

# contents

VOLUME THREE, NUMBER TWO  
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## 74 Features

### 46 Sweden on the Potomac

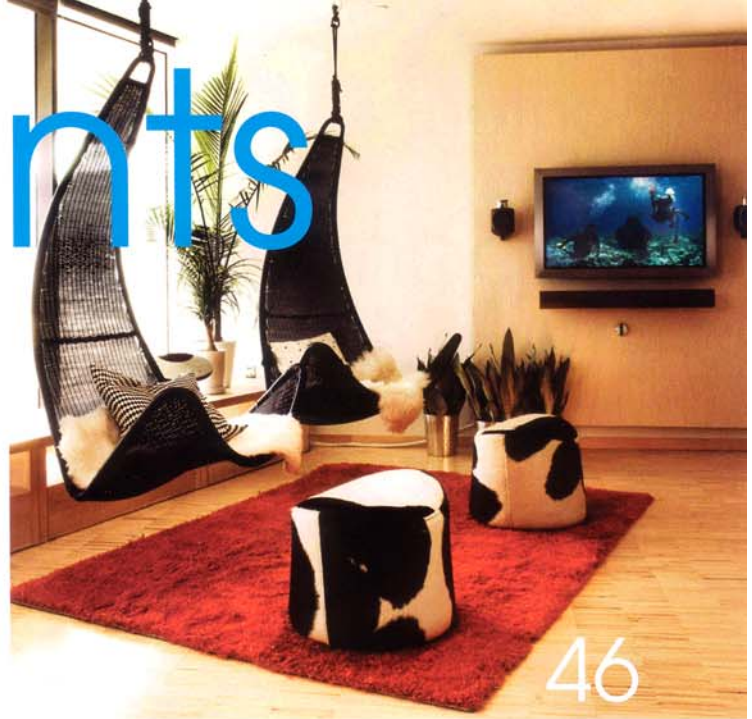
An embassy apartment on the Georgetown waterfront showcases the latest designs from a leading purveyor of Scandinavian modernism.

*By Linda Hales*

### 56 Barefoot Sophistication

In Key West, Florida, an oceanfront vacation house gets a makeover to withstand wet feet and sand tracked in from the beach.

*By Beth Dunlop*



### 64 Launching Pad

Three architecture students catapult their careers with a contemporary beach house inspired by a jetty off the South Carolina coast.

*By Barbara Karth*

### 74 Past into Present

Modeled on antebellum mansions, a lakeside home on a former South Carolina rice plantation is remade into a gracious haven for today.

*By Barbara Karth*

### 88 Branching Out

On Maryland's Eastern Shore, designer Vicco von Voss moves from crafting wooden furniture to building his own timber house.

*By Tracy Mitchell Griggs*



*Barefoot sophistication in Key West, Florida. Interior by Taylor & Taylor Partnership. Photo © Dan Forer.*



# launching Pad

A young architect starts a design partnership with a South Carolina beachfront house for his father

By Barbara Karth  
Photography by Richard Leo Johnson

**D**uring a visit to Folly Beach southeast of Charleston, architect Jason Hart walked out on a concrete jetty with his camera. With the ocean surrounding him, Hart focused his lens on a 21-foot-wide strip of sand between two houses, zeroing in on the quarter-acre property that his father, Jack Hart, had just purchased. From this vantage point emerged the genesis of a home and the first real project for the young architect, who used it to launch his own firm with longtime friends and roommates Chris Johns and Aaron Malnarick.

