Jennifer Hughes
Photographs by Janet Kimber*



Alexandra and Ellet Angle's crisp, 2,100-square-foot summer house is perched atop the highest hill on their stretch of coastline, near the northwest tip of Cape Breton. The exterior of the traditional saltbox belies its pared-back, contemporary interior. A couple of years ago, they scattered wildflower seeds; now, they pick fresh bouquets daily. The outdoor shower is the house's only one. General contracting, B. Watson Construction.

hilltop plot near Margaree Harbour with a commanding view of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the spruce-covered mountains of Highlands National Park. "It's the highest point on this stretch of coast," Alexandra says. "We were captivated by the view. We had an immediate emotional reaction to the place."

Plans were drawn up — then quickly scrapped — for a stunning modern glass house. It became apparent that the harsh climate, especially winter's 200-kilometre-per-hour winds, would not be kind to such a structure. "We were planning a California house for the Canadian climate," Alexandra laughs. Confronted with reality, they changed tack and began to plan something closer to the original farmhouse idea. The simple, 2,100-square-foot saltbox they settled on takes its cue from traditional maritime architecture. Much more practical for the location, it's built



to withstand repeated lashings by salty gales and also proved to be much easier to source and produce locally.

To take advantage of the panorama, the couple worked out the maximum number of windows they could incorporate into the modestly sized home and planned a simple, open floor plan around that. A large living-dining-kitchen space and principal bedroom suite make up the first floor, and a large bedroom for Elefe, a guest suite and bath encompass the second level.

It's a chic, minimalist take on the traditional saltbox that embraces classic cottage cornerstones like cedar-shake siding, whitewashed floors, panelled cabinetry, wood and wicker. But it presents them in a thoroughly contemporary manner by paring them back to their essence, evoking an almost Shaker sparseness.

When the structure was complete, Eliot and Alexandra turned

In the open-concept kitchen, the ample maple table (designed by Aqua Vitae and built locally) is paired with Gio Ponti's iconic Superleggera chairs and a mod Octopus pendant light to balance its rusticity. To get the kitchen's crisp look on a shoestring, paint big-box store beadboard cabinets a strong hue for impact and forgo upper cabinets in favour of open shelves housing pretty dishes. **Flooring**, Osma; **jute rug**, Merida Meridian; **pendant light**, Autaban; **chairs** by Gio Ponti, Cassina; **sconces**, Ameico; **wall colour**, Brittany Blue (1633); **cabinet colour**, Britannia Blue (1623), Benjamin Moore; **riser colour**, Arsenic (214), Farrow & Ball. **GREAT VALUE:** To keep your budget low, buy fewer dining chairs and pick up end chairs at a flea market.



A large deck wraps two sides of the house, offering sweeping views of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Highlands National Park. The low wall acts as both bench and railing.

GREAT VALUE: Forgo custom windows and doors in favour of standard sizes and styles.
RIGHT: Eliot built the rustic bedside table using driftwood from the beach.
Print, Winter Works on Paper Gallery.



Pale blue-green walls in the main-floor principal bedroom form a serene backdrop for a simple custom-made bed and vintage light fixtures. Alexandra designed the rug — a stylized version of an antique jellyfish engraving — and had it commissioned by local rug “hookers.”
Bedding, Anthropologie; **Le Klint** swing-arm sconces, **Lighting Universe;** wall colour, **Palladian Blue (HC-144), Benjamin Moore.**





Elefe's room is outfitted with multiple twin beds as she often hosts visiting cousins. For flexibility and affordability in kids' and guest rooms, outfit mattresses with big, chunky casters.

Beds, Ikea; **wall colour,** Brittany (C-134-10), Laurentide.

GREAT VALUE: Give a kids' room personality on a dime with Indian quilts and flea-market finds.

TOP RIGHT: Modern area rugs add pattern throughout the house. In the hall, the painted doors pull their grassy hue from the runner.

Rug, Fedora Design; **wall colour,** Brittany Blue (1633), Benjamin Moore.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM RIGHT: The seafoam-green principal bathroom is a serene spot for a soak.

Mat, Angelo Adams; **tub colour,** Palladian Blue (HC-144), walls, Van Allen Green (HC-120), Benjamin Moore.

GREAT VALUE: Clawfoot tubs are a steal at salvage shops; reglaze the inside and refresh the outside with a coat of paint.

THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT: Swooping wicker chairs are like functional sculpture in the living area. A maple window seat topped with a series of colourful cushions runs the width of the room and negates the need for too many other pieces of furniture. Drawers and shelves below stash books and toys.

