



Refreshingly Refined

Architect Ruard Veltman and designer Julia Wood infused this North Carolina cottage and guesthouse with a blend of coastal comfort and polished style that brings an added dose of refinement to its island setting.

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The pristine, tranquil beauty of North Carolina's Bald Head Island is matched only by its relaxed, slower pace that residents and visitors alike experience when exploring this sandy Eden. Reached only by passenger ferry or barge, the island offers golf carts, trams, and bicycles as the only modes of transportation. Cars, mercifully, are left behind on the mainland.

In this spirit of a pared-down lifestyle, architect Ruard Veltman and interior designer Julia Wood put their collective expertise into fine form while designing a coastal cottage that emits a sense of graciousness despite



its smaller size. While located only a street away from the beach, the home and its guesthouse afford a refreshing realm of privacy, as well as a tangible sense of refinement that's not typically seen in destinations along the coast. "Julia and I envisioned things from the inside out, primarily because the homeowners wanted a getaway spot that was a bit more sophisticated and polished," says Veltman.

Faced front and back with generous porches, the main cottage is perfectly positioned to catch passing breezes and encourage chats with neighbors en route to the beach. And if an afternoon nap is in order, the front porch offers a hammock area devoted to prime snoozing.

Inside, certain areas, such as the central TV lounge accessed by two oak-plank barn doors, give the family places to "cocoon" on rainy days or when it's too hot to be outdoors. "The upstairs master bedroom also exudes this same cool, insular demeanor," Veltman says.

Carefully chosen materials throughout the house signal that this is no ordinary vacation retreat. "We chose textured, enduring surfaces like plaster and unfinished white oak to provide warmth and vitality



Previous pages, left and right: Unfinished antique oak beams, as well as bookcases and an intermediate wall fashioned from the same material, add rustic details to the well-tailored living room. Opposite page: The back porch is actually two outdoor areas, one devoted to alfresco meals and entertaining while the other offers lounging space complete with hammock. This page, above: A scroll-cut backsplash made from plaster with a wax finish provides a dramatic touch to this inviting kitchen. Seagrass limestone countertops flank the range. The cooking space is further defined by an island composed of painted horizontal wood planks and a Calacatta marble countertop. Left: Just beyond the kitchen island, the dining area is enhanced by a large photograph of a foamy wave, chosen by the homeowners' art consultant, Heidi McWilliams. "We used this picture as inspiration to set the whole project into motion," says designer Julia Wood.



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—RUARD VELTMAN

Above: A built-in sectional and painted wood walls make this central TV lounge the go-to spot for family movie nights. Right: Tucked into a cozy recess formed by flanking closets, the master bed with upholstered headboard presents a dreamy escape from the world beyond. Opposite: Directly across from the master bed, this intimate seating area receives ample sunlight from a bank of windows lining three walls. On days when the sun is too intense, floor-to-ceiling draperies can be pulled to dim the space accordingly, as seen here. Below: The small guesthouse contains this airy bedroom, as well as a comfy den and bathroom.



in this Craftsman-influenced cottage,” says Veltman. “Even the living room’s fireplace and surround take on a very sculptural, subdued appearance that works in tandem with the overall design of the place.” Adds Wood, “Designed for easy, casual living, the place also abounds with furniture covered in outdoor fabrics that can withstand wet bathing suits and sandy feet.”

To complete the unique appeal of the home, Veltman and Wood added custom-designed details in places where the right piece of furniture or light fixture couldn’t be found, such as the custom-made sconces located on each side of the master bed. And throughout the process, the duo didn’t let the term “beach house” deter their discerning sensibilities. As Wood explains, “While intended as an easygoing retreat for weekends and holidays, this place is refined enough so that, at the end of the day, there’s still a proper spot to put beach towels and flip-flops out of sight.”

