



Thermally modified wood was used for the exteriors of the house, as well as high-performance assemblies with insulation and welded metal roof. Chris Mottolini

INTERIOR

This island house is a designer retreat in a place with history and nature

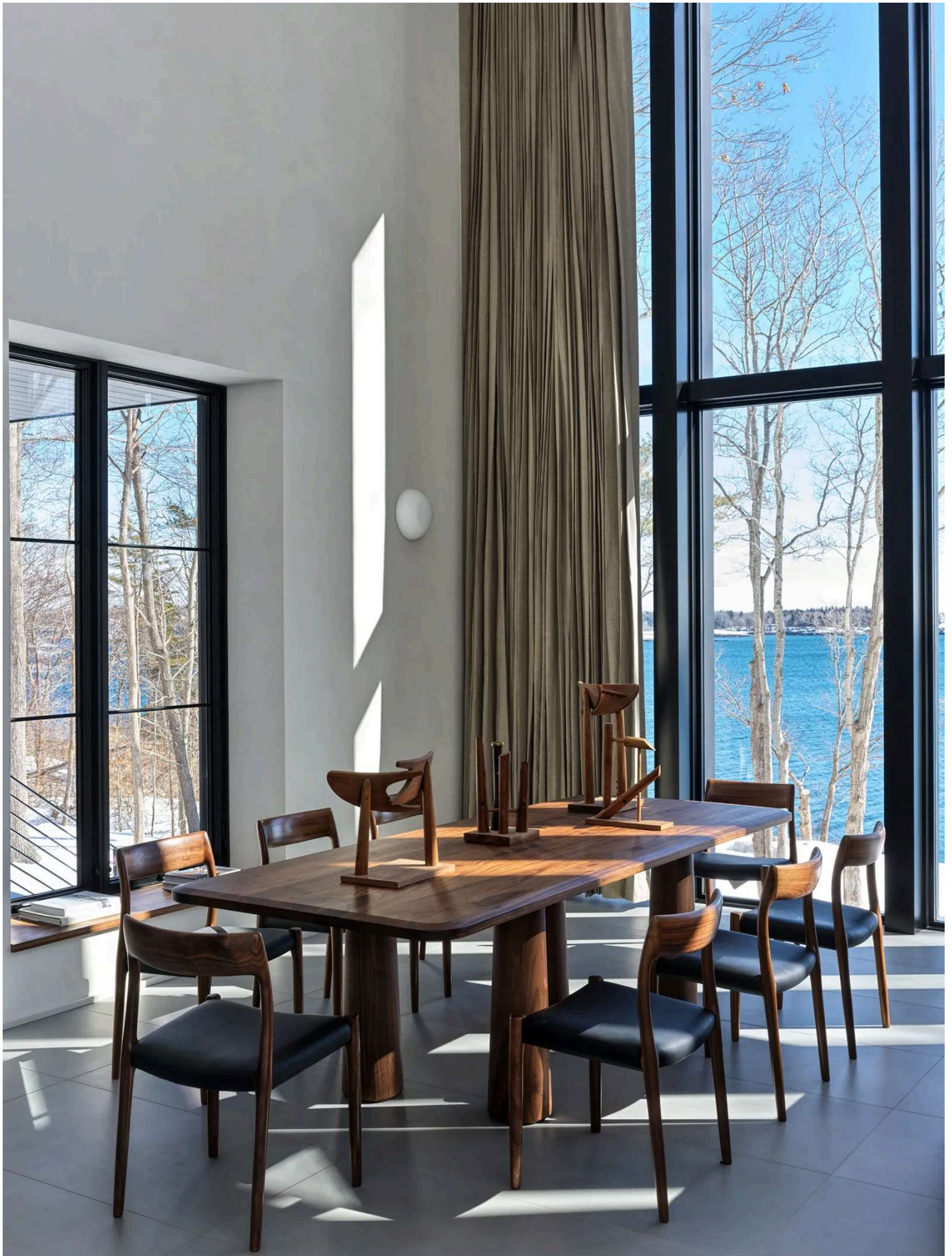
Great Diamond Island is a historic island, which has been a land for crops, artists' retreats and even a military base before its private urban development. There, a family has created a minimalist home, with brutalist and Nordic references, which privileges the connection with the landscape.