Bench construction, Valley Lumber; **chairs** by Vittorio Bonacina, Modern Living; **rug,** Fedora Design; **table,** Knoll; **pouf,** Design Within Reach; **flooring,** Osma; **wall colour,** Brittany Blue (1633), Benjamin Moore.

GREAT VALUE: "Build" your own multiuse bench (which adds seating, storage and a play surface) from inexpensive big-box shelving units.

A spot for Alexandra to paint and press flowers, the vintage metal table in the living room has a minimalist design that keeps the living room light and airy. The iconic Jens Risom stools belonged to her grandmother. To focus attention on the view, skip window coverings where you don't need privacy. **Rug, Fedora Design; wall colour, Brittany Blue (1633), Benjamin Moore. GREAT VALUE:** Tack up pretty postcards and images for a hit of interest in a pared-back space.

their skills as designers to the interior. The formula³ was simple: keep the focus on the view by maintaining a clean, uncluttered aesthetic, and bring nature indoors via a palette pulled right from the sea, sky, grass and trees outside the windows. Periwinkle blues and grassy greens adorn walls, cabinetry, carpets and bedding. The large expanses of windows are left bare, and the main living area contains only a crisp maple dining table, two curvaceous wicker chairs and a long, low maple window seat stretching the width of the space. The maple unit, upholstered in an analogous rainbow of blues and greens, was built by the same local craftsman who made the dining table. Sofas and bulky furniture were eschewed to keep the look serene.

"When we were choosing furniture, I decided all I wanted to do was read and look out the window," Alexandra says. "This house could be completely empty, and it wouldn't matter, because the

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Add wicker accents to balance cool colours and keep the look warm and friendly. Savannah basket. Seagrass. 8" h. x 12" sq. \$42. At Pottery Barn.

GET THE LOOK OF THIS MODERN SALTBOX WITH SPLASHES OF OCEAN HUES AND RUSTIC ACCENTS.



Bring the beach indoors with a driftwood and glass table. 25" h. x 27" diam. \$499. At Crate & Barrel.

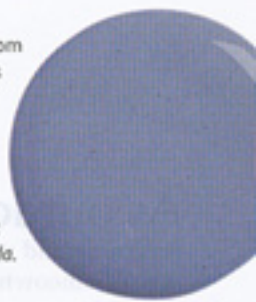


A doodle-inspired floral-print rug adds a touch of whimsy. Babushka rug. Wool. 5' x 7'. \$349. At EQ3.

In a minimalist home, corral favourite family photos and objects in a memory box, like this small antique cabinet in the Angles' principal bath.



Pull colour inspiration from the natural surroundings to create a seamless transition from indoors to out. Britannia Blue (1623) from the Classic Colors collection, Benjamin Moore. From \$53/gallon. At retailers across Canada.



Get the look of Elliot and Alexandra's "palette" bench with a mix of colourful silk throw pillows. In 16 colours; Eclipse, Graphite, Coctus shown. 17" sq. \$33 each. At retailers across Canada.

Cheerful, printed quilts bring colour and life to guest beds. (See Source Guide for pattern names.) Organic cotton. \$417/twin. Through Flower Organic.



Inject modern classic pieces for an updated cottage look. Stool by Jens Risom. Walnut frame; cotton webbing. 17" h. Approx. \$420. At Design Within Reach.

An easy-care alternative to a painted floor, white laminate gives a room crisp airiness and makes graphic rugs pop. Markland flooring with built-in underlay. Fibreboard with foil, clear acrylic lacquer. \$2.50/sq.ft. At Ikea.



GREAT VALUE

Sculptural wicker rockers are perfect for laid-back living. Hejka rocking chair. Rattan; steel frame. 29" h. x 31-1/2" w. x 34" d. \$149. At Ikea.



VIEW

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now was not always considered normal, and certainly not something you would strive for. It used to be the fashion to go to the furniture floor of a department store and buy brand new sets or suites, the best you could afford.

The first time I saw true high/low decorating was in the late '70s when I was the managing partner of a prominent interior design firm. Our bookkeeper was a former decorator who lived in a gorgeous old house in Forest Hill, one of Toronto's toniest neighbourhoods. I remember going to Anne's for the first time and being amazed. Her living room was canary yellow, with a front window flanked by two tall *étagères* in the exact same colour, filled with books and fun, interesting stuff. There were hits of blue chintz, red lacquer and colourful art. The room was fabulous.

