



micro hampton

Two rooms tiny,
Todd Romano's Southampton
cottage overflows with
more summer spirit
than most places ten
times the size

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it started with a chair, a faux-bamboo Chippendale lacquered Tangee-lipstick orange. When Todd Romano unearthed it on a junking expedition last spring, he instantly had the theme for his new Southampton summer cottage: Palm Beach divorcee or bust.

"One object led to the next," says Romano, a New York decorator with a bijou shop on the Upper East Side. "Everything fell





Facing page: A privacy-covered arbor shades the front of decorator Todd Romano's cottage. Below: A 1920s crowdwork hangs above the living room sofa, which is slipcovered in Damara check by JAB. The pillows are covered in Teaticket plaid by Robert Allen. See Resources.

This page: Romano bought the console table at a Paris flea market and the convex mirror at Ann Madonia Antiques in Southampton. **Facing page, from top:** A vintage monkey incense burner on the cocktail table, Romano with neighbors Patricia Burnham and Heather Cohane on the patio. See Resources.



Romano claims color and pattern as a birthright, as well as all things Pucci and Fornasetti. "My mother was teasing me the other day—she told me I was dated"



into my lap." After the keynote chair came a piece of vibrantly colored vintage crewel, precisely the right size for the living room wall, with lanternlike sconces from San Miguel de Allende installed on either side. The local hospital thrift shop yielded a Lucite ice bucket, and a zebra-skin rug topped by a 1970s cocktail table completed the retro-glam effect.

Romano had planned to carry the same palette through to the bedroom, but the snappy canvas-duck stripe he coveted wasn't available in orange. Instead, he opted to skirt his bed and upholster the headboard in lime-green, hanging a not-quite-Rothko above. No such stumbling blocks for the minuscule bathroom: Romano hit the jackpot with witty orange chinoiserie wallpaper, clearing out all ten rolls in stock at Decorators Walk—the extras might come in handy on future projects. "I love a busy print in a small space," he says. "You can't be afraid."

Insouciantly teetering on the brink of outrageous without ever falling off, Romano claims color and pattern as a birthright. He grew up in San Antonio in the '60s and '70s, acquiring a taste for pop art and all things Pucci and Fornasetti. ("My mother was teasing me the other day—she told me I was dated.") He credits an early New York job assisting Mario Buatta, a "brilliant colorist," with translating those natural leanings into a decorative vocabulary.

All that notwithstanding, Romano's apartment in Manhattan is remarkably sedate, an antidote to the city's visual stimulation, and he did briefly consider a "stripped-down, beachy look" for the Southampton cottage, taking a cue from the exposed whitewashed beams. "But in summer it's more fun to be surrounded by something happy and bright, nothing that's too precious," he says. "Especially as I'm here just two or three days a week."

Usually, Romano makes an early escape from the city on summer Fridays. His first stop in Southampton is the greengrocer,

This page: Porthole towels add a touch of luxury to the pure of Decorators Walk. La Pagoda wallpaper. Facing page: Decorators Walk canvas deck dresses Romano's beard and bed skin. His blazer is vintage 1970s Lilly Pulitzer. See Resources.



to buy fresh fruit and cut flowers. Then he stocks up on his guilty pleasure, cold fried-chicken drumsticks for beach snacking. A few minutes down Main Street, and he's practically home.

Curbside on his leafy village block, all that's visible is an anonymous driveway beside a typical Victorian house. Originally the house's kitchen wing, the cottage is tucked away in the back, the smallest of three converted outbuildings on the property. The other two are rented by *Gotham* magazine executive vice president Heather Cohane and luxury real-estate broker Patricia Burnham. "If you need anything or want company, all you have to do is walk down the path, but we're all terribly good about respecting one another's privacy," says the decorator. "It's a very polite commune." Or a Hamptons sitcom come to life, featuring a suitably social cast

of supporting characters, including event planner Polly Onet and Leslie Stevens of LaForce & Stevens public relations, who'll stop in when they're biking by.

If Romano's not home, he's probably relaxing on the beach, a passion since childhood vacations on the Gulf of Mexico. (When it comes to accessorizing those Lilly Pulitzer blazers, nothing beats a good tan.) Otherwise, reading on the sofa and a few games of tennis fill up his lazy afternoons. And he's taken to inviting people round for lunch on his diminutive patio, jazzed up with a pair of fringed Tibetan parasols. The table seats four, six in a pinch. The galley kitchen doesn't lend itself to culinary masterpieces, but he's never really taken to cooking anyway. He usually just buys lobster salad and dishes it up in the best country-club style, on assorted cabbage-leaf plates. ■

