



Robert Indiana, pages from *The Book of Love*, 1996, Edition AP3-15 gift of the artist, 2008.

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# You're the *Top*

OBSESSIONS



Start the New Year with three  
at the high end.

BY COLIN W. SARGENT

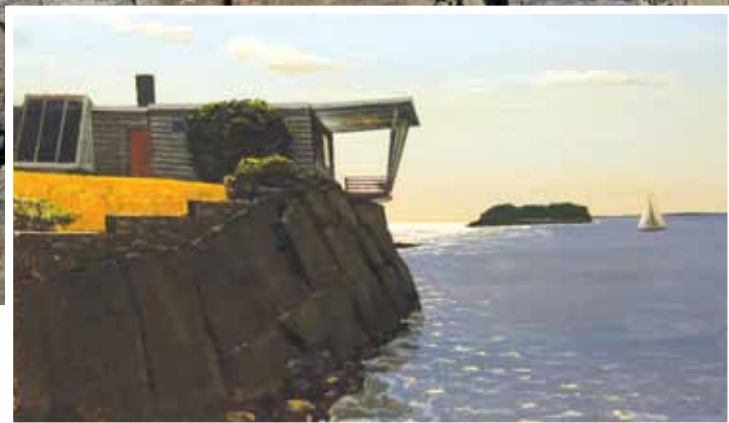
**W**hen you consider the new crop of properties above \$2M on the Maine multiple real-estate listings, this trio—from South Harpswell (top), Northeast Harbor (center), and Deer Isle (bottom)—jumps into view. The first of these, built in 1948, has never been for sale before. It was designed by Maine artist Stephen Etnier (1903-1984).





\$3,200,000

# Landing Signals



Life on the edge: Stephen Etnier's mid-century modern Harpswell home and *House by the Sea*, his 1981 oil painting; and at right: the artist in New York in the 1930s; a terra cotta sculpture by Charles Rudy redines on the Harpswell property, a glamorous navigational aid to passing sailors.

In 1948, when Stephen Etnier built his dream house, a mid-century modern cantilevered over the surf in South Harpswell, it was life imitating art.

Notably, the interior of "Old Cove" is a three-dimensional tribute to Piet Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (1943)—well before the pattern was silk-scarfed into oblivion in museum gift stores today.

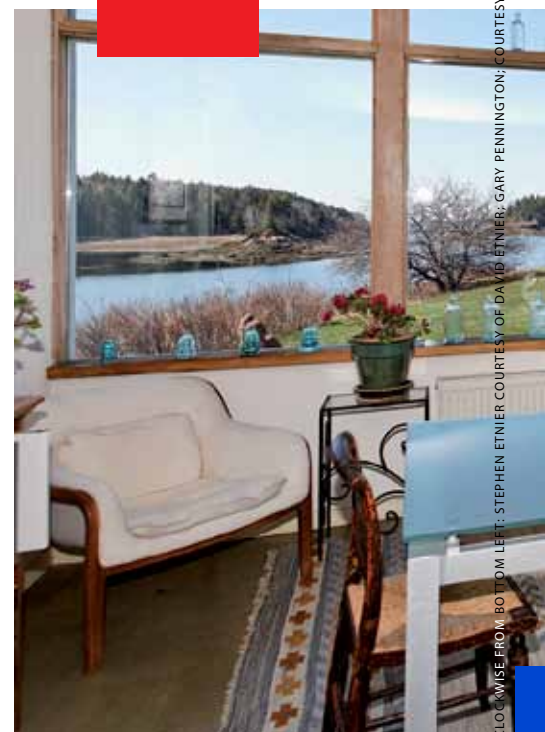
"The living room is a pretty cool place," says Etnier's son David, 58, a Harpswell yacht dealer who grew up here admiring the mullions dividing the great room's picture windows à la Mondrian.

Heir to a family fortune amassed from patents needed to produce gizmos from

washing machines to turbines, the elder Etnier created his real-estate statement here nine years after *Esquire* Magazine featured him as "Stephen Etnier: Bad Boy Artist" in May, 1939.

