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COLOR REMIX

NEWEST
RUGS

ANIMAL
PRINTS





Coastal Calm

NATURE GUIDES THE PALETTE AT THIS BEACH-READY HOME

BY JAMIE MARSHALL | PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARCO RICCA

Bright & Light (top) The living room is grounded by a custom Perennials rug through David Sutherland. Kravet swivel chairs and a Swaim Furniture chaise face off across a Troscan coffee table. **Textural Tableau** (opposite and following page) At one end of the room, a Vanguard sofa wears a Theo performance fabric. The whitewashed cork wallcovering from Stark is the perfect backdrop for a pair of vintage sconces from 1stDibs and an array of African woven baskets from Kazi. See Resources.





IMAGINE A YOUNG COUPLE who sells their New York City apartment and moves into a beautiful Craftsman-style home in Darien. Four years and two kids later, their broker calls to tell them the house of their dreams has just come on the market. “My husband said, ‘I’m not moving again,’” the wife recalls. “I convinced him to go have a look. We moved again.”

The husband is an avid fisherman and had long dreamed of living on the water. The five-bedroom house ticked that box, and more. Set in the private Wilson Point section of Norwalk, it has its own beach with direct access to Long Island Sound. It’s also part of a close-knit community. “In the winter, there is caroling, in summer, there are lobster bakes, and in the spring, a giant Easter Egg Hunt. It’s a really magical place to live,” says the wife.

Equally magical is Brian del Toro’s interior design, which lets the seascape take center stage. “The views are spectacular,” says del Toro. “It can be very shallow at low tide, so you get all these sandbars that appear and disappear in different shapes every day. It’s a beautiful, everchanging vista.”

The designer had worked with the couple twice before and had a keen sense of their aesthetic. The house, which dates from 2006, “is simple and understated with traditional details but without being wedded to one particular style,” says del Toro. “It basically runs parallel to the water, all rooms looking out onto it.” French doors in the living room and large windows everywhere make the most of the mesmerizing view. Other than a few small renovations by VAS Construction—switching out two fireplace mantels, adding mirrored doors to the open bookcases in the living room, retiling the master bathroom—most of the interior changes were cosmetic.

Designer and homeowners agreed the interiors should reflect the water-front setting without screaming “beach house.” “I didn’t want whatever was inside to distract from all those views out the windows,” he says. “I wanted a very calm, simple interior that allowed your eye to go outside and not be blocked by too much decoration.”

To achieve that goal, del Toro let nature guide the way. He incorporated a mix of coastal hues: think driftwood, sand, taupe and gray, accented

Gathering Spot (top) In the family room, a J.D. Staron rug complements the stonework in a new fireplace by VAS Construction. A coffee table from Kravet sits between a Vanguard sofa in a Delany & Long fabric and a pair of chairs from Lexington Home Brands. **Welcome Home** (opposite page) The front hallway sports whitewashed grasscloth walls and a blue-and-white Patterson Flynn Martin area rug. The bench is from Robert Allen; the vintage Murano glass chandelier is through Olde Good Things. See Resources.

Easy Breezy (THIS PAGE) A mixture of fabrics and textures takes its cue from the coastal setting throughout the downstairs, including this Vanguard loveseat with throw pillows in a Gretchen Bellingier fabric. **Waterfront Dining** (OPPOSITE TOP) Palecek chairs provide seating at a custom Cliff Young dining table. The carved concrete chandelier is from Faux Bois Furniture, and the wool carpet is from Stark. **Perfect Landing** (OPPOSITE BOTTOM) The designer whitewashed the existing grasscloth walls on the second floor to give them a naturalistic feel. *See Resources.*



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Serene Sanctuary (ABOVE AND OPPOSITE PAGE) In the first-floor master suite, an A. Rudin chaise is upholstered in Perennials fabric. The bed is from Hickory Chair, the dresser is from Century Furniture, and the custom plaster walls are by Omar Yacoub of Maatsch Finishes. A pair of Visual Comfort sconces from the Light Touch illuminates the mirrored cabinets in the bathroom, where custom cabinets are finished with Lisa Jarvis hardware from the Brass Center.

Bright Spot (LEFT) In a girl's bedroom, the light fixture is through Blanche Field, and the bed is from ducduc. See Resources.

with varying shades of blue (the husband's favorite color) and lots of different textures for interest. Even the living room walls have an unexpected treatment—whitewashed cork with the barest trace of silver leaf underneath. "It's about having a very natural, nubby texture that feels appropriate to the beach and yet adds tiny bits of glam that make it feel more grownup," the designer says. In the family room, furnishings are anchored with a plaid wool rug, then topped with textured throw pillows.

At the same time, a nautical theme appears in subtle, but sophisticated, ways. A pair of 1940s French rope sconces adorn one living room wall; directly opposite, a brass sailboat sculpture seems to float above the marble fireplace. In the dining room, a custom chandelier cast in concrete is meant to replicate a piece of driftwood. "It's kind of sculptural and looks like something that might have washed up on shore," says del Toro. "But it has an elegant purpose." This room, more than any other sums up the designer's vision. "It's this whole element of versatility," he says. "The table is ten-feet long and it drives home the fact that there is no formal dining room—the dining area is, in fact, part of the kitchen. It's all very easy and calming."

This emphasis on versatility and a relaxed lifestyle is apparent throughout. "They have two young children and easy-going friends. They wanted a beautiful interior without it being too precious," says del Toro. "Most of the fabrics downstairs are indoor/outdoor, including the hand-knotted rug in the living room. They are scrubbable, washable, sticky-finger proof and fade resistant. That was a big answer to making the whole house elegant and elevated yet very beach-ready." 🌞