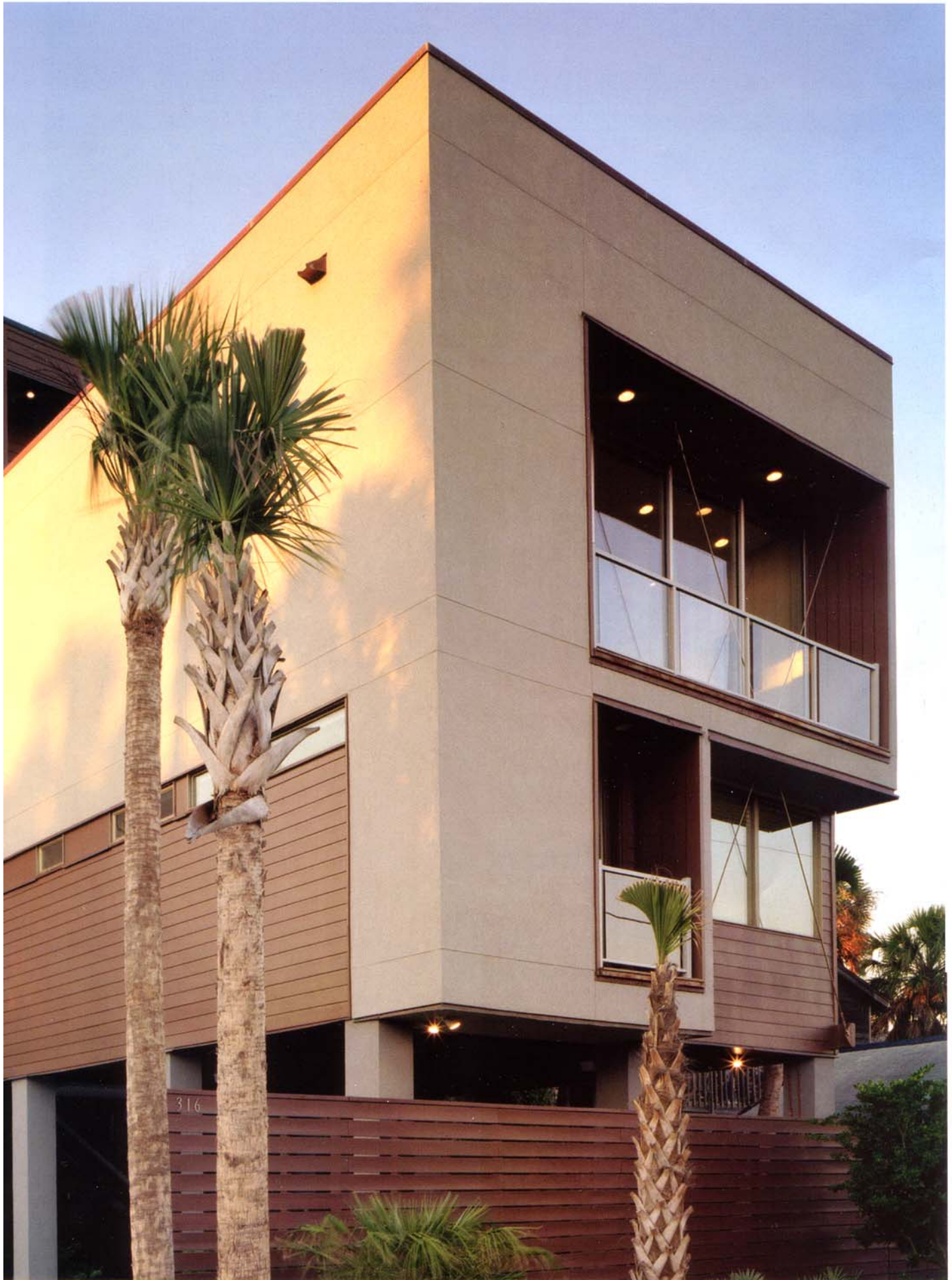
Bound by a love of architecture, the three were ensconced in graduate studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology when Jason brought his Folly Beach photos and plans back to the group. The trio quickly focused on the possibilities of the design: arguing about concepts, defending positions and ultimately reaching a consensus as they had done over the years as undergraduates at the University of Florida.

Procuring this waterfront commission, however, was far from a given. Jack Hart, a landscape architect, was capable of separating his roles of father and client. "I have worked for architects and a lot of different people in the design process, so it really wasn't a problem," he explains. His wish

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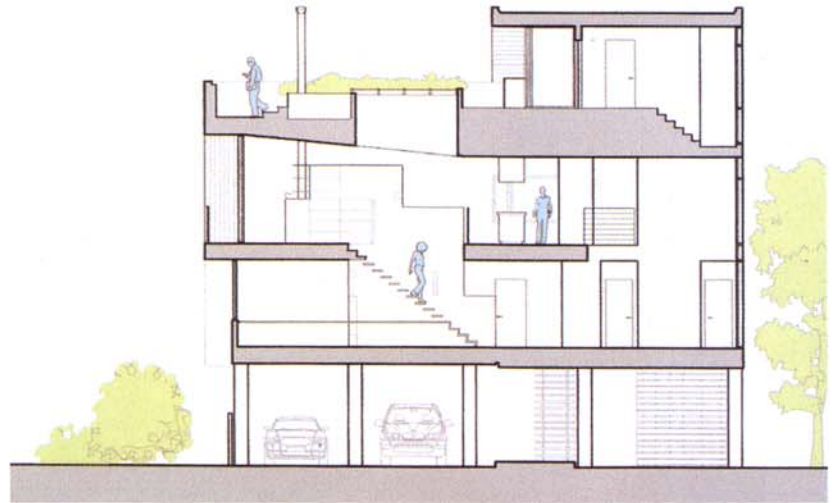
*Architecture:* Jason Hart, Chris Johns and Aaron Malnarick, CUBE design + research, Boston, Massachusetts







Built on a 21-foot-wide lot between two houses on Folly Beach (opposite), the Hart house is clad in stucco and fiber-cement siding (previous spread). The staircase leads from under the house (below) up to the living spaces and top-floor master suite (drawing at right), which is flanked by a rooftop deck overlooking the water.



list for his permanent home was substantial: a living space, a master suite, a separate guest apartment, two more bedrooms and a bath, and an office for his business. After the trio came up with plans and a model, Hart was convinced. "I really liked what they came up with—[it] seemed to fit the site very well."

Landing their first project required the architects-in-training to face the challenges of a program, a budget, contractors and a client. "I think my partners were skeptical in the beginning [about] having a parent as a client, but tough clients are some of the best clients because they challenge you and the outcome is usually better because of it," explains Jason Hart.

