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Bespoke Beachfront Builder

Ben Krupinski Builder is the builder for
the stars in Connecticut and the Hamptons

BY MARY GRAUERHOLZ

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL DOMZAL

Ben Krupinski
Builder built this
Barnes Coy Architects
designed home in
Bridgehampton.



Stratton Schellinger was deep in the nitty-gritty of constructing a sumptuous oceanfront home in East Hampton, New York, when he and the

project architect, Andrew Pollock, began to implement an exquisite detail: a slight flare in the shingles on the roof line and exterior ground floor of the 13,000-square-foot house. After all, here on the Hamptons waterfront, living is done in high style and each home is unique.

When a search for the particular flared shingles proved too difficult for the project's deadline, Schellinger, co-owner with Ray Harden of Ben Krupinski Builder in East Hampton, dug in and built a shingle-steaming shack on the building site. Shingle by

shingle, Schellinger and his crew created an artful turn in each piece of cedar. The embellishment is subtle yet grand, beautiful but without a speck of ostentation.

Bespoke features such as this give Harden and Schellinger a reputation in the region – primarily the New York metropolitan area, the Hamptons, and Connecticut – for precise, elegant work.

For Schellinger and Harden, conjuring beautiful homes is all in a day's work. The pair purchased Ben Krupinski Builder almost two years ago, after founder Ben Krupinski



PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL DONZAL

died in a plane crash. Schellinger and Harden were both longtime employees of the company and Krupinski's long-term plan had been for the two men to assume its ownership if ever needed. "Ben was incredibly driven, and he wanted the company and all of us to go on. He wouldn't have wanted it any other way," says Schellinger.

Today, the company, commonly known as BKBuilder, has built a reputation for constructing homes that are lavish yet true to architectural roots. In the Hamptons, they are often called "the builders to the stars."

Therefore, BKBuilder clients tend to be high-profile people who value privacy. Harden and Schellinger agree. "Our respect to keep their privacy is a big selling point," Schellinger says.

However, some clients, like the author and style guru Martha Stewart don't mind a little publicity. In fact, her 1874 traditional shingled home in East Hampton has one of the best known interiors in the country and its well known that BKBuilder completely refurbished it.

BKBuilder's work is also expressed in other notable projects, such as the iconic home of The Parrish Art Museum in Southampton's Water Mill, New York, a project completed with the internationally renowned architectural firm Herzog & De Meuron.

BKBuilder's residential projects are a mix of modern and traditional, hewing carefully to high architectural standards. "They're very different," Harden says. "You can build on the ocean with either one."

Siting a home on the Atlantic, which alternately roars and whispers, calls for special materials. For modern houses, Harden says, "metal and concrete are always better." He cites one modern build that required a very particular type of steel, originally only thought to be available in Europe. The men started a deep search and discovered it in Ohio. "We love a challenge," Harden says. "The more difficult the project, the better."

Plans for modern homes must be especially precise in their logistics and mechanics. "You really have to plan ahead," Harden says. "HVAC, lights, everything, has to line up. You're always thinking about where you are ahead of the project, since you're very limited on space because there's so much

BKBuilder's clients require precise, elegant and often complicated work.



BKBuilders steamed each of the flared shingles on this home in East Hampton designed by Architect Andrew Pollock.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEFF HEATLEY

glass.” There is also no room for tolerance and no trim to cover space, Schellinger interjects. “It’s very challenging and fun.”

Architect Chris Coy AIA, the principal of Barnes Coy Architects in Manhattan and Bridgehampton, is known for his modern designs, many of them oceanfront. His projects with BKBuilder tend to be large houses with lots of glass and sleek, logical lines. Coy has teamed with Harden and Schellinger on some important homes, including a modern beachfront home in Bridgehampton. The combination of steel, glass, and unvarnished, weathered teak – all of it embraced in clean, crisp lines – is breathtaking. “Beauty is our first requirement,” Coy says.

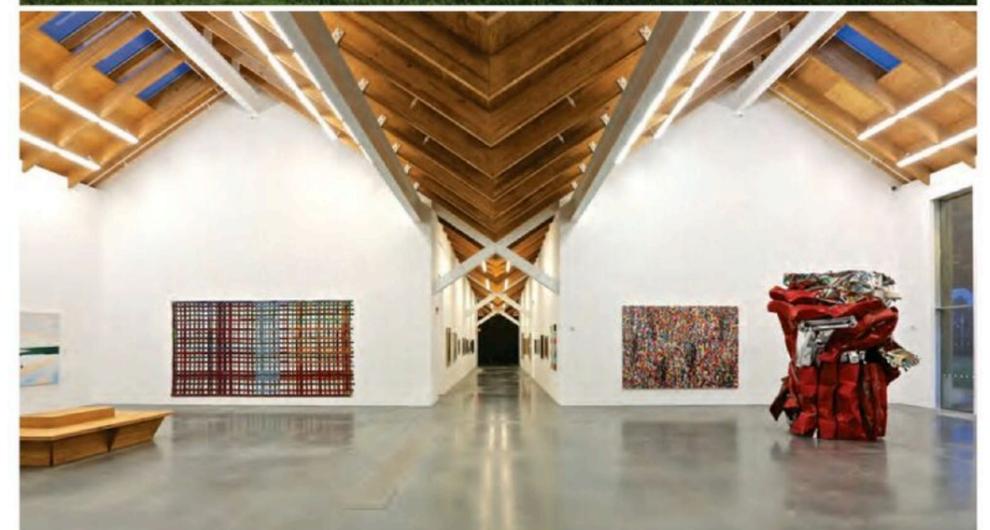
Harden took the reins on the Bridgehampton build, a creative modern with sheets of glass facing the ocean. “The walls were framed so that each room on the west side of the house would have a south-facing window to view the ocean,” Harden recalls. “The window wall was a walk-out that extended the room with a full view of the ocean. We’ve built many kinds of windows, but this one was unique in the way it was designed.” Harden also appreciated the practicality and aesthetically pleasing design of the carpark, located under the house.

Several miles west, on an East Hampton jetty, is an ocean home with traditional looks (and the flared shingles) that was brought to life by BKBuilder, primarily Schellinger and architect Pollock.

The men and their crews worked slavishly to meet a fast-approaching deadline so that the family could be in their home for summer. Pollock recalls being on the East Hampton work site twice a week for 14 months with Schellinger. “We had to hand-make all the details,” recalls Pollock, the principal of Andrew Pollock Architect PC in East Hampton and Brooklyn. “It was a challenge.”

Add to this the fact that the home had to be built in record time. “That required a great deal of coordination. Communication with BKBuilder was wonderful,” Pollock says. The team not only met their deadline; they beat it.

Architect Pollock designed the front of the house to suggest the influence of famed archi-



The Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, New York shows the level of craftsmanship BKBuilder is known for.

ects Stanford White and Edwin Lutyens. With its traditional design of easy elegance, the home seamlessly blends with the other mansions in the area. The details give it its individuality.

Schellinger explains, “Flared shingles must bend on a radius. If you order them, it’s a long lead time. I built the on-site steamer to manage time and quality of outcomes.”

“Stratton Schellinger is a magician,” Pollock says, remembering those days.

And the creativity, talent and attention-to-detail that Pollock has come to depend on to get his designs built helps Barnes Coy design and deliver magnificent oceanfront homes (which often call for huge technical challenges such as cantilevering an entire wing of a house) to extremely happy clients. “We do nothing but create horrible challenges for these guys,” Coy says. “They always succeed.” ✦

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT bkbuilder.com, cityarchitect.com, herzogdemeyron.com, barnescoy.com, and parrishart.org

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