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MARTHA'S VINEYARD & NANTUCKET

THE COLOR ISSUE

Color sets the stage
from Nantucket
to the Cape
to the Vineyard



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COLORFUL HISTORY

Patrick Ahearn, Architect and E. J. Jaxtiner Builder, Inc. transform a historic home with a renovation that sets the stage for Trellis Home's masterful color and design.

By Julie Craven Wagner
Photos by Jane Beiles



A drive down Seaview Avenue in Osterville gives the feeling of one foot in the past and one foot in the future. Historically established as a prominent summer playground for those who were among the privileged, the area has evolved through the years to be the culmination of a life of hard work for some who chose to retire along the august boulevard. Today, a mix of successful entrepreneurs at all stages of life—young families to founders of industry—are settling in and calling the icons of architectural New England history home.

For one such family, a modest Dutch Colonial home that belonged to the wife's grandparents was a place that had spawned generations of memories and lore of summers past. When the current family had the opportunity to acquire the property and thereby keep it in the family, the examination of how to preserve all that was good, and coax out everything that could be great, became an adventure of some of the finest professionals in the architectural, building and design industries found in New England.



Patrick Ahearn, FAIA and principal of Boston-based Patrick Ahearn Architect was enlisted to re-imagine the home's potential. "The house had significant sentimental value to the homeowners, being so intricately linked to their family's history on the Cape," Ahearn recalls. The interior rabbit warren of rooms and the program from yesteryear, however, didn't meet the wants and needs of their family today. The home had endured some unfortunate augmentations over the years that Ahearn, along with Cesar Monte, AIA who served as project architect for the renovation, successfully overcame. The homeowners were very committed to retaining the original gambrel style of the front façade. Ahearn and his team achieved that request while adding pleasing symmetry, side wings, and details that feel as though they had borne witness to previous generations of enjoyment. Cantilevered bay windows at gambrel peaks now add an element of romanticism and repeating double-decker porches on the front and back of the main house appear to have been original to the residence even though all are newly inserted design elements.

"We were able to preserve the idea of the home more than the actual structure itself," Ahearn explains. While the gambrel forms were preserved, every interior wall was reconfigured to create a logical floor plan that felt comfortable and gracious. In addition, Ahearn created what he deems an "Urban Village Compound" at the rear of the property with the main house protecting this private realm from public view. A pool is hidden behind the home, bookended by a cabana with vaulted ceiling, and a multi-function carriage house. "The detailing in the secondary structures mimics that in the main house," says Ahearn. "The beadboard, the crown, the custom cabinetry—it all adds to the timeless character."

The hierarchy of buildings is reinforced by stepping down the scale of each additional structure, allowing the 3 forms to sit comfortably without overwhelming the site. The covert function of their placement in this project is that the unique and deliberate site designation provided privacy, barriers and seclusion while also meeting setback requirements. "The carriage house opens to the pool area and is also accessed from a private way behind the house, so guests can come and go as they please. It really provides a significant function, helps form the courtyard, and also masks that courtyard from public view, creating real privacy from the street," says Ahearn. "Architecturally, it's playing multiple roles."

To take Ahearn's ideas and bring them to fruition, the team at E. J. Jaxtimer, Builder Inc., stepped up.





Jamie Jaxtmer functioned as the project manager for the renovation as well as the new construction. The construction began with lifting and supporting the existing structure in order to pour a new full foundation and create a new lower level as well as two new wings off each side of the home. “We poured all of the new body foundation and the new wing foundations, all at the same time,” Jaxtmer shares. “We lift a few houses a year, and while we use a subcontractor, it is our responsibility to make sure it is done correctly and that nothing goes wrong. It is a big deal, but what you get in return is a lot more functionality, more space and a lot of peace of mind.”

The new fenestration package included new high-performance Pella windows and Jaxtmer’s crew was responsible for the restoration of the windows Ahearn identified for preservation. Another window point of interest is found in the cabana where a large window lifts to serve guests at an outside poolside bar, imagined and designated by the architectural team.

Inside the home, the charm and swoon-worthy design is the work of Allison Mattison, founder and principal of Trellis Home Design. Based in Hingham and now opening a new office in Hyannis, Mattison has earned a reputation for masterful integration of colorful design without the cloying effect so many others achieve when trying to make a statement with color. Mattison, who has been designing for more than 10 years, has refined her love of color as she navigates her clients’ personal preferences. Her intuitive sense of style provides a conduit for her to take her clients’ inclination for a colorful design and arrive at something they never dreamed they would enjoy so much. “Color is a funny thing, clients want to use it in their homes, but fear that it won’t be a good investment, that they will get sick of it. I actually think the opposite—if used properly, color can lift your mood and create a sense of happiness in your home, and that is something you will never get sick of!”

