



The living room walls are painted Elmira White, and the trim and wainscot are painted Decorators White; the master bedroom door (right) is painted Red Parrot, all by Benjamin Moore.



At Ease

A smart renovation and a bright palette turn a waterfront house in St. Augustine, Florida, into a cheery, light-filled stunner

BY BRIELLE M. FERREIRA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
FRANCESCO LAGNESE

STYLING BY
ELIZABETH BEELER

The dining room walls are painted White Drifts, and the trim is painted Decorators White, both by Benjamin Moore. Opposite: The backsplash tile is by Mosaic House.



FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR, EVERY time this St. Augustine, Florida, vacationer looked out the window of her rental condo, she felt a pang of longing. Right across the way she could see the home of her dreams: a sprawling Key West-style retreat with plenty of charm. “I always said that if it went up for sale, I wanted to be the first one to look inside,” she says. When the home, built in 2004, finally went on the market, she quickly found that while it was surprisingly lacking in interior detail, it more than made up for that with breathtaking views. “It wasn’t what I was expecting,” she adds. “But I knew I could make it work.”

Perched on a picturesque plot of land situated directly between the Intracoastal Waterway and the Atlantic Ocean, the home’s setting was magical, even if the rest of it needed some serious TLC to live up to its full potential. “Everything inside was pretty nondescript,” admits the homeowner, “and the design elements that were there had a masculine vibe.” Wanting to carve out a space that would reflect her own style and sensibilities, the New Yorker reached out to interior designer Andrew Howard with a vision: to inject a heavy dose of Hamptons charm into the home’s cookie-cutter oeuvre.

First, Howard replaced plain-Jane tile floors throughout the house with warm, driftwood-hued wood planks.



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Then, he developed a plan to bring drama and intrigue overhead with a series of standout ceiling treatments—some painted and lacquered, others paneled and laid with beams—which helped to open the rooms and bring light and warmth to the formerly dark spaces.

Architectural interest firmly in place, Howard's next job was to furnish the interiors, mixing curated finds with custom pieces tailored to the rooms' unique dimensions. The oversized coffee table in the living room, for example, is one of the homeowner's favorite pieces, scaled to both fit the extra-large space and to accommodate her healthy reading habit. "On most days, the French doors are open, and this room really becomes an extension of the outdoors," explains Howard. "The breeze blows in off the water—it's her favorite reading spot."

In fact, the entire house is a bit like that, having been thoughtfully designed with the homeowner's lifestyle in mind. A custom dining table expands to fit extra guests at her frequent dinner parties, and the renovated kitchen was borne of her love for cooking. With its new, Shaker-style cabinetry on olive knuckle hinges, open shelving displaying pretty blue-and-white dishware, dazzling glazed terra-cotta backsplash, custom hardware made from a mold of an antique pull, and fanciful range hood, the kitchen is the home's crowning jewel. "This room gets great light, and we wanted to take full advantage of it by using reflective surfaces like mirrored finishes and tiles with an iridescent quality to them," says Howard.

Now, thanks to the extensive remodel that touched nearly every room, the house is finally worthy of its dream-like setting. For Howard, however, the transformation was about much more than just aesthetics; it was about capturing a laid-back, happy feeling. "I like houses, no matter what their style, to be places everyone looks forward to relaxing in together," he says. "And we definitely accomplished that in this house."

His client is quick to agree. The carefully wrought beauty inside the home is second only to the landscape right outside, framed in the dining room's expansive window and reflected in the calming blues—on the sofa, chairs, and draperies—that ground the living room. From these plush spots, the homeowner watches the world go by, developing a new appreciation for the captivating views that first made her fall in love with the house. "It's just surrounded by the most incredible wildlife," she says. "There are lots of birds—roseate spoonbills, kingfishers—but I also see dolphins going by and even the occasional manatee. You never know what to expect with the view outside, and that's the best thing about living here." **For more information, see Sources, page 110.**

Brielle M. Ferreira is a freelance design and decorating writer based in Fort Lauderdale.



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The walls in the master bedroom are painted Paper White, and those in the guest bedroom (opposite, bottom) are painted Mt. Rainier Gray, both by Benjamin Moore. Opposite, top: The homeowner on the patio, which faces the Intracoastal Waterway