



Luxurious Small Spaces

Designers Laura Urban and Susan Tuttle have taken on two particular projects in Falmouth and Nantucket that showcase their skills.

BY TERRY WARD LIBBY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAN CUTRONA
AND GREG PREMRO

Multiple but distinct spaces, each with a different seating configuration, add to the feeling of spaciousness, says designer Laura Urban of this small but plush Falmouth condo.



Cape Cod houses have, typically, been built as snug, cozy affairs, counterpoints in scale to the sweeping maritime landscape and vast ocean waters that surround us. It is this sense of being sheltered from the wild and sometimes unpredictable forces of nature that gives life in a house on Cape Cod its own special kind of drama. It's an aspect of life here that inspires many, city dwellers in particular, to put down roots of their own.



Designer Susan Tuttle tried to keep the window treatments subtle in this Nantucket home, using a simple Roman shade made of white cotton duck cloth.

GREG PREMUR

"The classic Cape Cod house tends to be small," says interior designer Laura Urban, "and we like that." Vacation homes on the Cape, she says, offer her clients a contrast to the larger, more formal houses they occupy during the rest of the year. They want interior spaces on a human scale, ones that are "casual, comfortable, and relaxed," says Urban, but with all the functionality of a modern home.

Susan Tuttle, owner of Surroundings Interior Design in

Orleans, says her clients have much the same expectations. They want interior spaces that echo the colors and textures of the Cape's natural landscape, but they also want artful interiors that offer touches of elegance, as well as practical convenience.

Urban and Tuttle have long-term, professional experience in decorating Cape Cod homes, and each has developed personal design strategies for making small, interior spaces both beautiful and highly functional.

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CASINO WHARF CONDO

When the new Casino Wharf condominium complex was completed last year by Braintree developer Frank Messina, he invited several Cape-based interior designers to make presentations to his firm, showcasing their décor ideas for a model condominium. The complex was constructed directly on the beach at Falmouth Heights and has eight units, all with large decks overlooking Vineyard Sound.

“It was a serious designer’s challenge,” said Urban, “complete with sketch boards and fabric swatches.” When the competition came down to just two designers, she says, she was thrilled to be selected, not only to design the model condo’s interior, but also to do Messina’s own private townhouse at Casino Wharf.

Every property, says Urban, has some prominent or outstanding quality that will figure most importantly in her design approach. In the Casino Wharf condos, she said, it was the commanding water views that would be key to all her decisions.



Urban has added subtle ocean side
 ambience with large ceramic nautilus (above)
 and a seaweed pattern on the upholstery.

PHOTOS BY DAN CUTRONA

“The condo’s decks are directly above the water, and the views are so beautiful,” said Urban, “I knew I needed to pull those external elements right inside, to bring in the feeling of the sea air and the textures of the beach.”

To increase the sense of spaciousness in the condo, she wanted “a light color palette that would not be at odds with the outdoor environment,” one that would create a feeling of continuum with outdoor spaces.

This process began with a sample of fabric which she felt played especially well in the room. It had a soft green background printed with a single cluster



Laura Urban won out the competition to design the private residence of developer Frank Messina in Casino Wharf.

of hydrangea blossoms. From this, she designed a valance, which repeated the subtle hydrangea image, to frame the largest window in the room. It made for a pretty focal point, and was as bold a decorative touch as she felt was appropriate. To the soft green tone, she added varying depths of tan and cream colors in furnishings and other accessories, which she carried throughout the condo.

“In smaller spaces,” said Urban, “you have to be careful about scale, especially the scale of the furniture, relative to the



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The commanding water views are what inspired Urban to bring elements of the sea into the home. Although the furniture is comfortable, she made sure not to have the pieces overwhelm the space.

PHOTOS BY DAN CUTRONA

size of the room overall.” For the Casino Wharf condos, Urban used furniture of moderate size and was careful not to over-furnish the space.

To make the open living and dining area most functional, Urban created three separate seating areas, an especially good strategy for entertaining, says Urban, since guests naturally gather into small groups to talk or play games. Multiple yet distinct spaces, each with a different seating configuration, add to the feeling of spaciousness.

In a Cape Cod house, says Urban, there is always the issue of introducing the kind of decorative nautical motif that seasonal residents, in particular, nearly always desire.

“This is not such an issue for year-round homes,” says Urban, “but in a vacation home or beach house, the client is usually looking for a little more nautical emphasis. The trick is not overdoing it.” In the Messina condo, Urban has added subtle ocean side ambience by introducing such items as a large, ceramic nautilus, coral print fabrics, and pieces of furniture made from rattan, a material which always evokes a feeling of beaches and the tropics.

A bedroom boasts a second-story deck attached to the lower deck with a spiral staircase.



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