



Designer  
Ashley  
Gilbreath

JEFF HERR; OPPOSITE PAGE: PETER MURDOCK



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Emily Painter

# A TALE OF

# TWO

Two designers take totally different palettes—to breathe distinct

# CONDOS

different approaches—with similar blue-and-white color personality and style into a pair of Florida condominiums

BY PAIGE PORTER FISCHER

Rather than paint the large space white, which would have made it seem even more expansive, Gilbreath chose Sea Salt by Sherwin-Williams, a barely-there shade that acts as a neutral, making it a perfect backdrop for the blues she used throughout.



# SEA FRESH

ASHLEY GILBREATH

When designer Ashley Gilbreath first met the Georgia client who hired her to tackle a brand-new condo in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, she knew one thing for sure: “This place had to be classic and polished but deliver some surprising personality, too,” says Gilbreath. “My client is one of those people who is effortlessly stylish, whose look you wish you could emulate. She’s impeccably dressed, a classic Southern lady, but she always has a way of pulling off a little something unexpected. I tried to take that approach within the walls of her condo.”

The condo boasts an unusually large common space, with one wall of windows across the back, all of which face the Gulf of Mexico. The view predominates the space, which is a selling point, says Gilbreath. But it also presented a particular design opportunity: “How do we create interiors that promise personality but don’t try to steal the show from the water outside those picture windows?” Gilbreath’s solution was to borrow from the view’s ever-evolving, timeless color palette and boldly use various shades of blue—from the palest turquoise that mimics the shades of the water at daybreak to the deepest navy blue of the Gulf on a cloudy day.

“You truly see that the color of the water changes every hour, depending on the time of year, the time of day, and the cloud coverage,” she says. “I wasn’t afraid to mix lots of blues throughout the space, but I kept them all continuous, repeating seafoam greens, azure blues and teal, and using interesting patterns to carry these shades—like threads—throughout the entire space.”

## COMFORT ZONES

In the large great room, Gilbreath needed to design multiple zones for the clients’ often-packed beach house. “We had to create lots of seating areas for the couple, their children, and their grandchildren, who are often all here at once,” says Gilbreath. She fashioned multiple zones within the large space, delineating them with rugs and light fixtures but uniting them all with varying shades of blue. A large-scale blue rug anchors the primary seating area, where the designer played with pattern on the chairs and throw pillows to deliver personality.

**TIP**  
Gilbreath pulled out a minor color—pale robin’s egg blue—from the upholstery she chose for the CR Laine spindle chairs and painted the spindles the same shade.

ASHLEY GILBREATH PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF HERR

## MAKING AN ENTRANCE

To keep a casual feel, Gilbreath designed a small table for the entryway to the condominium, skirting a table so it could hide beach necessities. By propping art and an antique mirror, she established a relaxed mood.

### TIP

"I love a lamp for moody light in a foyer, so in the evenings, if you don't want a bright overhead light on, you can create ambience with lamplight," says Gilbreath.



## WALL OF ART

Because the only windows in the common space look out toward the water, Gilbreath needed to tackle large swaths of blank wall with artful aplomb. She framed three vintage African mud cloths, which deliver subtle pattern, big drama, and texture.



## DINING IN

The dining room is situated between the kitchen and the living room, so Gilbreath elected to delineate it with antique shutters she found in Europe. "We cut them down and put them between the sofa and the dining banquette to divide the two spaces," she says. "They have this beautiful seafoam green paint that's peeling off, which works perfectly with the color scheme."

"I LOVE AN OLD BEAT-UP ANTIQUE TABLE, BECAUSE IT ALREADY HAS ALL THE DINGS IN IT, SO YOU NEVER NOTICE THE NEW ONES. WE WANTED THIS TO BE A PLACE PEOPLE COULD RELAX IN WITHOUT WORRY"

—DESIGNER ASHLEY GILBREATH



For the cabinetry, Gilbreath chose a gray that landed in between the cool tones of the kitchen and the warmer elements, like the pendants, like the pendants from Parish by Ashley Gilbreath.

### COOL KITCHEN

Gilbreath needed to solve for limited cabinetry storage, so she added a glass-front hutch in weathered blue-gray finish. Woven pendants, rattan barstools, and a wooden ceiling add warmth, while seafoam green tiles and stool cushions cool the space.

### SIMPLE & SERENE

"The desire in the main bedroom [below] was to create a serene space that felt effortless and relaxed rather than fussy," says Gilbreath. The headboard (slip-covered instead of upholstered for a more relaxed aesthetic) wears a classic gray-and-white ticking stripe by Pindler. While the color palette remains mostly neutral, Gilbreath added classic navy blue lamps and bed linens with navy trim. "The large painting by Augusta Wilson really unites everything in the space," she says.

#### TIP

"With lots of walls," Gilbreath says, "we could only hang so many paintings. We had to think outside the box, adding a piece of driftwood or a collection of vintage sieves for sifting flour—creates visual interest above the bed."



### RETHINKING WALLS

"You can only do so many upholstered headboards," says Gilbreath about a guest bedroom. "We wanted to soften the room and make it funky and different, so we upholstered the whole wall instead. It dips down over the bed, creating this interesting architecture." The artwork hangs from the sconces, and a collection of vintage sieves—for sifting flour—creates visual interest above the bed.





### SLEEPOVER STYLE

With several granddaughters who visit often, the client wanted a space for them to sleep that felt cozy and special. Gilbreath added low bunks from Pottery Barn Kids and derived the room's color scheme from the seaside painting that distracts from the fact that there are no windows in this diminutive space. The blue settee wears indoor-outdoor fabric, and the rug is performance, too. Navy blue sconces and hooks echo the fabric on the settee.