I asked where the custom units were made, and she said they were from Karelia, the Ikea of the '70s, and cleverly painted to match the walls. I remember being shocked. Back then, if you were successful enough to live in Forest Hill, you did not aspire to \$200 bookcases or have the guts to cover a flea-market chair in Scalamandré chintz!

Anne's tales of where she found things and what she did to them left such a huge impression on me. It was the moment when I learned the stylist's trinity: the power of a good eye, the courage to venture beyond labels, and the imagination to see potential. Those three things are what you need to achieve a great look at a modest price.

And one more thing: time. This is not one-stop shopping. It's countless hours spent looking in unlikely places. Learn to love the thrill of the hunt.

Gradually, as you can afford it, you replace some inexpensive furniture with the good stuff. You start to collect fine antiques, modern classics, handmade rugs and real art. But don't go too far. Keep enough of the clever tricks that made your room so charming in the first place. **■**

EVENTS

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(705) 675-7252 or cmha.sudbury.on.ca.

ART 2009, Toronto, June 12 to 14. Enjoy landscape paintings, ceramics, photography, jewelry and more by 250 local and international artists. Metro Toronto Convention Centre. art-2009.com or ticketmaster.ca.

The Pontiac Artists' Studio Tour, Ottawa, June 13, 14, 20 and 21. Enjoy the outdoors while viewing works by 15 artists. (819) 647-6365 or pontiacartists.com.

5th Annual Art Show: Summer RED, Port Carling, Ont., June 27. Each artwork is themed after (and a portion of sales will go to) the RED campaign to help those with AIDS around the world. Thyme of the Season. (705) 765-6960 or thymeoftheseason.com.

Show and tour organizers from across Canada are invited to forward information for publication in upcoming issues to: Events, House & Home, 511 King St. W., Suite 120, Toronto, Ont. M5V 2Z4; fax to (416) 591-1630; email to cheditorial@hhmedia.com; or submit on-line at Houseandhome.com/contactus.

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view is so beautiful."

Adding to the home's airiness are its unique white floors, which are wood coated with a durable natural oil-paint finish that stands up well to life with a toddler and the family's Tibetan terrier, Sturtevant. They also create a cleaner, more modern backdrop than natural wood and are great at reflecting light, a boon on overcast days. "During our first summer here in 2007, we obsessed over keeping the floors pristine," Alexandra says. "But once Elefe entered our lives, we had to let it go, and it actually stays quite clean without much fuss." They do try to live a "barefoot" lifestyle inside, slipping off shoes at the door after a beach excursion or an afternoon spent lounging on the deck that wraps around two sides of the house.

They have a similar take on the "stuff" of life. Like true minimalists, they try to keep life simple, especially on vacation.

Where necessary, they created set storage spaces. The pantry houses dry goods and extra kitchen paraphernalia; a closet in the entry stores outerwear; a bookshelf upstairs holds the summer reading. The unfinished basement is home to bikes, kayaks, cleaning supplies, laundry, etc. "This house is about relaxing and being outside. We don't need a lot of stuff to do that. It would get in the way," Alexandra says.

Her advice for keeping costs low echoes that mentality: "Buy only those things you love and need," she says. "Because we don't have a lot of furnishings, it allowed us to go high-end on some things, like the custom rugs, and the designer chairs in the living and dining areas." They also kept costs down by having as much work as possible done locally and in traditional and standard forms, as opposed to customized. "The workers were local; the wood was local; the windows and doors are standard sizes," she says. And they didn't invest in loads of equipment. There's no dishwasher, microwave or TV, and clothes are line-dried outside.

For a couple with a book and TV specials on entertaining under their belt, the mood when hosting here is decidedly laid-back. They hold casual gatherings for family and neighbours on the porch, often spotting whales in the water or watching for the bald eagles and hawks that stalk their hillside for prey. So the kitchen was designed to accommodate only essential elements. "We debated whether to have a toaster," Alexandra says. "It made the cut in the end." Food prep is limited to the easiest, no-fuss methods possible, grilling outside or boiling lobsters. Picnics down at the beach, roaming the shore for interesting shells, rocks and driftwood (which Eliot used to build an elegantly crude bedside table) are higher priorities than spending hours in the kitchen. Work is kept to a minimum, but high-speed Internet allows work projects to run smoothly during their time here.

"Our mandate was to create the simplest possible dwelling and live the simplest possible lifestyle," Alexandra says. "We brought only what we needed and loved — nothing more. **■**