In this home the color certainly taps into an emotional outlet and Mattison’s successful application resonated with what is often the most reticent element of her clients: the husband. Case in point: this husband’s office was intended to provide a simple, unfettered space for the homeowner to take calls, send emails and host an occasional meeting while trying to carve out precious leisure time on the Cape. Given his love for the game of golf, and the beckoning pull of the renown Wianno Club just down the street, Mattison chose a deep green to bathe all of the traditional molding in the space—including the coffered ceiling—in a high gloss lacquer treatment. A



plaid rug in shades of blue, sumptuously upholstered furniture, and a deep blue and white faux bois treatment on the husband’s custom-made desk by Aronson Woodworks in Iowa, with a waterfall edge, all contribute to be a place where work is not a chore.

The dining room, again treated with the high gloss lacquer—this time in a hydrangea blue—features built-ins, crafted by Shaw Woodworking, with glass-paneled cabinetry, a wet bar and mahogany counters. The dining table, also by Aronson Woodworks, this time reversing the white and blue faux bois treatment, comfortably seats eight upon crisp white Chippendale chairs, and is grounded by another custom-made geometric floor covering by Elizabeth Eakins, and is crowned by a lacy white chandelier that adds to the space’s fresh and airy vibe.

The family room is a perfect example of Mattison’s deft use of color, pattern, texture and accents to create a well-balanced space. The walls are white shiplap with V-notch insets of the coffered ceiling. The room’s fireplace features white-washed brick, flanked by built-ins lined with an apple green Phillip Jeffries grass cloth, and a white and green pineapple pendant lantern fixture floats above the seating area.



An over-sized upholstered ottoman by Dunes and Duchess, features wooden turned legs that are in the same blue as the chunky pedestal table that greets guests in the spacious gallery entry. Kelly green tub chairs provide the pop of color that plays off the blue and white accent pillows and striped lamps. A Greek key tape in green and blue edges the sublimely tailored ivory drapes.

“When you use powerful color in your home, it has to be dispersed in the right way,” Mattison affirms. The family room could be a master-class study of that particular design philosophy. She also advises using color to connect to adjacent spaces to achieve a sense of flow. “In all of my designs, I’m informed by classic design first, even though I’m not necessarily a classicist. I always am very nostalgic in my design, so I never do anything I think is going to be really

trendy. A lot of people, when they use color, they think trendy and that’s not how I view color.”

For this project Mattison says the homeowners were on board for the adventure ahead. “When we first discussed the project, the clients explained that they wanted this home to be completely different than their permanent home in Dedham, which was much more serious. For this home, they wanted it to feel more relaxed and carefree, a place to entertain and encourage a good time. One rule was ‘No brown furniture!’”

Off of the family room, a sunroom with a brick floor and interior shingled walls that complement the bountiful windows provides an example of Patrick Ahearn’s subliminal use of old-world materials to give a space a sense of implied history. Mattison says the sunroom is one of her favorite rooms in the



house. White wicker furniture, previously enjoyed for years by generations of the homeowners’ family was re-purposed after receiving a fresh coat of white paint. Blue and white fabrics in three separate patterns—cheetah, bouncy chrysanthemums, and a men’s shirt-inspired stripe—give the illusion of history to the cushioned pieces as though they entered the family’s history at different chapters. In the center of the seating area grounded by an over-sized Fenwick Chart Table by Oomph, in a lacquered ice blue, features a custom chart of Osterville from the coordinates Mattison supplied. These thoughtful and well-considered elements have aligned the homeowner’s agreement with Mattison’s claim of the most favored room of the house.

Adjacent to the sunroom, a screened in porch provides seasonal comfort, with a sky blue painted beadboard ceiling and comfortable cushioned seating in colors evocative of the blooms just outside. Both

spaces benefit from over-sized, custom-designed copper skylights—a design feature Patrick Ahearn has become known for including in many of his projects. “It’s an architectural skylight that’s copper-clad and has some three-dimensional quality about it.” He explains. “They are cove-lit at night which gives them a wonderful quality, and it is a way to create some verticality without changing the ceiling height.”

Ahearn sums up the project and efforts of all involved when he says, “You know, when you go through the house today, you really think it’s just this wonderful restoration; a preservation. You have no idea we reconfigured circulation patterns, and changed many things inside, and basically introduced all new finishes. But, it’s the new old house.” 🏡

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