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# PORT OF CALL

Whether he's playing host to his nieces and nephews or putting up his sailing crew, a yachtsman finds his guesthouse on the ocean in Newport makes a perfect refuge.

TEXT BY PAULA M. BODAH • INTERIOR PHOTOGRAPHY BY WARREN JAGGER • EXTERIOR PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAM GRAY • ARCHITECTURE: MARK P. FINLAY • INTERIOR DESIGN: KIM KIRBY • BUILDER: JERRY KIRBY, KIRBY-PERKINS CONSTRUCTION





V-groove ceilings and up-lit cove lighting bring intimacy to the large living room. Designer Kim Kirby ordered up oversize furniture in restful neutral shades complemented by periwinkle blue.

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ho better to settle in this spot—a rare parcel on Newport's famous Ocean Drive—than a man who spends much of his time on the water? A world-class sailor of racing yachts, the owner of this glorious stretch of land appreciates the strength and beauty of the sea. It seems only fitting, then, that the guesthouse he built should reflect a strength and beauty of its own.

No quaint little guesthouse with the bare necessities, this 6,400-square-foot retreat has six bedrooms, eight baths and a fully turned-out kitchen that opens onto a casual dining area and a living room with enough seating for a crowd. A terrace in the back, complete with outdoor kitchen and fireplace built of stones excavated from the site, leads to an infinity pool that overlooks a quiet cove.

Jerry Kirby, whose construction company, Kirby-Perkins, built the guesthouse, has been a friend and sailing buddy of the owner for years. It was he who suggested that his friend look at the land, a neglected lot with weeds so tall they obscured the ocean and, as Kirby says, "a moldy old mansion" that was beyond repair. Kirby introduced his friend to Mark P. Finlay, an architect based in Southport, Connecticut, who went to work bringing the owner's vision to life. The stalwart guesthouse is

the second of five buildings slated for the seaside compound. A caretaker's cottage has been finished, and plans for a barn, a carriage house and the main house are all on the drawing board.

Finlay sited the guesthouse to take advantage of both ocean and cove views. Because the main house will be built on a promontory above the guesthouse, the architect designed the smaller structure to sit low, allowing the eventual main house to have unobstructed water views. "We pushed it down so it cozies up to the land," he says.

From the outside, the guesthouse has a sturdy, timeless look. With its symmetrical front, formal entry, limestone-framed windows and fieldstone cladding, it looks totally at home on this street famous for magnificent abodes. "We put great emphasis on the house being solid rather than showy," the owner says.

The owner had two sets of people in mind when he thought about the interiors. For his mother, sisters and nieces and nephews who visit often, he wanted an environment that promotes ease, relaxation and fun. For his racing team, he needed efficiency and comfort. That translated into an easygoing interior, a bright, airy space that contrasts with the classic, solid exterior.

The public spaces, master bedroom and three guestrooms occupy the first floor, while the lower level holds two more guestrooms and a family room. The only room on the second floor is what both Finlay and Kirby call the "man cave," a cozy wood-paneled study with pocket

doors that close for privacy or open to look out over the great room below.

As large as the high-ceilinged living room is, it has a comfortable scale, the result of its v-joint ceilings and up-lit cove lighting. Adding to the comfort level are the oversized custom-made furniture pieces designed by interior designer Kim Kirby. "We have a big racing team and some of the





Much of the stone for the cladding, terrace walls and outdoor fireplace came from the site. Facing page top: The front entry is restrained but welcoming. Facing page bottom: the pool looks out on a quiet cove.



With its symmetrical front, formal entry and fieldstone cladding, the house looks totally at home on this street famous for its magnificent abodes.





Kirby-Perkins Construction made most of the home's wood furniture, including the coffee table. *Facing page top:* Double-coffered ceilings add interest to the simple white, black and stainless kitchen. *Facing page bottom:* The owner's art collection stands out on white walls in the foyer and throughout the house.



**“Some of the guys on the racing crew are very large, so we made sure the furniture would fit them. Everything is solid, comfortable and easygoing.”**



The master bedroom looks out to both cove and ocean. *Below:* The master bath gets a jolt of color from a littersweet roman shade. *Facing page top:* the "man cave" is a cozy but masculine retreat. *Facing page bottom:* Serenity reigns in a guestroom.



**The designer brought the white bedrooms to life by adding shots of color that play off the hues of the sky and ocean outside.**



guys who sail are very large," the owner explains, "so we made sure the furniture would fit them well. Everything is solid, comfortable and easygoing." Kirby-Perkins made much of the hardwood furniture, while P.J. Bergeron, a Fall River, Massachusetts, company, fabricated the upholstered pieces.

Walls and woodwork throughout the first floor are kept to a soft white to act as a backdrop for the owner's extensive art collection. Designer Kim Kirby then introduced colors that complement the art, rather than compete with it. The living room sofas wear a Barbara Barry fabric called *abalone*—a creamy neutral that contains hints of both gray and periwinkle blue. An amusing giraffe print fabric in periwinkle covers the two oversized lounge chairs, and the curtains combine the neutral and periwinkle in silk stripes.

The kitchen keeps a low profile with its white walls and cabinets, stainless steel appliances and black granite surfaces, while the dining area—a curvaceous banquette tucked into windows at one end of the kitchen—adopts a more playful tone with its blue and yellow cushions. Like the oversize furniture in the great room, the dining table was custom-made to be a bit higher than is usual. "We went through a lot of mockups to get it just right," Kim Kirby says of the table, which was built by Jutras Woodworking, a company based in Smithfield, Rhode Island.

The designer brought the white bedrooms to life by adding shots of color that play off the hues of the sky and ocean outside: navy blue, sea-foam and coral in the guest rooms, cornflower blue in the master. The master bedroom's light wool drapes in chocolate brown add a masculine touch. In the master bath, a bitter-sweet-orange roman shade adds warmth to the pale blue-gray and white palette.

The combined efforts of architect and builder come together beautifully in a downstairs guestroom where the owner's racing crew can bed down in double-size bunks and stow their duffel bags in a specially designed dresser that would fit right in on a yacht.

Old friendships were strengthened and new friendships forged during the process, even through such challenges as the owner's insistence that a long, horizontal Francesco Clemente painting be installed above the opening between living room and kitchen—a desire that meant tearing down and rebuilding the wall. "I wasn't willing to put the painting in storage until the main house was built," he says. His instincts were right: the painting looks like it was made for its location.

It might seem backwards to build a guesthouse first, but the owner has no doubt that this was the right way to go about it. "It would have been a giant mistake to build the main house first," he says. "The guesthouse has really given me a huge opportunity to think about layouts and spaces and elevations."

Meanwhile, he's perfectly content to live in his own guesthouse, especially when it fills up with the happy sounds of his favorite crew in the world—his five nieces and nephews. •

**Resources** For more information about this home, see page 194.

