



BEACH HOUSE REDUX

NEW CONSTRUCTION IN VERO
BEACH REFRAMES THE EXPECTED
COASTAL-INSPIRED LOOK.

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AUGUST GERARD SCHWARTZ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Not every client advises their designer to push them out of their comfort zone, but that's precisely what Malcolm and Dorothy "Dusty" MacColl asked of Leah Muller. After raising their children in a traditional home in Massachusetts and settling into an active retirement in Vero Beach, the couple was ready to change up their Florida vacation home—and the designer, known for her coastal modern interiors, was happy to deliver. "The MacColls were looking for something a little edgy," she says. "Our vision was to reimagine the conventional beach house with a fresh point of view."

The clients discovered an idyllic lot along a golf course that gave the couple the chance to build from the ground up. Wanting a place that would be as comfortable for just the two of them as for hosting visiting family, they engaged architect John M. Brenner and general contractor Matt Barth to create a plan inspired by one they'd done for a nearby residence.

Brenner began sketching an Anglo-Caribbean-style home with French doors, hipped rooflines and an open plan on the main floor. "This lot was quite a bit larger and deeper than the one the MacColls saw, which allowed us to develop a grand private courtyard," the architect explains. "The breezeway provides covered walkways from the auto court, carriage house and main house while framing the courtyard perimeter." The exterior spaces influenced the interior, Barth adds. "We always try to design for the views," he says. "Outdoor living is what people come here for."

The project was still on paper when Dusty reached out to Muller about giving the abode a modern beach house vibe, allowing her and project manager Shannon Colkitt to play a key role in selecting hardscapes and materials. "Our designs have clean lines, a fresh look and unexpected

elements, but they're not austere or cold," Muller says. "We like to mix in less expensive things, like a found side table, to jazz up the basics."

What the designer calls her "low risk, low impact; high risk, high impact" philosophy is immediately apparent in the foyer. A woven zig-zag rug in a blend of neutrals and ocean blue rests on a limestone floor that sets the coastal tone, while the metal ribbon chandelier overhead announces the decor is anything but business as usual.

The theme continues in the kitchen and the living, dining and family areas—connected gathering spaces ideal for hosting friends and family. A beachy spirit is felt through natural textures, such as rift-cut oak shelves in the living area, hand-woven rope dining chairs and a kitchen backsplash mosaic of travertine and marble. Against crisp white walls—a departure from the MacColls' previous home—Muller and Colkitt introduced a seaside palette of sandy hues with hints of blues, greens and greige, including neutral-colored sofas with blue striped pillows.

Where the walls aren't white, however, they are patterned—and boldly so. In the guest suite, the designers decked out a bedroom in a whimsical tropical-fish wallpaper and lined the bathroom in a terra cotta and white chevron-print wallcovering. Other pattern play occurs on pillows, none of which are solid colored.

The atmosphere calms in the master bedroom, which Dusty asked Muller to make "a quiet place." She responded with elements such as a pale green wall color, a bench upholstered in a barely-there aqua and an existing dresser repainted a glossy taupe.

The palette is also referenced in artwork, which the designers used as another layer to the coastal modern aesthetic. A commissioned piece over the living area fireplace echoes the oceanic hues, while the duo found appropriate homes in the study and a hallway for existing works. Lighting, meanwhile, acts as an additional art form that gives an edge to an expected beach style; the stairwell features a blacksmith metal chandelier, and the kitchen island is illuminated by pendants made of upholstered cotton banding.

As refreshing as the interior spaces are, landscape architect August Gerard Schwartz ensured the couple has ample reasons to step outdoors. He designed a garden that can hold up to longstanding enjoyment, deploying artificial turf in high-use areas and installing a putting green. "The entire purpose of the house is to encourage generations to always feel invited to visit, stay and play," he says.

The MacColls are delighted to report their new residence isn't just a departure from their former homes; it's also become a favorite gathering place for the family. "My sister walked in and said, 'Who lives here?'" Dusty laughs. "It's so out of the ordinary for us, and we love it." ■

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—LEAH MULLER



A rattan mirror and ceramic gourd lamps join a Hickory Chair console in the foyer of a Vero Beach home by designer Leah Muller. A metal chandelier suspends over Patterson Flynn Martin's Variable rug. The floor-to-ceiling woodwork is painted Benjamin Moore Super White. "We wanted immediate artistic impact through the front door," Muller says.



Perennials fabric covers the living area sofa—topped with pillows in Kravet and Osborne & Little materials—and two armchairs. The sofa is bookended by Hickory Chair's Martinique side tables and faces woven chairs by the brand. John Schuyler artwork, Palecek's Amaya mirror and Visual Comfort & Co. sconces decorate the walls.



Above: At the north end of the first-floor veranda, landscape architect August Gerard Schwartz installed an artificial turf putting green and a garden wall of confederate jasmine. "A simple rhythm of Seminole pink hibiscus adds color," he says.

Opposite: Lighting pendants made of cotton strips suspend above a white quartz kitchen island, home to seagrass Palecek stools. A mosaic of greige travertine and white Thassos marble lines the back wall. Premier Millwork & Cabinets made the cabinetry, outfitted with chrome pulls. A satin nickel Hansgrohe faucet pours into a Franke sink.

For the master bedroom, Muller softened Benjamin Moore's Bali Green to a custom shade. Matouk bedding from Pioneer Linens covers the bed, which has a headboard made of a Christopher Farr Cloth textile. An Arteriors lamp tops one of the Hickory Chair nightstands, and draperies made of Sunbrella fabric frame the window.



"The master bathroom is spacious, bright and private and overlooks the central courtyard," says architect John M. Brenner. An MTI tub and the owners' stool rest on mosaic flooring of white Thassos and Carrara marble.

The covered loggia, with its aluminum roof, dominates the pool courtyard. Seagrass rope-wrapped Kingsley Bate seating with cushions made of Perennials fabric occupies travertine flooring, while Frontgate lounge chairs border the pool. "We connected that sitting area to the pool using a fun checkerboard of turf and hardscape," Schwartz says.

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