A private pilot who didn't shrink at danger, "he was able to beach his flying boat right beside the house," David says. "But when my brother and I came along, he got completely rid of planes," including two pontooned Cessnas and his amphibious 1947 Seabee. "He'd had a couple of accidents, so he thought it best for his longevity that he stop flying."

Climbing to altitude with Etnier père was so life-affirming that "Robert Tristram Coffin







fin has a passage about dad flying in one of his books: "The Terrifying Ride."

Other pals to grace Etnier's low-slung retreat included "the Wyeths. Dad was good friends with Andy Wyeth."

With delicious waterfront views and a friendly flame in its quarried stone fireplace, the Mondrian-mullioned room was "Probably the studio in its former days," David says. "We've changed it quite a bit, obviously."

Listed for \$3.2M, the four-bedroom house at 260 Basin Point Road includes nine acres, its own sand beach, 1,300 feet of direct water frontage, a three-car garage, a security system, propane heat, and well water.





It must be hard for the next Etnier generation to leave a place like this. "There's a website my brother and my former wife did for Dad, [stephenetnier.com](http://stephenetnier.com)," David Etnier says. Among the books that will stay in the family collection, one from "Hemingway, who autographed a book for dad with a notation in it."

COLOR PHOTOS GARY PENNINGTON(2); VANS HYPERBEAST.COM; COURTESY OF DAVID ETNIER(3)





Piet Mondrian: Once cutting-edge modern, now museum-shop silk-scarfed to oblivion.



On one memorable occasion, instead of looking out at the island-studded view from the end of his pier, the artist turned his easel around and “painted this house, from the dock looking back. It’s an unframed 26-inch by something oil,” rich in the marine blue/greens and magnetic rusts from Etnier’s signature palette that somehow reconcile Maine with the Ash Can School.

Just as this house joins nature with sophistication, so were there two Steven Etniers, one the Yale dropout who became gilded bug in Manhattan society and another the reclusive dreamer who fell in love with the eternals so magnificently present in the Harpswells. His friend, the late writer John Cole, thought so: “He was

not exclusively a social person; he had plenty of capacity for solitude. He divided the two. Did he have a misspent youth? It’s hard for a guy as rich as he was to have a misspent youth. All I know is, he painted hard. He got up early, at 5:30 or 6:00 every morning. By the afternoon he started tapering off after he got older.”

Nowhere is the quiet side of Etnier more vibrantly present than here. Taxes are \$6,727.







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## Hidden Ledge

**W**e're at the end of a point on Deer Isle with a private cove," says owner D'Arcy Guerin Gue, who with her husband Ron owns Phoenix Health Systems, Inc., a leading hospital outsourcing IT firm headquartered near Dallas/Fort Worth. "There's a rock at the tip of the point that's ideal for sitting and viewing. You can see the Reach and three-acre Sawyer's Island." The entire island is included with the price of this property.

Before this corner of heaven was subdivided, it "was known as The French Camp, built in the early 1900s for young women to speak French and ride horses."

Sometimes former campers tiptoe around, like deer trapped in time's headlights. "They'll come and ask, please, can we walk around?" Usually in English. One thing they pine away for is the original "log cabin on Sawyer's Island, with a bunkhouse and a stone fireplace." If a girl won a wilderness contest or activity, "she got to spend the night there as her reward." Today, in the spirit of the camp, "There's a note pad there. People kayak to it. They write their names when they get there and their stories."

D'Arcy Gue's story is, "We bought this house around 18 years ago. We'd driven here before, in 1992 and 1993, because I'd never seen Maine. This house was one of six we looked at, and it was in foreclosure. It had been on the market for a long time. We fell in love with it because it has a 280-degree view of the water. The fireplace in the living room was quarried from Deer Isle granite. The ar-





## OBSESSIONS

chitect is from New York, Harry Shannon, who designed the New York Port Authority. He was able to create a contemporary design set up on the cliff in 1986, just before setback restrictions would have prevented it."

It would be a laugher and a halfer if you tried to do that now.

"Of the parcel's 13 acres, the 2,800 feet of frontage hugs the point," Gue says. "The whole foundation of the house is built on a group of flat granite boulders. Huge." Note to the harshest nor'easter: "The house never moves."

