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Cayman's Home & Living Magazine



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A beachfront haven

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Vista of Blue Villa Azure

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The sparkling waters and palm-lined sands offer a magical backdrop for the homes at Rum Point. So, when Michelle Butler was designing a beachfront home in the quiet area, she decided not to compete with the sublime scenery, but rather to enhance it.

“The house is all about the view,” says Michelle, owner and interior designer at Design Studio, gesturing to the azure sea just steps from the back patio. “This view is becoming very rare in Cayman and we wanted it to be the focus.”

Indeed, Villa Azure takes its cue, and its name, from that breathtaking vista. Michelle and her husband David Wilson, an architect and landscape designer, were simply instructed to create a beach house. Although

the duo certainly fulfilled this wish, beach house does not seem to adequately describe the warmth, comfort and elegance of the property. It radiates with understated luxury.

“The owners wanted the quintessential Cayman experience,” Michelle explains of the three bedroom, three bathroom home. “They wanted to take that island look and make it more modern. They wanted it to be clean, crisp, and simple.”

The influence of the sea is evident throughout the house. In the open-plan family space, encompassing the dining room, kitchen and living room, sea green pillows echo the shade of the water, which is framed in French doors that open to the back patio. The calming palette features shades of





cream, eggshell and vanilla, creating a bright, cheerful atmosphere that evokes the serenity of the shore.

“In the living room and kitchen, we used mainly neutral tones. But we didn’t want that bleached-out beach look,” Michelle says. “We wanted to create contrast. The owners had a few specific things they wanted, such as the white finishes and the big comfortable white couch. The room looks as if it has progressed organically, or evolved over time.”

Coastal-inspired features, such as delicate shells and a driftwood candle holder, enhance the style of the home without resorting to clichés. The same discreet approach is evident in the spacious kitchen; the all-white cabinetry is punctuated by unique silver handles in the shape of sand dollars and turtles.

Michelle believes the design of the space is simple, yet eclectic elements, seen in the hand-woven wicker basket chandeliers, help to pull the look together. She says the exceptional quality of the materials and sophisticated palette truly reflects the notion that less is more. It is an ethos that Michelle and her husband Dave, who designed the stunning gardens, employ in every project they undertake.

“We used really clean, simple details in the kitchen,” Michelle explains. “We focus on the quality of the materials in the homes we design. Like this floor,” she gestures to the stunning floorboards, “it’s made of wide plank, white-washed oak and it’s incredible. It’s the only statement that needs to be made.”

This focus on quality and simplicity is

further evident in the master bedroom, which is designed to showcase the breathtaking views of the pristine water. Soft aqua hues, which Michelle describes as beachglass, are used to create a sense of serenity and calm without detracting from the outside scenery. A sumptuous king-sized bed offers the perfect place to relax and unwind after a long day in the sun. French doors open to the wraparound patio, drenching the room in light and allowing the owners to fall asleep to the gentle sounds of the sea.

In an unusual design twist, the master bathroom leads into the bedroom, with little demarcation between the spaces. The bathroom is a work of art, featuring a sleek, free-standing Wet Style tub, and a dramatic blue quartzite floor that is used to define the area. Mother of pearl lighting adds a hint of whimsy to the space.

“The master bathroom is my favourite part of the house,” Michelle says. “It was really fun to design. Because you walk into the bathroom to enter the bedroom, it had to be amazing. It has a real spa-like feel, but it’s very simple.”

Colour comes alive in the guest bedrooms, where Michelle and David were given the freedom to indulge in vibrant hues. The first bedroom features bursts of bright blue, with a striking bed and throw pillows. The second bedroom is awash in rich turquoise, creating an atmosphere of luxury and relaxation. A collection of colourised sea life etchings, from the 1884 collection of esteemed botanist Henry Bradbury, further evokes the coastal theme of the home.

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“The guest bedrooms look out on to the garden, rather than the ocean, so we could use punches of colour,” Michelle explains. “The owners were really open to colour. It was great to work with them because they really knew what they wanted, but they let us decide how that would be creatively expressed.”

Art plays an essential role in creating a sense of character in each room, according to Michelle, enabling the owners to add their own feel to the space.

“We used art to take the house to the next level,” Michelle says, pointing to two striking works, on either side of the entrance, which feature one hundred sand dollars and one hundred starfish. “We want the owners to be able to collect a piece of art they love, or to pick up shells on the beach, and personalise the home. I want the owners to build layers.”

The guest bedrooms each feature a stunning ensuite bathroom, which are mirrored in style and materials. In the showers, travertine tiles, in one centimetre

by one centimetre squares, add texture and detail with hint of extravagance.

Although there are only three rooms in the main house, a separate guest pod, with private bathroom, enhances the space and privacy of the abode. Stepping into the charming space, one could almost forget there is a bustling house only feet away.

“The guest pod is really restful,” Michelle says. “We used bright green in this room and it turned out really well.”

“Each room has a distinct style, but the bathrooms have similar palettes. This continuity pulls the entire look together.”

Outdoors, David created a thriving, tropical terrain, brimming with native plants and exquisite flowers. The symmetry of the front garden echoes the perfect symmetry of the house, creating a sense of calm and balance. Vivid sprays of frangipanis, poinsettias, and jasmine add dashes of colour and fragrance; in the early evening, the garden comes alive with the flowers’ rich, heady perfume.



“A lot of houses use sand planting,” Dave explains, “but we wanted a really natural and lush look. We wanted it to be as low maintenance as possible.”

Leaning palms provide shade for the sun-dappled backyard, with quiet pockets of garden in which to escape. A spacious wraparound deck with a swing seat reflects the homeowners’ love of entertaining and relaxation. It is the perfect spot to while away an afternoon watching the sea or spending time with family.

“We wanted a garden where there would be a change in scenery,” says Dave. “The landscape changes as the seasons change.”

“It’s all about the views,” Michelle continues. “There are garden views and lots of areas of privacy. The beach side is very simple so it is all about the view.”

The understated landscape design allows the breathtaking vista to shine. This is the ultimate beachfront abode, a place where beauty and simplicity are in harmony. Azure by name and azure by nature. 

