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HOME

YOUR GUIDE TO EVERYTHING HOME





Urban RENEWAL

Unfazed by a fire-damaged kitchen, designer Laura Urban refreshes a house from top to bottom and gives the owner a cottage with cachet.

BY JANICE RANDALL ROHLF • PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAN CUTRONA

Houses, like people, have personalities. This 1920s cottage tucked behind Main Street in Chatham is like someone you may have met and dismissed, then circled back to get to know and become best friends with. Even before interior designer Laura Urban graced the intimate spaces with rich, saturated color and fun yet functional furniture, many carefree days were spent here, with people often spilling out onto the shingled porch and side deck.

The house was a rental property for many years. Close proximity to Main Street shops and restaurants, peeks of a water view, and Lighthouse Beach just a quick shuttle ride away make it a perfect spot to while away lazy summer days.

Interior Design: URBAN DESIGN INTERIORS



A whimsical white coral branch chandelier hangs above the dining room table.



Framed old maps of Massachusetts and Cape Cod hang in the den, which has a sleeper couch for guests.

The idyll was temporarily shattered not long ago when a kitchen fire required the owner to call in Disaster Specialists. The next chapter of the house could have unfolded in a number of different ways. Happily, the accident was the impetus not only to update the kitchen but to redecorate the rest of the house as well. Cape Cod Kitchen Tech came in to redo the kitchen, and later the bathrooms, and on their recommendation the owner brought in Laura Urban to give the space a fresh new look. The kitchen revival went so well that the homeowner



An avian motif is carried through the house with the bird-patterned fabric, above, and the bird-shaped coat hooks, below.

asked the designer to take on the interiors of the rest of the house. If an unfortunate incident like a fire ever had an upside, this was it.

From an aqua jute runner climbing up the stairs to a handcrafted, white coral branch chandelier above the dining table, inspired touches abound. Some of the floors are painted in a black-and-white diamond pattern and were recently refurbished by a local artisan. “The owner wanted casual, coastal elegance that would feel Cape-y,” says Urban, whose business, Urban Design Interiors, is based in Harwich Port. As soon as the aqua runner received the homeowner’s enthusiastic thumbs-up, the whole-house color scheme fell into place. Aqua is also the color of choice for faux crocodile living room side tables and rattan bistro chairs that are durable enough to be used indoors and out.





In the master bedroom, curves are featured in the bureau design and a circular, shell-rimmed mirror.

We “started with blues, and then brought in sands and grays,” explains Urban. Instead of a traditional shade like royal or navy, Urban splashed “Ocean Air” by Benjamin Moore on the walls, a color that is tranquil yet arresting. Accented by earth tones and neutrals, the overall effect is fresh and even sophisticated, but not at all stuffy.

“I tried to make it a fun, whimsical house,” says Urban, who, favoring an eclectic style, introduced a variety of textures and finishes. In addition to faux crocodile, jute and rattan, there is wicker, dark wood, bleached wood and mirrors rimmed with shells. She also added touches that are lighthearted without being cutesy, like a jolly ceramic fish as the dining table centerpiece, and an avian motif in the kitchen window-treatment fabric that is carried through the house by ornamental birds on candlesticks and bird-shaped coat hooks.



Having chosen aqua as the starting point for the color scheme, Laura Urban brought in sands and grays.



A table with a fold-down top allows sit-down meals in the small kitchen.

Drawing from the homeowner’s collection of artwork, including framed, old Massachusetts maps, Urban personalized the décor. There’s a map of Chatham in the living room and one of Fenway Park in the master bedroom. “I like to incorporate a person’s collections or family heirlooms so that the house looks like it’s been done over time,” notes Urban.

To make the most of every inch in the cottage, Urban incorporated dual-purpose items whenever possible. The homeowner wanted an eat-in kitchen, so Urban searched for and found just the right bar-type table to fit the scale of the room. It has a fold-down top and can be moved aside to allow access to the French doors leading to the deck. The dining room table, like the kitchen table, can be enlarged—just insert the leaves, while the top

of an antique-white console table, also in the dining room, flips open to increase its surface area. In the den, a wicker trunk used as a coffee table in front of the foldout couch provides storage space for bedding. Counting the sleeper sofa and bunk beds the owner requested upstairs, the small house sleeps eight comfortably.

Urban says that 80 percent of her clients are summer people. “I try to get a feel for a client’s interests and lifestyle,” says the designer, “and then create a home that’s beautiful and comfortable to them.” This Chatham house, a diamond in the rough, speaks volumes for how well she is able to do just that.



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