



## ON TRANSFORMING AND SURPASSING THE LUXURY STANDARD: A CONVERSATION WITH THOMAS HICKEY AND EDWARD YEDID, FOUNDERS, GRADE ARCHITECTS

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287 Parsonage Lane, Exterior Front

Founded in 2001 by Thomas Hickey with Edward Yedid, GRADE is a full service, New York-based architecture and interior design firm, whose reputation is defined by spatial clarity and a cutting edge style. The partners Hickey and Yedid have brought innovative visions to each project, whether it is in buildings, restaurants, townhouses, apartments, retail space, or furniture, GRADE's portfolio involves transformations, renovations and occasionally disruptions – projects whose designs differ dramatically from others in the area, and whose presence allows viewers to rethink traditional, and embrace contemporary.

One of GRADE's most recent projects is one that has this certain probability of changing minds, perspectives, and attitudes. It is a tripartite building project in the Hamptons: three homes, to be completed next year, that are unlike most Hamptons homes. Unlike mansions and estates built in the grand Gatsby-esque East and West Egg styles, these homes, all three on Parsonage Lane in the town of Sagaponack, are built similar to the style and drama of Le Corbusier and Mies Van der Rohe. These homes may aid in the evolution of the Hamptons style from a classic traditional to a more contemporary design aesthetic, full of light and clean, uncluttered space.

Urban Arches interviewed both Messrs. Hickey and Yedid, asking them to comment on the far-reaching design of these homes, and the GRADE vision behind these three creations.







The Grade Partners: Thomas Hickey (left), Edward Yedid (right)

**Urban Arches: We would like to know about the vision you have for the three Parsonage Lane houses in the Hamptons.**

**Thomas Hickey:** The vision for this project was to create a distinctive design for three exclusive, modern homes that capitalize on the extensive views through its neighboring nature reserves. These are owned and shared by the three lot owners and are strategically integrated in the overall site plan. Our vision was to allow the open layout of the houses to extend into the landscape, and the architecture of a modern home is the most appropriate expression for this.

**Edward Yedid:** Yes, we've designed these homes to create continuity between the outdoors and indoors and frame the surrounding landscape with strategic positioning of windows and architectural planes. The nature reserves include native flora as well as areas designated for agricultural purposes. There are over 10 acres of reserves surrounding the three homes.

**Urban Arches: I would also like to know about the practical aspects of the homes. Are they the same or similar square footage? What differentiates them?**

**Edward Yedid:** The houses are all approximately the same size – about 10,000 square feet. But each includes its own individual characteristics based on site conditions, as well as features that include an outdoor pool, dining area and sunken tennis courts that add value to what we might call a Hamptons beach house.

**Urban Arches: These are beach houses?**

**Edward Yedid:** The homes are less than a mile and walking distance to the beach. In fact, you can see the beach from the second floor of one of the residences.

**Urban Arches: Are these homes being built on spec or do you have a buyer, what is their cost and when will they be completed?**

**Thomas Hickey:** They are spec homes, they should be completed in Summer of 2015, and the pricing has yet to be determined.

**Urban Arches: These three homes have a vastly contemporary look, which seems to me to be a mélange of Le Corbusier, Richard Meier and Mies Van De Rohe. Did you plan it that way?**

**Thomas Hickey:** Le Corbusier and Mies Van De Rohe are significant influences in our architecture. My background at RAMSA (Robert A.M. Stern Associates) also contributed to the clarity and organization of space. Each house takes into consideration the values that these architects practiced in their projects.

**Urban Arches I am quite interested in the process by which you originally created the ideas for these three homes. If you were commissioned to design them, did you originally think they should all have some unifying theme? Or did you think they should be separate but similar looking?**

**Thomas Hickey:** Our process for every project can be categorized into three phases: research, design and execution. While the Parsonage Lane homes are spec homes, we planned them for a specific demographic. Our research beyond the architectural dimensions allowed us to provide a luxurious house and bespoke experience for a family. It was critical that the designs were unique, but not so different that they didn't feel like they weren't part of a greater whole.