A cheery contrast to the granite, the kitchen floors and counters are "all in terra cotta tile. So is the floor in the hall-

way, beautiful old terra cotta tiles. The rustic kitchen cabinetry is local maple by local craftsmen."

At 5,000 square feet, with its sharply dramatic rooflines, four bedrooms, and four baths, this hidden beauty has the kind of charm that manufactures unforgettable experiences.

The exquisite sloop *Glissade* tied to the dock does not go with the property.

Gue is proud of the "complete garden along the water that has beautiful granite fire pits that overlook the ocean. Our paths have benches and stone sculptures.

"Deer Isle is not Mt. Desert Island. It's not tourist-focused, though we do have a

few inns. It's a relatively undiscovered location." Stonington, the nearest town, "has been the same forever. It's still back in the 1950s here."


Just ask the wildlife. "My daughter came to visit us with her boyfriend. They'd driven in from Maryland, came in to say hi, and then went outside to get their bags. Ron and I heard shouts, and then they came in very quickly, saying there was a bear on the porch," enjoying the incredible views. The younger set was "afraid to get their luggage. We asked our caretaker, who's been here since it was built, if this was the exception or the rule. 'Oh, sure!'"

Taxes are \$13,168.



FROM TOP: DARCY GUERIN/GUE(4); BEAR: US FISH WILDLIFE SERVICE/STEVE HILBRAND





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# Savage Splendor



In 1901, the Mount Desert Island architect Fred L. Savage (1861-1924), who cut his teeth drafting shingle palaces for Peabody & Stearns in Boston, dreamed up The Ledges at 111 Huntington Lane in Northeast Harbor for Mrs. Mary Williams. Directly facing the water, this estate, since modernized, is praised in *Maine Cottages: The Architecture of Fred L. Savage on Mount Desert Island*.

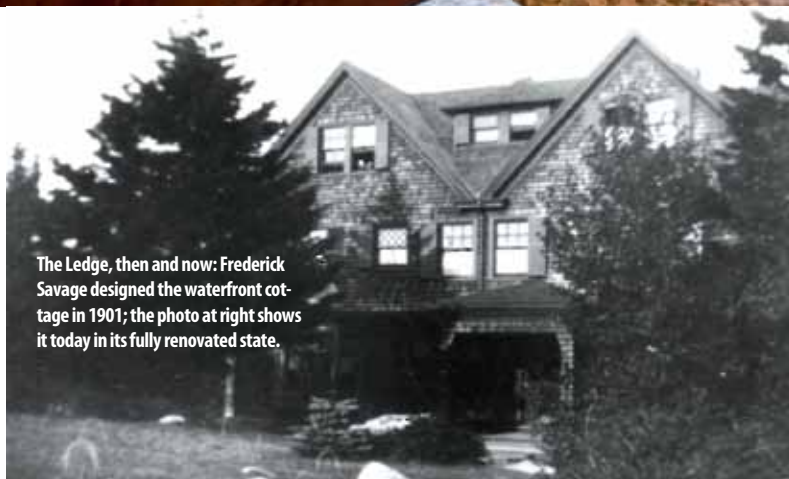
"The landscaping at the entrance is lush, with stonework walks beautifully designed and integrated," says listing agent Story Litchfield of the 8,016-square-foot, nine-bedroom landmark, which features six full and two partial baths.

Inside, "there's beautiful paneling and lots of living space. It's recently been fully renovated and updated for all systems. The harbor-level kitchen has wooden cabinetry





\$8,250,000



The Ledge, then and now: Frederick Savage designed the waterfront cottage in 1901; the photo at right shows it today in its fully renovated state.





## OBSESSIONS



and a granite counter. The open layout has a breakfast table and dining table which look out onto the harbor and deepwater dock. Around a wall is a dramatic boulder fireplace in a den...There's also a more formal dining room on the first floor."

To channel the fabulous view from the 70 feet of waterfront, which includes "Bear Island with its lighthouse, the Cranberries, and Sutton Island, the owner added a deck to the master bedroom that overlooks the harbor."

Price is \$8.25 million, taxes \$21,814. ■

» For more, visit [portlandmonthly.com/port-mag/2013/12/top-extras.com](http://portlandmonthly.com/port-mag/2013/12/top-extras.com)



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