

RHAPSODY IN BLUE

Interior designer Jocelyn Chiappone strikes a balanced chord between the historic past of Edgartown and an active family's future.

By Julie Craven Wagner

Photography by Greg Premru

Styling by Karin Lidbeck Brent



The bespoke village of Edgartown is truly a haven of charm and character redolent of a bygone era. Majestic sea captains' homes, clad in frothy white clapboard and punctuated with droplets of color provided by shutters accented with period-appropriate working hardware, are set back behind white picket-fencing from the tree-lined streets that allow for leisurely evening strolls after a sun-soaked day on the water. When the opportunity arose for one very busy family to create their own Vineyard retreat, it became apparent that a blank canvas actually involved a myriad of countless decisions, that the homeowner—who accomplished all of the design of her home in Wellesley, and originally wanted to be at the helm of their new undertaking—quickly realized she should enlist the help of the best professionals she could find. That short list included Patrick Ahearn, FAIA and Newport's own Digs Design Company.

"The history of Edgartown really resonated with these clients, so for us, the question became how do we create a new old house—a house with a sense of implied history, that would take cues from houses in the historic district that they appreciated so much," says Ahearn. The result became a Greek Revival cottage designed by

Ahearn and Project Architect Francesca Gordini that looks as though it could have been a mid-1800s captain's house, complete with period-appropriate details that imbue the home with the patina of age even though it's all new construction. "All of the layers on the exterior—the heavily articulated cornice boards, corner columns and oversailing eaves—plus smaller details like copper gutters and authentic lanterns and louvered shutters—all come together to indicate a house that could have been built more than 100 years ago."

On the inside of the house, Ahearn's hand is visible in the exquisite architectural detailing seen throughout. Beadboard decorates the ceilings and walls of certain rooms, adding timeless character and a nod to history. The floor plan, however, meets all the needs for modern day. "This house lives the way families want to live today," says Ahearn.

Jocelyn Chiappone, founder and principal of Digs Design says, "These were great clients, and the wife and I immediately hit it off. In fact, when she complimented the dress I was wearing and said she thought she had the same one, I knew it would be a great match!" Within a week of their initial meeting, Chiappone arrived at the home with a full binder of designs, ready to decorate





the house and the duo embarked on this adventure, to as Chiappone puts it, “create a timeless design that relates to the traditional architecture, while capturing the youthful energy and lifestyle of this young and active family that loves summer entertaining.”

That classic yet current design came to life in this new home by incorporating traditional lines in the soft and case goods, yet whenever given the chance, Chiappone interrupts the expected with an unexpected take. Case in point: the living room features an intimate and cozy seating arrangement large enough to accommodate several family members plus guests when needed. White upholstery, not uncommon in this sort of coastal environment is accented by a deep blue palette of lively pattern on throw pillows throughout, a pair of swivel chairs in front of the fireplace and a flame stitch pattern on the café shades on the wall sconces. Anchoring the center of the seating is a Lucite coffee table that provides a lightness that would have otherwise not been possible with a more expected piece crafted from wood. Upholstered cubes, in a mod blue and white geometric pattern, tuck in under the table which allows their pattern personality to shine, and are always at the ready to provide another four places to perch in the spacious room.

The living, dining and kitchen spaces in this home are open and connected on the main floor which Chiappone says required careful consideration as to not interrupt the flow, yet balance each space with its own identity. One of the effective ways Chiappone achieves independence for each of the spaces is with her deft choice in lighting. Throughout the home, unique fixtures, pendant, flush mounts and table lamps steal the eye’s attention for just a fleeting moment, sometimes sublimely and sometimes overtly. In the living room, floating above all of the activity and suspended from the V-notch coffered ceiling, a cocoa bead wrapped over-sized pendant evokes the sandy shores of the island while allowing enough of an open feel in its design to not feel overpowering.

In another vignette, the entry way, is an example of the “Digs Mix” —a look Chiappone and her team have become known for. “We took very beautiful and traditional elements that feel collected over time, and are in keeping with the beautiful New England architecture, and then added unexpected layers to make them more interesting, while still feeling timeless and classic.” The stairwell and wainscoting, with the antique painted chest are historic, yet feel fresh against a crisp white backdrop and a Digs Mix of more eclectic elements in the lighting and accessories. The Lucite and





rattan vintage lamp and the wonderful geometric cotton runner add that signature Digs style to the space.

An “away room” as Chiappone calls it, is found in the husband’s study. Wrapped in a moody blue geometric wallpaper, the space affords a place at the vintage campaign desk to steal away, for a phone call, or check email. A sumptuous sofa can host a brief meeting or just an hour to recline with a good book. The room has been treated in the “Digs Blue” shade of Benjamin Moore Van Deusen on all of the millwork and the ceiling, giving it a jewel box feel, yet perfectly welcoming for the masculine member of the home.

Speaking of the individuals in this project, Chiappone shares that the family has three teenage daughters. “Working with the teenage girls in this family added unique perspectives that made the process that much more rewarding and fun.” she explains. “They each had mood boards where we would find inspiration looks and colors and textures for each of them. I honestly think they enjoyed this process more than any of us.” Expression of that collaboration is evident in one of the daughters’ bedrooms where a geometric wall covering in shades of fuchsia and tangerine, with

accents of gold foil in the bedding, ignite the joy of arriving on the Vineyard every summer.

Outside a spacious patio area extending from the French doors of the home, around the pool and to the new pool cabana provide all of the outdoor space this family, and surely plenty of friends and relatives, need. A comfortable seating area and an oversized dining table that seats 10 draw the attention from the beautifully appointed interior during the warmer months.

Overall, the Digs Design treatment this new home and special family received has set the stage for years of fun and precious memories to come. As the homeowner succinctly says, “Digs was incredible to work with. They understood I wanted to go out of my comfort zone a little bit, in order to work with them, but they also respected my taste as well. Everyone who visits our home has nothing but amazing things to say. I could not have done it without them—it was truly an incredible experience to work with them.” 🏠

Julie Craven Wagner is the editor of Cape Cod HOME.



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