By Rebeca Vaisman

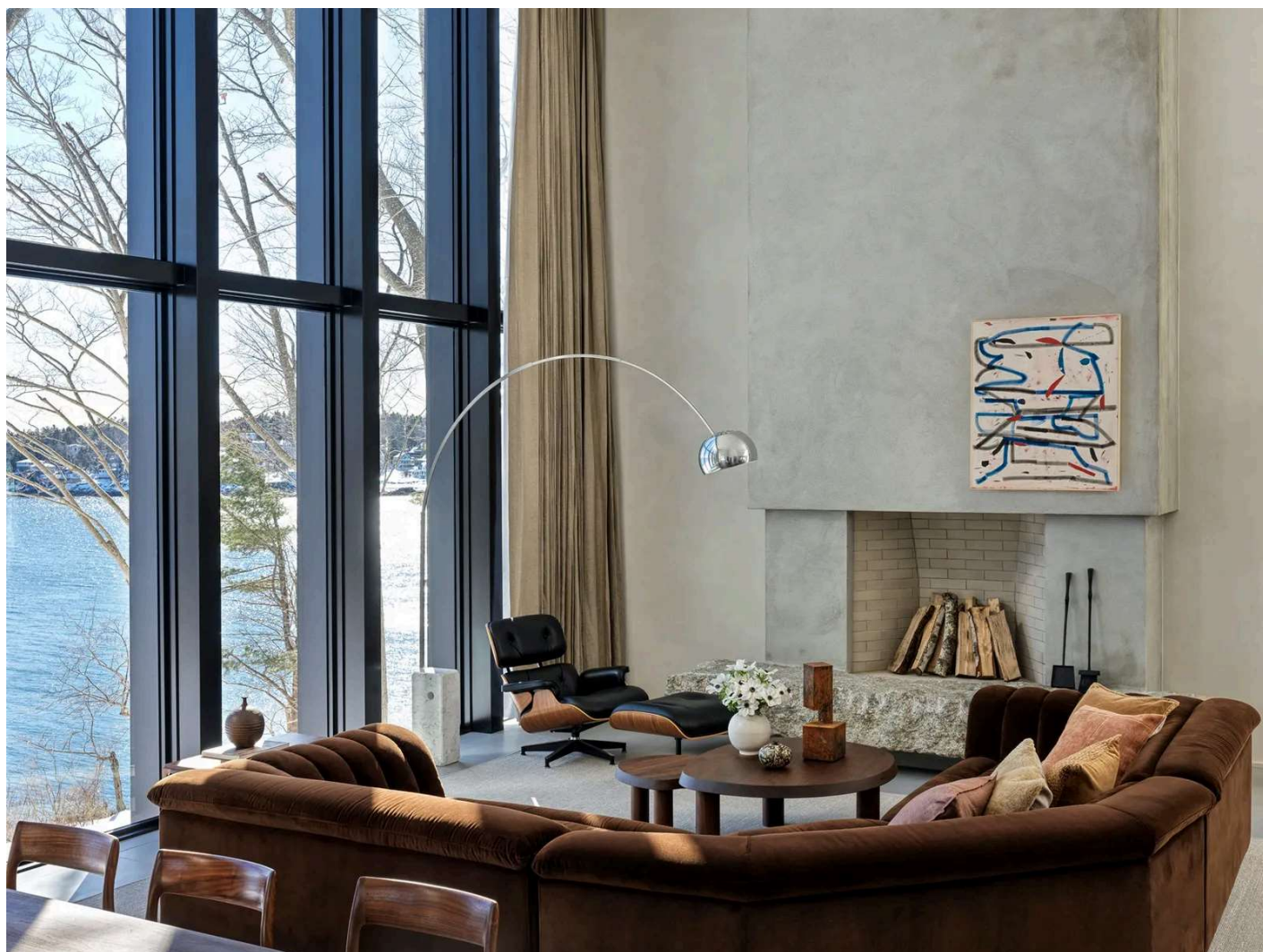
October 19, 2025

The couple has lived in the United States for over twenty-five years. They met in **New York** and, little by little, began to migrate north, until they arrived **in Portland, Maine**. There, they decided to build a house for themselves and their 7-year-old daughter on **Great Diamond Island**, a historic and very particular place, with just over a hundred residents throughout the year.



