

Just Beachy

Designer Diane Snyder creates her family's dream cottage
high in the Naples sky. BY MARSHA FOTTLER



PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIM STAMM



All decked out: Seagrass furniture and an ornamental fan give the lanai tropical flair.



DIANE SNYDER ENVISIONED A BREEZY, SOPHISTICATED Naples beachside cottage. But when her dream turned out to be six stories above the sand and encased in a contemporary condominium tower, this interior designer wasn't fazed. With 28 years of design experience both in Toledo, Ohio, and more recently in Southwest Florida, Snyder liberated her imagination to embrace various definitions of tropical and beachy. She conjured up a stunningly beautiful and totally tranquil beach home. And she did it all in just 10 weeks.

The 4,300-square-foot apartment with terrace and beachside lanai wittily balances restrained formality with easy nonchalance. The quiet color palette and astute placement of elegant antiques co-exist beautifully with vintage painted furniture, playful custom fabrics and simple natural artifacts that suggest sand, sea and tropical foliage.

"My husband, Jim, and I have been coming to Naples for 12 years," explains Snyder. "On one of our trips, we were at LaPlaya Resort; and as we were walking the beach one morning, I noticed this condominium

tower in final stages of completion. The location seemed perfect, so we investigated and bought a sixth-floor unit from an investment owner. It was too late to choose cabinetry, counter surfaces or bath fixtures, but I knew I could use color and texture, architectural detailing and the right mix of furniture and accessories to transform the space into the beach cottage our family wanted."

They especially liked the split floor plan, which makes the home ideal for visits from the couple's two grown children, Lauren and Michael. Both guest bedrooms open onto a stone terrace. A home office is situated between the two suites; it can easily be reconfigured into a guest sitting room.

Snyder began by choosing a subtle color palette focused on the Gulf of Mexico. "My intent from the beginning has been to play to the water, not against it," she says. "I went with a quiet aqua, light sage, oatmeal and buttercream, and I've used white for all the trim, but blue is my main color."

With the color scheme set, the designer customized with architectural detailing: crown

Bed on the beach: a seashell chandelier, bird-shaped finials on the iron bed and a custom raffia headboard in the master bedroom.



TOM HARPER PHOTOGRAPHY/COURTESY OF DIANE SNYDER

Customizing a condo: Snyder added architectural detailing from crown molding to columns, above, then selected such finishing touches as the open-orb chandelier, right.



molding, raised paneling in the entrance foyer, wainscoting in the hallway and a stone floor medallion at the front door. She personalized the kitchen with a chandelier and put grasscloth on the ceiling, trimming it with bamboo molding. The grasscloth is repeated on the family room walls.

The dining area is part of the grand salon

but made distinctive by a curving wall. Again the designer played to the feature instead of resisting it. "I set a round glass table in the space and paired it with bamboo chairs upholstered in a striped Manual Canovas fabric," she says. "An octagonal Stark carpet anchors the space. I also added an iron railing to visually separate it from the salon. Then I installed two classical white columns to really set off the space as a room." Above the table, Snyder suspended a distressed-iron, open-orb chandelier. That added the perfect finishing touch to her new dining-in-the-round room.

THE GRAND SALON GATHERS together nearly all the colors and most of the fabrics she used in the apartment project. Textiles are her special delight. "They are the secret weapon of a creative designer," she reveals. "Custom fabrics allow you to have a completely original and one-of-a-kind scheme. I believe more homeowners would insist on custom fabrics if they realized what a huge impact they make on a home."

Snyder selected a Barbara Barry linen fab-

Beach Cottage Basics

from Diane Snyder to inspire your own Southwest Florida beachy residence:

✧ Arrange furniture and choose colors that complement your water views.

✧ Choose a quiet palette of perhaps three main colors and two or three supporting colors and use them throughout for an easy, harmonious flow. You don't have to use all the colors in every room.

✧ Custom fabrics can make your rooms original.

✧ A great white trim paint is Benjamin Moore No. 967.

✧ A few pieces of mirrored furniture can add lightness and sophistication.

✧ Never be afraid to paint furniture. A soft wash of color updates a tired piece.

✧ Incorporate natural surroundings—shells, coral, tropical plants and flowers, a glass bowl of lemons or limes, botanical prints, a carved stone or metal fish.



Mission accomplished: Snyder mixed contemporary and antique furniture with metal accents and lots of tropical accessories to create her cottage in the sky.

ric for the Henredon sofas. On a Chinoiserie washed-wood side chair she used the same Canovas stripe from the dining room chairs but ran it in a different direction. The bar chairs are upholstered in a Ralph Lauren hound's-tooth check. To soften the stone floor and define the salon seating area, Snyder chose a natural sisal rug, which she then had banded in the traditional blue Greek key pattern.

The master bedroom, done in buttercream and goldenrod, has a seashell chandelier. The luxurious bed linens are from Cowtan & Tout and Brunswick et Fils. The 26-by-26-inch custom pillow shams are from Jane Churchill. The iron bed features bird finials and a custom raffia headboard. Happily the room is big enough for an intimate table and comfortable chairs for morning coffee. Cotton/linen

drapery panels made from Osborne & Little fabric set off the suede chamois-colored sofa in front of the window.

Since the generously proportioned lanai is meant to be part of the living space, Snyder brought her color scheme outside with seagrass furniture and an ornamental leaf ceiling fan. Pillows and weatherized seat cushions pick up on Snyder's supporting shades. This casual outdoor room is one of the homeowners' favorite places for informal meals and entertaining.

Having herself as a client proved to be a surprisingly satisfying experience, says Snyder. "Experts always say designers make the worst clients, but Jim and I had a clear vision and fortunately the rooms in this place are very workable and well laid out," she says. Like the best of clients, she's thrilled with the result. ✦