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PHOTOGRAPHY BY DUSTIN PECK

A hands-on homeowner works with an expert team to build a coastal vacation cottage on Bald Head Island, North Carolina.

An Island *Coastal* Cottage

FREE FLOW. Vicky and Kayla always research a diverse array of layout options for their clients. The final layout of the living room considers the doors that open to the porches while still centering around the fireplace.



COASTAL COTTAGE. Builder team Whitney Blair Custom Homes and Allison Ramsey Architects have together created a community of coastal cottages (“and we love the style!” Vicky says).

OPPOSITE | FRESH AIR. Several outdoor porches are part of the home’s design. This one is a quiet space to enjoy the ocean and salt air, and the furnishings were selected for both style and function. “We’re very careful to specify only durable materials for coastal properties. These chairs are made of recycled bottles and stainless steel hardware, so they’re guaranteed to look good for years,” Vicky points out.



Homeowners often delegate their interior design projects to professionals.

It’s a wise move, considering that experts have the connections, aesthetic sensibilities and skills honed over years of experience and formal training. Homeowners can know their projects will turn out wonderfully without having to worry or ever unfurl a measuring tape.

However, a homeowner sometimes has a crystal clear vision and wants to be involved at a micro level—as opposed to signing off on things from the sidelines—which makes it delightful for everyone involved.

This was the case with a new build on the island escape of Bald Head Island, located just off the coast of Southport, North Carolina. A family from Virginia wanted a vacation home custom built for their needs.

The family turned to Vicky Serany and Kayla Boyle of Southern Studio Interior Design, along with Whitney Blair Custom Homes and Allison Ramsey Architects.

“Seeking a place for their family to gather, the homeowners enlisted us for this very special project,” principal designer Vicky says.

Client Carolyn was hands-on throughout the process, and her energetic spirit added an element of fun and personalization.

She made the trip from Virginia to the Southern Studios office in Cary, North Carolina, and, together with the team, brainstormed a design.

“Carolyn’s excitement and energy were contagious, and you can see that spark in the resulting project,” Vicky says.

Just as Carolyn desired, the home embodies “coastal cottage” and is full of soothing blue hues, dynamic interiors and art that Carolyn curated.



GOOD MORNING, SUNSHINE! The breakfast nook features rattan chairs in a charming two-toned, coastal-inspired finish, along with an elegant dining table. "Carolyn wanted a collected and dynamic design," Vicky says, "so we strategically selected each piece, including the chairs and table."

“Blue is a universal color that adds calm to a space. The eclectic mix of the different hues just works in this house.”

MERRY ON A FERRY

One aspect of the project required expertise only professionals can offer: The build's location was on Bald Head Island, which is only reachable by ferry. On top of that, golf carts are the main form of transportation on Bald Head Island to ensure the ambience isn't undermined by the disruptive sounds of horns and traffic.

However, this makes things extra tricky when building a home from scratch, and Carolyn was grateful to have professionals navigate the challenge.

“We spent months preparing checklists upon checklists,” Vicky says. “Barge reservations were made well in advance, with backup reservations confirmed in case of bad weather (the barge doesn't operate during the high winds often found on the coast).”

It took lots of organization and preparation. Vicky and Kayla's team packed extra supplies and brought everything they could possibly need, because there's only a small hardware store on the island. Despite weather and construction delays, the entire project took about a year to complete.

“We thrive on challenges, and our team thrives on execution,” Vicky adds. “The difficulties were great, but the rewards were worth the extra effort.”

DESIGN DETAILS

Vicky and Kayla always allow space for a design to evolve while making sure to maintain the overall vision.

Carolyn wanted a coastal cottage with a glorious blue color scheme. Layers of blues were carefully planned out to bring the serenity of the sea and sky into this seaside home. The blues are utilized in a variety of ways—from sofas to a bold and vibrant wallpaper in a powder room.





DINING IN STYLE. "Sometimes, an oversized light fixture adds a big statement to a space," Vicky says. "Because this is a vacation home, simplicity was key. We decided not to use an area rug, so the light fixture needed to have a big design impact."



WHIMSICAL WALLPAPER. A powder room has a major moment with an eye-catching Thibaut wallpaper. It carries on the blue color scheme seen throughout the home. "We wanted to layer the color, pattern and texture, so this shade of blue worked beautifully," Vicky says.