Their first priority was to capture the ocean views, so they placed the house as close as possible to the side lot line, allowing clear sightlines between the older homes to either side. The nearby jetty, walked by Jason Hart, inspired an L-shaped plan with a wide leg projecting toward the sea and a narrower one extending across the back. This siting maximizes water views through recessed windows and decks on each





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The staircase leads past a cherry-paneled storage wall (opposite and inset) displaying Jack Hart's pottery collection. Past a bookcase, an ocean view beckons from the drafting table in Hart's first-floor office (right).



of three floors, which total 3,100 square feet. On the exterior, vertical and horizontal planes of stucco and Hardiplank siding create contrasting juxtapositions of textures and colors like abstract paintings.

In designing the house, CUBE design + research, as the three now call their firm, had to confront local regulations that require all houses on Folly Beach to be elevated 12 feet above ground—after all, this is a barrier island in a hurricane zone. The resulting proliferation of stilts underneath older homes, notes Jason Hart, often makes the ground-floor spaces impractical and unattractive. Seeking an alternative, the three architects supported their structure with perimeter columns and larger beams, allowing for parking under

the house, and applied the same siding and stucco as in the upper stories. “We literally wrapped the façade under the house,” says Hart. They also “carved out” the entry stairwell beneath the house, eliminating any fly-away exterior steps and porches. Visible from the parking area, this under-the-house staircase invites visitors to enter while providing shelter from rain, snow or blazing sun.

At the base of the stairs, a large Peruvian pot and a pre-historic mortar and pestle from the Southwest convey the owner’s penchant for collecting artifacts of indigenous people and what the appetite for what is to come. Adjacent to the entry is a guest suite with a separate entrance, full bath and a small deck facing the ocean. Two more bedrooms and a

bath are located in the back in the widest portion of the house.

After ascending the staircase and entering the home, the ocean is immediately visible down a book-lined corridor past Jack Hart’s office. The designers utilized every inch of space to maximize this work area: The oak tread of the staircase on the fourth step to the second floor extends through to the office to become an expansive work surface set at a 90-degree angle to a drafting table.

For Malnarick, the stairs leading up the side of the house from the first-floor office and bedroom area to the second-floor living space became a source of pride as he refined the adjacent wall into cherry shelving to house books and Hart’s collection of pottery,



much of it pre-historic. The compressed space of the staircase keeps the eye focused on the light at the top where the seaside is revealed through a window, followed by a sequential unveiling of space: The living area with its fireplace first comes into view, then the kitchen, which is open to an adjacent dining area with another view of the ocean. Tucked to the left of the kitchen on the horizontal leg of the L-shape, the formal dining room has become the billiard room. In this space, designed for flexibility, the walls are filled with Jack Hart's collection of historic artifacts, effigies made from bone, arrowheads and necklaces, some from Africa but most from the Americas. A barbecuing grill fills one end of a small, adjacent deck.

The grandest views are on the top floor as the jetty concept becomes

fully apparent in a 30-foot-long deck extending from the master suite to the water-facing edge of the house. "It is beautiful to wake up to the beach and go to bed with the sound of the waves," notes Jack Hart. Wooden planters with built-in benches further emphasize the long, outreaching dimensions of the commanding overlook. "Plants must be really, really tolerant of the salt air and wind, because it really gets windy up here," explains Hart, who put his landscaping skills to work. Aloe, agaves, creeping rosemary and a century plant are all thriving.

The deck minimizes the impact of the building's height, 47 feet above the ground, so that the home is distinctive but not imposing from the beach. Although its full height is apparent from the back, the depth of

On the second floor, the galley-style kitchen (above) incorporates a dining area with a view from the glass-topped table to the sea (opposite).







Next to the kitchen, the living area (these pages) focuses on a wood-burning fireplace and shelving displaying artifacts collected by Jack Hart on his travels. The wooden deck off the master suite (above) offers unobstructed vistas of the Atlantic. One of two planters on the deck shields the skylight over the staircase at the side of the house.

the lot and the mature palmettos, oaks and magnolias, plus an aging pecan tree, disguise and ameliorate the height.

Throughout the house, windows were placed for the views, the light and privacy, and shielded against the hot sun of summer by decks so that air-conditioning bills are reduced. Johns talks of “happy accidents that happen when certain axial views align and draw your eye... views that are calculated, and yet, the outcome is more than anticipated.” One window in the billiard room frames the

branches of a mature magnolia. Another at the base of the stairs coming down from the master suite focuses away from the ocean, over the treetops with tall pine trees in the distance. Johns points out how the home’s two landscapes, the oaks and pines at the rear and the sand and sea in the front, are ever evident throughout the house.

“It is satisfying to be able to give something back to a parent—to know my dad really enjoys living in the house,” Jason Hart says. The completion of Jetty House last spring was just the beginning for CUBE design + research. The trio is now bi-coastal, in Boston and San Diego with designs progressing on both coasts—including another home at Folly Beach. ≡

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