**Urban Arches: I am also interested in your interior design visions and attitudes regarding these three residences. Did you design the interiors also? Have you designed residences, or hotels or apartments from exterior to interior?**

**The organicity of such things are rare.**

**Edward Yedid:** Our method and designs are most effective when we curate both the exteriors and the interiors. Our holistic approach of executing each detail as part of the overarching experience provides an end result that is both part of our personal and collective aesthetic. With these residences, we are defining the client's way of living, based on our knowledge of living and working in the Hamptons.

**Thomas Hickey:** Yes, each house will have its own identity. As a whole, however, we are creating a calm and elegant interior that expands out to the terraces, and the views beyond.

Another intriguing aspect of this particular project is how deeply collaborative this project has become. GRADE is working with Jay Bialsky, who is in the forefront of The Hamptons new home development. We are working with to a team of dedicated brokers and a specialized marketing team, as we seek to create a collection of homes that go against the grain of what a typical Hamptons residence would be. But we also want to surpass this upscale community's traditional luxury standards.



289 Parsonage Lane Exterior Front

**Urban Arches:** I think one of the more interesting aspects of these homes is they are so different from the other Hamptons homes. Have you ever taken a chance like this in your other architectural projects and done something quite different from the norm? If so, what was the project? Could you discuss that a little?

**Edward Yedid:** Yes, GRADE also designed a luxury concept home called the Modern Farm House envisioned for the Hamptons community. It was developed as a response to the different styles of architecture imported to the area that dilute the value of farmland. The Modern Farm House has open spaces, typical with barns, and has tall ceilings with ample light and walls of glass that open up to views of the surrounding landscape. The barn has always been representative of the Hamptons because of its agricultural heritage; but, because of its historical uses, isn't thought of as



a luxury residence. That changed with the Modern Farm House.

**Urban Arches: As regards these three residences, what are some of the amenity spaces, exterior and interior finishes used to make these homes so visually arresting?**

**Edward Yedid:** Well, as we said, these homes have about 10,000 square feet of living space. Each home features one master, one junior master and three bedrooms — each have their own bathrooms in addition to the powder rooms on the main floors. The lower levels include gyms/theaters/playrooms/wine storage/ home theaters and maids quarters.

With our exterior finishes, they are similar and different: at 285 Parsonage, there is mahogany, glass & stucco; at 287 Parsonage there is limestone, glass & mahogany and at 289 Parsonage, there is limestone, glass, mahogany & stucco.

The interior finishes, again, similar and different: at 285 Parsonage: bleached white oak floors, bleached walnut doors, stained oak kitchen cabinets, stainless steel details, marble counters and marble baths throughout, Dornbracht fixtures; at 287 Parsonage: bleached white oak floors, bleached walnut doors, white lacquer/bleached walnut kitchen cabinets, stainless steel details, quartz counters and marble baths throughout, again Dornbracht fixtures and at 289 Parsonage: bleached white oak floors, grey sycamore kitchen cabinets with white lacquer accents, stainless steel details, marble counters and marble baths throughout, Dornbracht fixtures throughout.

**Urban Arches: I am aware of what a typical Hamptons residence is, and what many look like. That is why I think the Parsonage Lane homes are such a breath of fresh air. Is this difference what you mean about these homes surpassing this upscale community's standard of luxury? And by surpass do you mean expand and surpass?**

**Thomas Hickey:** We designed these homes with discerning residents in mind and left no stone unturned when carving the spaces within. Our goal was to offer not just a luxurious home, but also a bespoke experience for its future inhabitants. We envisioned what these residents would want, what would organically flow and work cohesively with their lifestyle – what's the definition of luxury to them? It isn't about marble; it's about how a home works, and what a home feels like to be in concert for and with the buyer.