THE SIMPLE LIFE. This is a second home, so simplicity was the goal for the primary bedroom. “We use easy-to-care-for bed linens in vacation homes, because we want our clients to enjoy their time together and not worry about upkeep,” Vicky says. “All of the bedding is clean and simple, without busy patterns.”

“Carolyn’s excitement and energy were contagious, and you can see that spark in the *resulting project.*”



Singing *the Blues*

This coastal vacation residence features a range of blues—proving that one color can be used in a variety of ways for inspiring home décor.

- **COLOR CURATION.** Gather your color palette. Vicky suggests “strategically repeating the elements throughout the home.”
- **DASHES AND SPLASHES.** Use one or two colors as a constant, and then layer in a splash of bold color.
- **“DRAMATICA.”** Remember that using the same colors in a variety of textures can also add drama. “This is a great way to create dynamic interiors,” Vicky points out.
- **STUNNING STATEMENTS.** Vicky also suggests “considering each individual piece or element of the design and making sure they make a statement of their own.”
- **EXPERIMENTAL.** Experiment with a wide range of values using the same color for interest.



[ABOVE, RIGHT] TEEN TERRITORY. Designing a room for a teenaged son means providing sleeping capacity for visiting friends and a cozy spot to hang out. “The small space was challenging, but we managed to maximize it without compromising function or aesthetics,” Vicky explains. “The sofa bed and ottomans provide flexibility and a quiet space to watch a movie. The bunk beds are tucked away for sleepovers.”

[BELOW, RIGHT] BEDROOM BEAUTIFIED. An elegant bed in this guest bedroom was the inspiration for the rest of the design. “We began with the neutral bed and added the rich-blue nightstands,” Vicky says. “The serene wall color softens the space. And homeowner Carolyn found the perfect art to add the finishing touch.”





[ABOVE] SWEET DREAMS. A bedroom for the family's adult daughter is the most feminine space in the home. Even so, it still maintains the coastal vibe of the residence. Two printed armchairs at the end of the bed create a cozy spot just for her and a friend. "We had the space, and the chairs add comfortable seating to enjoy a quiet cup of coffee. They offer an alternative to the traditional bench at the foot of the bed," Vicky says.

[OPPOSITE, TOP] SOFT AND SERENE. The window seat in the primary bedroom was inspired by the soft and serene color palette of the bedroom. Because this is a vacation retreat for the family, the space is designed to impart a sense of relaxation.

"Blue is a universal color that adds calm to a space," Vicky explains. "The eclectic mix of the different hues just works in this house."
 She took advantage of moments to use blue in unexpected ways, such as on the kitchen island, where it adds a happy pop of color. (According to Vicky, "Because this is a second home, there were opportunities to be playful.")
 The more-soothing blues were used as a neutral in some of the spaces. As a result, other colors were welcomed as accents, such as a raspberry hue in the living room.
 "We wanted to add a splash of accent color to the blue palette found throughout the house. A raspberry-colored, faux leather ottoman was just the right color and piece to anchor the space," Vicky explains.
 In addition, gathering with family and friends was the emphasis for this home and comprised one of Carolyn's main priorities, so Vicky and Kayla made sure that each area was stylish, yet relaxed, and was suited for long conversations taking place in comfort.

Furniture placement was especially important in order to create natural movement throughout the open-concept home while still maintaining intentional spots to gather and connect.
 "We always experiment with a variety of space-planning options, and we reviewed them all with Carolyn," Vicky points out.
 Another aspect of the home's unique character comprises the striking art pieces displayed throughout. This was facilitated by Carolyn.
 "Carolyn has beautiful taste in art," Vicky says. "She worked with a variety of artists to incorporate unique pieces into the design."
 They both enjoyed collaborating with Carolyn to incorporate the art collection, noting that the variety and interest of the pieces bring personality to the home.
 From navigating the difficulties of building on the island to creating a stunning color scheme inspired by blue, along with designing furniture layouts suited for vacation mode, this coastal home is a true tribute to the love of family and making good memories together ... in "paradise." **CB**



Paint Choices

The paints in this home are all from Sherwin Williams.

- SW6204 "Sea Salt"
- SW6218 "Tradewind"

ADDITIONAL FAVORITES

- SW6247 "Krypton"
- SW6244 "Naval"
- SW6505 "Atmospheric"