**TIP**  
 "Don't be afraid to mix shades of blue," Gilbreath says. "Think of the colors in the ocean—it's not uniform. It's many shades, and they all work well together when the balance is right."



### BOTANICAL BLUES

In a guest bedroom, Gilbreath framed pages of a vintage seaside book and hung them over and around the bed. The headboard wears a custom slipcover with navy blue ties along each side for easy removal. The fabric, Riviera by Lulu DK, is an abstract botanical floral that delivers a modern take on traditional design. Because the space is rather small, Gilbreath chose concrete garden stools to stand in for bedside tables and added swing-arm sconces above them.



### LOUNGE LIFE

For the large veranda overlooking the pool and the Gulf of Mexico, Gilbreath created a sophisticated lounge area that doubles as an outdoor living room. She kept focus on the center of the patio, which she grounded with an indoor-outdoor striped rug by Dash & Albert. "My client is often dressed in classic navy and white, many times stripes, so this just felt right for her," says Gilbreath, who went classic on the white sofa and chairs by Selamat Designs and outfitted two Summer Classics chaises with navy upholstery and white piping. She added a bit of edginess with the more modern Perennials patterns on the throw pillows.



# THE ART OF REINVENTION

EMILY PAINTER

When interior designer Emily Painter first set foot in the Palm Beach, Florida, apartment she now calls home, the exact word that came to her mind was “frightening.” But rentals are hard to come by in this South Florida city, especially along Worth Avenue, the upscale shopping and dining district she was eyeing for her family. So Painter didn’t run away. Instead, she began dreaming.

“The walls were brown with mirrors everywhere,” says Painter, who has spent the past five years working as senior designer for Amanda Lindroth and before that was with Margaret Kirkland in Atlanta. “It was the most un-Palm Beach place imaginable. But that meant I had a blank canvas for reviving it.” Painter convinced her husband, Austin, she could erase the drabness and resuscitate the 1,300-square-foot space. The catch: all changes had to be cosmetic, because this was a rental.

“While trying to brighten the place and make it feel like an island home, I was also wanting to visually enlarge it and create rooms within rooms that could have many purposes,” Painter says. “I used my best tricks. I needed it to function well for a toddler by day and a dinner party by night.”

**TIP**  
“Texture keeps a space from feeling cold. Rattan, wicker, and sea grass say ‘laid-back island living.’ And the canvas palms—well, they scream it,” says Painter.

**POWER NOOK**

A corner of the living room serves as an eating area, a home office, and a crafts space for the couple’s 3-year-old son, Charlie. A tulip table cozies up to a banquette from Ballard Designs. Painter reupholstered its cushions and layered pillows in fabrics by Quadrille, Sugar Feather, and John Robshaw. Wicker chairs lend a casual vibe, and low-cost matchstick shades add texture without blocking light. A rattan hatstand keeps beach totes and accessories organized.



**BOLD MOVES IN THE LIVING ROOM**

Painter didn’t sacrifice style to keep things family friendly. The armchairs, sofa, and ottoman wear performance-fabric slipcovers but have sophisticated details, like blue grosgrain tape trim and jute fringe. She believes oversize pieces can make a small space feel bigger, so she covered the formerly mirrored wall with a massive cabinet and anchored the room with a 4- by 5-foot ottoman. “It’s my son’s play zone during the day and a coffee table when people come over,” Painter says. She keeps decorative pieces on a movable wicker tray.



Painter always grounds a light and airy environment with something black—in this case, a vintage Ming console.

#### A FRESH LOOK FOR THE FRESH AIR

You can catch Painter's signature breezy but sophisticated style in the outdoor dining room, which elevates an IKEA table and wicker seats with a vintage peacock chair. She added a montage of her favorite blue-and-white pillows. The table linens, glassware, and vases are from the Amanda Lindroth collection.

**TIP**  
Spray-painted woven lanterns by Amanda Lindroth, mixed with paper lanterns, create a dramatic lighting story above the table.



#### PATTERN PLAY

In the foyer (above), which shares walls with the living room, Balinese Batik wallpaper by Quadrille defines the carefree aesthetic. "It was the first design decision I made, and all others evolved from it," says Painter. She covered the tile floor with a sea grass rug made of individual squares that can be replaced in case of spills or stains.



### GOING BIG IN A SMALL BEDROOM

Painter didn't sacrifice personality in the tiny primary bedroom. Her friend Aldous Bertram hand-painted vines that reach toward the ceiling. "It was my take on a wallpaper pattern I'd seen, but I wanted my vines to look more tropical," she says. Inexpensive woven shades hung above the top of the window frames give the illusion of a higher ceiling. Matching tables and lamps help create symmetry and calm in a tight area.



#### TIP

Hide under-bed bins with a bed skirt (here in Schumacher's Huntington Gardens). Vintage chests double as bedside tables.



### GUEST RETREAT

"I wanted it to feel like a true tropical getaway," says Painter of the guest bedroom. She coated the walls in her favorite island coral—Salmon Peach (2013-50) by Benjamin Moore—and added a vintage rattan canopy bed that she draped with a white eyelet bed hanging. Linens from Roller Rabbit deliver subtle but colorful patterns.



### INDOOR/OUTDOOR OASIS

Painter couldn't replace the existing tile on the screened-in porch, so she grabbed a roller and painted it gray. She reupholstered the cushions on the vintage wicker sectional with pale aqua indoor-outdoor fabric and added layers of pattern with pillows from Roberta Roller Rabbit and Sugar Feather. A durable striped rug from Dash & Albert anchors the space.

EMILY PAINTER PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER MURDOCH  
STYLING BY LIZ STRONG