Sober furniture, minimalist lighting, few objects and a lot of emphasis on the environment and atmospheres are the keys to this interior design. Chris Mottolini

The island's modern history dates back to the eighteenth century, when it was discovered as a hunting and fishing location; over the years it became an area of crops and farms, and also a retreat for artists (such as **Harriet Beecher Stowe**, the author of the book "Uncle Tom's Cabin"), until it was transformed into a military base – with the establishment of **Fort McKinley** – which was closed in 1947. From the 1960s onwards, the island was able to be acquired by private buyers for its real estate development.



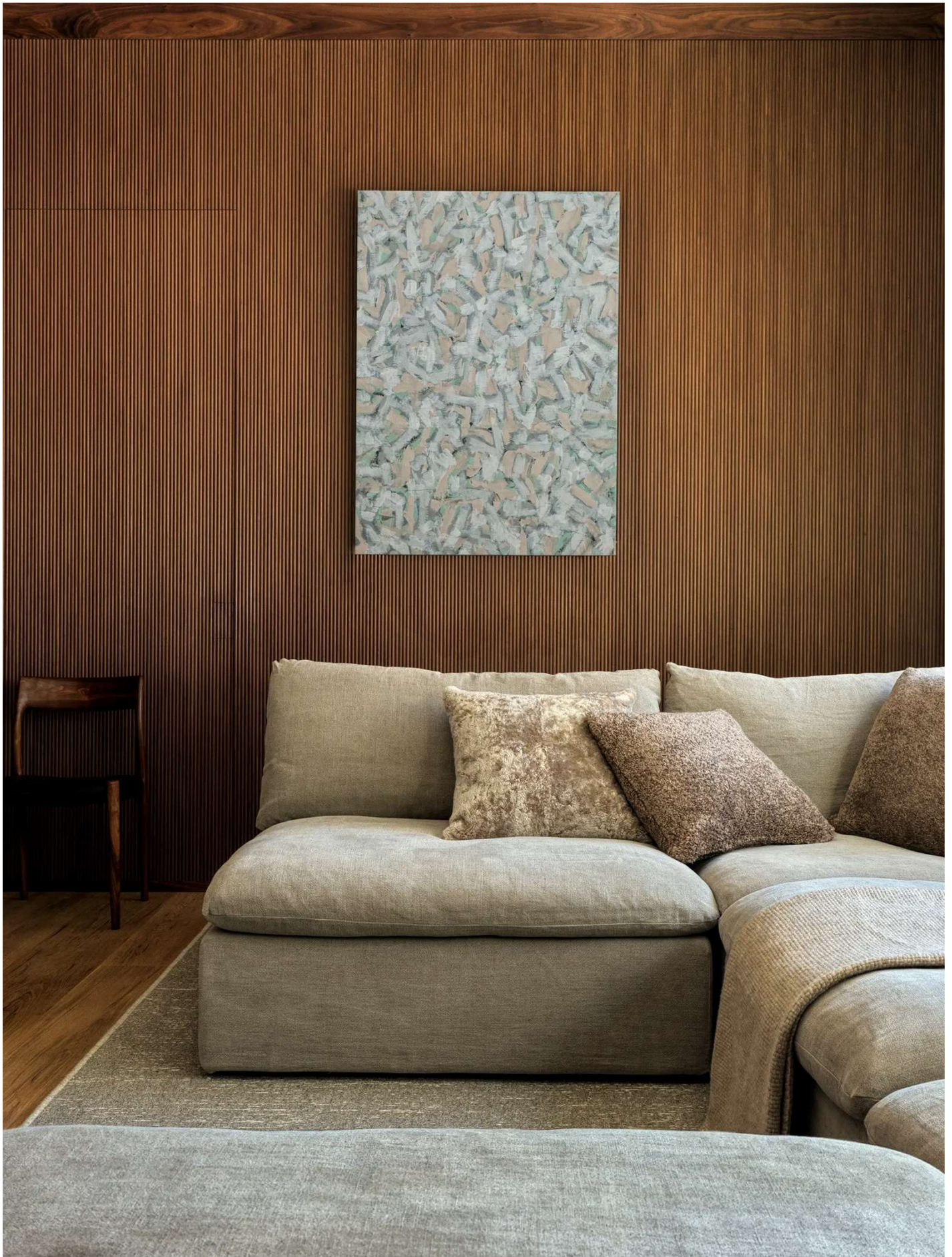
The interior designer opted for a minimalist mid-century style so as not to distract from the landscape. Chris Mottlini

Volume with character and history

The owners chose the lot because of its privileged views and proximity to transportation that links the mainland. They wanted **stunning architecture**, and in the *brief* they mentioned the dens of James Bond villains, as well as the clear, clean, and sophisticated lines of **Scandinavian design**. They definitely wanted the house to embrace its remote surroundings to feel like a true retreat from the city.

Jessie Carroll Architect was commissioned with the architecture of the residence, while the interior design fell to **Heidi Lachapelle Interiors**. From the street, the house presents itself as a one-level structure plated in black to get lost in the shadows of the nearby trees. Towards the reef, however, the structure becomes a glass volume that looks out over the waters of **Casco Bay** and is dramatically distinguished from neighboring houses.

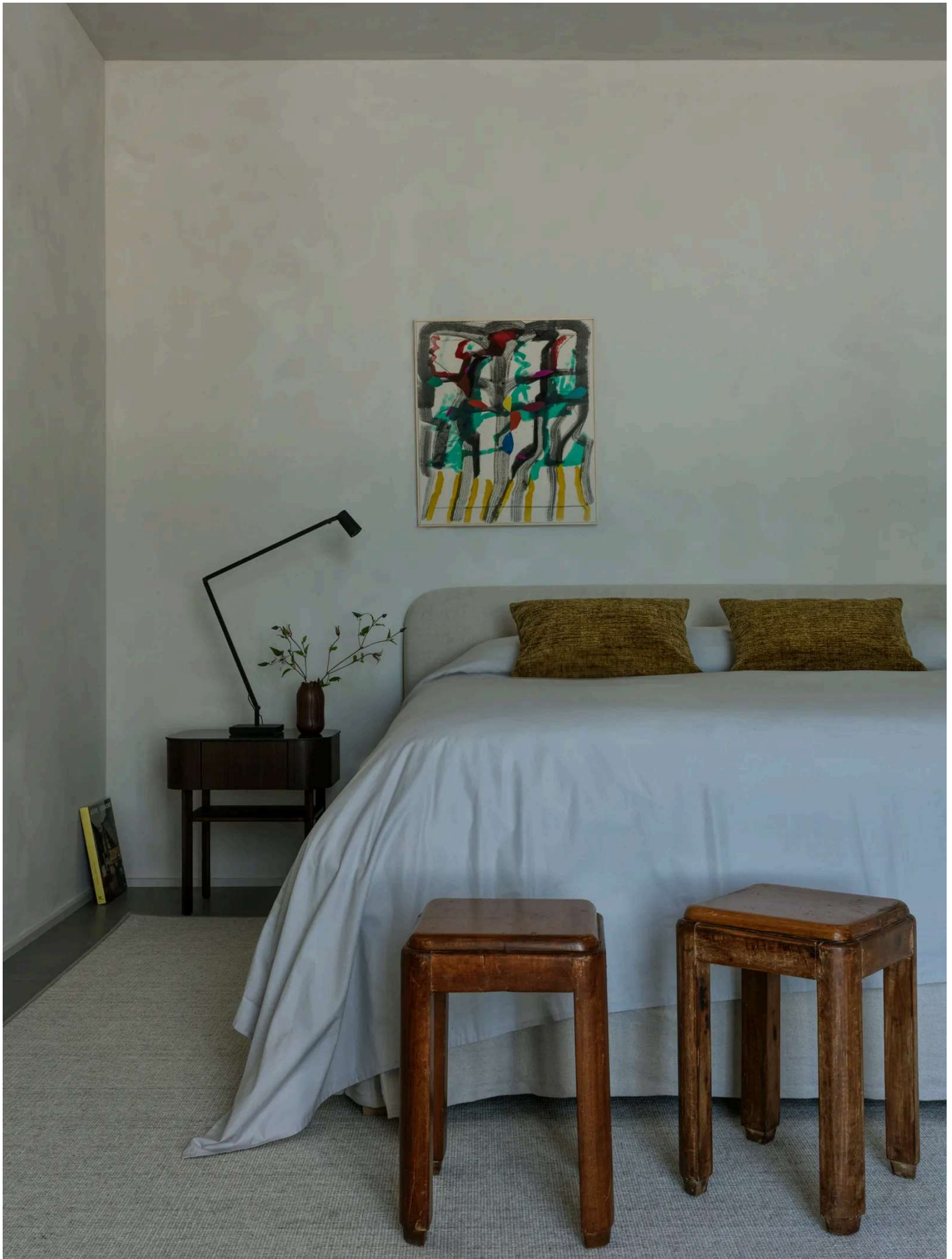
ADVERTISING



Wood panelling in the living room, to welcome and wrap up. Chris Mottilini

"In an island community that aspires to a **'New England cottage'** style, this residence feels like a breakthrough, but not without precedent," explained Heidi Lachapelle. For the interior designer, the house drinks from the brutalist references that remained as remains of the military base.

The interior also holds **unexpected volumes** and windows that open generating **a visual impact**. The distribution is organized around a central staircase, and unfolds in spaces with different levels and ceiling heights. Additional bedrooms and functional spaces are located towards the top; the larger rooms occupy the base. The configuration prioritizes the gaze towards the landscapes and socialization in the living room or in the courtyard.



The art was bought in Portland and in addition to moments of color and plasticity, they link the refuge with the dynamism of the city. Chris Mottolini

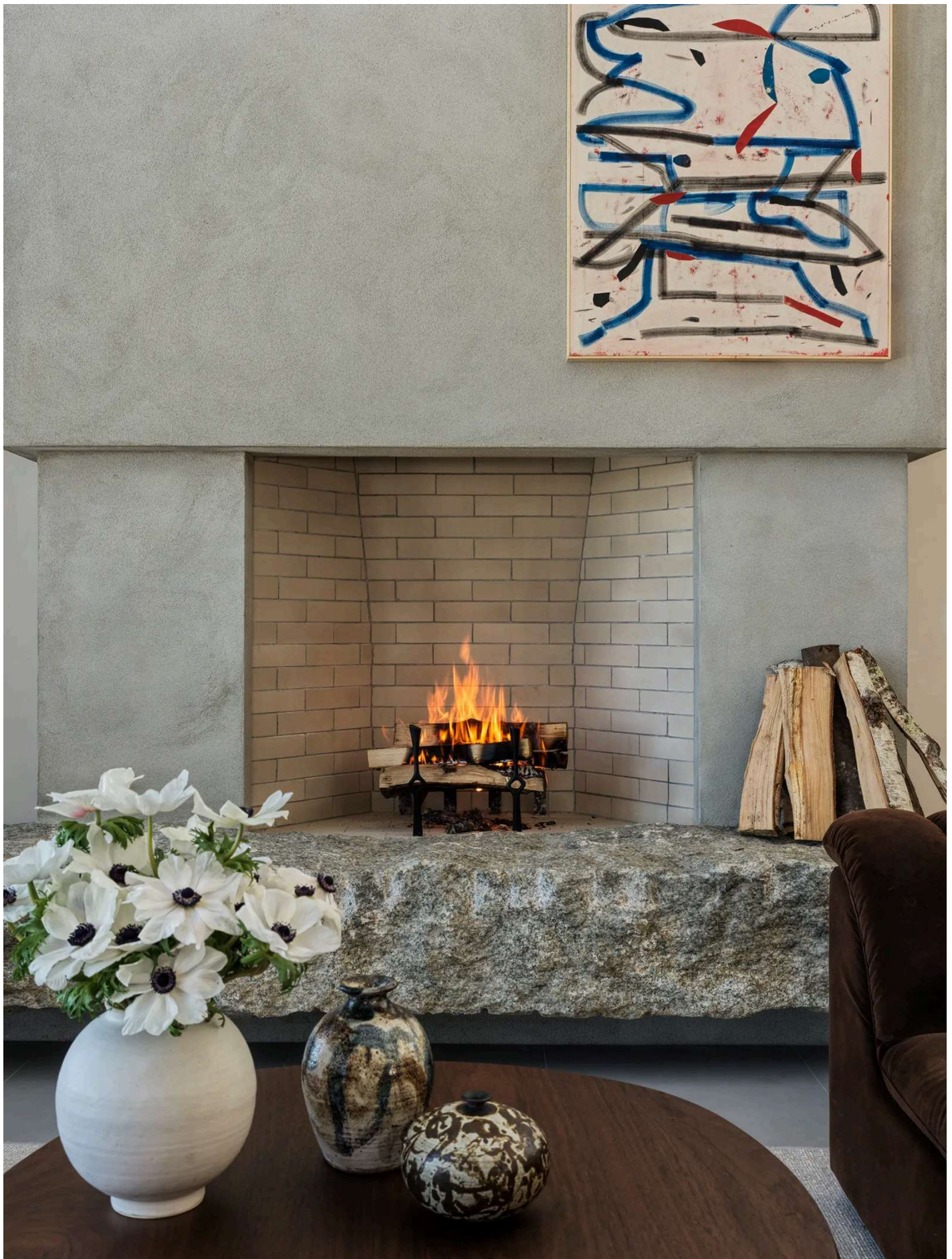
Surprising interiors

"The aesthetic blends our clients' desire for **pragmatic minimalism** with the warmth that comes from the selection of earth tones and walnut wood," Lachapelle said.

ADVERTISING

The interior designer tried to make walnut take over the carpentry and doors, with details such as wooden walls "that shelter the family room with minimal furniture". While the choice of furniture and objects was very restrained, Lachapelle took it upon himself to give abundant texture to the rooms with the implementation of **a plaster finish on the walls, Tadelakt coating** in the master bathroom, and the use of concrete and stone in the "extravagant scale" fireplaces.

Additionally, the hidden rooms and storage spaces are a response to the quirky **inspiration of the Bond films**, while the wine cellar "helps maintain island vibes," said Heidi Lachapelle.



Fireplaces in concrete and local stone add literal and energetic warmth. Chris Mottilini

Lachapelle used classic mid-century modern silhouettes, such as the **Moller 77 dining chairs, the Eames chair and ottoman**, and an *oversized* plush sectional. "A minimalist approach to decorative lighting provides moments of drama without obstructing the views," said the interior designer. And the décor was complemented by art from **Portland galleries**, such as Cove Street Arts, Portland Art Gallery, Green Hut Galleries, and Dunes.

Jessie Carroll Architect is particularly interested in creating homes with a contemporary edge and also a touch of nostalgia; Heidi Lachapelle Interiors fuses modern and traditional sensibilities to create a **balance between the comfortable and the curated, the sophisticated and the livable**. Thus, this collaboration on a remote island resulted in a **minimalist escape** connected to the coast, which makes its surroundings, and to the unique desires of its occupants.

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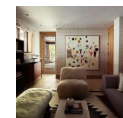
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