



A Touch of Honey

INTERIOR DESIGNER HONEY COLLINS OF HONEY COLLINS INTERIORS PUTS HER SWEET AND SOPHISTICATED TOUCH ON A GUEST HOUSE DESIGNED BY PATRICK AHEARN.

By Julie Craven Wagner · Photography by Sarah Winchester unless otherwise noted.



SOME HOUSES
SPEAK TO YOU
THE MOMENT
YOU CROSS THE
THRESHOLD.
OTHERS SEEM TO
QUIETLY UNFOLD,
REVEALING THEIR
SECRETS ONE
GRACIOUS ROOM
AT A TIME.

This guest house in Osterville—designed by renowned architect Patrick Ahearn and thoughtfully decorated by interior designer Honey Collins of Honey Collins Interiors—is somehow both. It’s warm and welcoming right away, but laced with layers of detail and intention that invite a longer look.

Although technically a guest house, this new build lives much larger—both in square footage and in spirit. Tucked closer to the street than its primary residence counterpart, on an adjacent lot, yet seemingly part of a shared compound, it was designed with the implied function as a gatehouse, a charming first impression for visitors approaching from the road. “It’s a substantial program,” Ahearn says. “We had to make it feel secondary to the main house, not like a second mansion, and we accomplished that by layering architectural clues that suggest a history of additions over time.”

That “implied history” approach, a hallmark of Ahearn’s work, suggests that the structure may have started its life as a carriage house, then evolved through careful expansions.

Gambrel rooflines, flanking wings, and a motor court defined in brick and centered in peastone help break down the massing, reinforcing the story. “It’s like writing chapters of a building’s life,” Ahearn says. “It’s all new construction, but we’re creating a new reality rooted in tradition.”

That same philosophy continues indoors. Step through the wide, thick front door and you’re greeted by an open sightline all the way to the rear French doors, where sunlight and views draw you toward the back porch. But rather than a grand foyer or soaring staircase—often the signature of homes of this size—this entry is understated, even cozy. “It was

important that it didn’t feel like a competing house,” Ahearn explains. “We purposely kept the ceilings modest and tucked the staircase off to the side. It’s welcoming and warm.”

Indeed, despite its generous scale—the house boasts nine ensuite bedrooms and a fully outfitted lower level with a home theater, game room, and lounge—it feels intimate. “That’s the magic of good scale and smart design,” Ahearn adds. “You can have 8,000 square feet and still feel like you’re curled up in a cottage.”

For Collins, the invitation to design the interiors was both a delight and a challenge. “It was my first time working with Patrick, and I expected it to be daunting; after all, it is *Patrick Ahearn*,” she admits with a laugh. “But we all brought our best to this project, so it ended up being a great collaboration. Everyone stayed in their lane, and we had a shared respect for the architecture.”

From the beginning, she understood her role: to complement the story Ahearn had begun, not step in to rewrite it. “My goal was to make it feel as though this house had been lived in and loved for generations,” she says. “We layered in antiques, wallpaper, textures, and lighting choices that felt collected and timeworn, but never old-fashioned.”

That layering is perhaps best expressed in the living room at the center of the home, anchored by a custom double-sided sofa upholstered in a leafy taupe-and-cream fabric, trimmed with a flirty fringe that gives it softness and movement. “It looks like two sofas back-to-back, but it’s



actually one massive piece, made as a single unit,” Collins explains. “It was something I’ve always wanted to do, and it turned out beautifully.”

The arrangement not only provides ample seating but also creates a cozy symmetry, grounded by a large rug and an oversized spool-legged ottoman upholstered in tufted leather. Behind it all, thoughtful appointments add subtle tension and texture—bamboo chairs and occasional tables, sumptuously upholstered chairs with plenty of pillows to sink into, and the homeowner’s personal favorite: a tufted chaise lounge tucked into a corner surrounded by windows dressed with elegant draperies cascading from bamboo rods. “Everything needs balance,” Collins says. “If you’re going to use wallpaper, you need architecture that holds it. If you’re going bold in one space, you need softness somewhere else.”

Upstairs and down, each bedroom ensuite has its own personality. One room features tiger maple beds from Leonard’s, paired with traditional New England details and one of Collins’ favorite wallpaper, Resort Weave in Chase Cream by Phillip Jeffries. Another bedroom leans fresh and spunky, with an upholstered bed in a lively green pattern and an unusual textured basketweave wallcovering. One of her personal favorites—one of the two primary bedrooms in shades of cream and brown—feels serene and sophisticated. “It’s quiet, soothing. You just want to stay in bed with a book all morning.”

Collins also isn’t afraid to have a little fun. A whimsical children’s craft room is lined with wallpaper that mimics a bookshelf—complete

with a deep, vintage-inspired utility sink for post-art cleanup. Downstairs, in the basement bar, a marbled Florentine-style wallpaper injects texture, movement and character near the theater and popcorn station. “It’s a playful space,” she says, “but still sophisticated.”

Lighting, too, was handled with precision. “We minimized recessed lights in favor of decorative fixtures,” Collins notes. “It’s like jewelry for the home.” Ahearn concurs: “That’s something Honey does really well—she understands scale and proportion. Her lighting selections, her furnishings, even the wallpaper, all feel like they belong to a house with history.”

The collaborative chemistry between Ahearn and Collins is a model of professional respect and complementary vision. Both acknowledge how frequently architect-designer relationships can become territorial, with each party defending their vision. But in this case, each allowed the other to lead where appropriate. Ahearn’s architecture provided the framework for a layered narrative; Collins’ interiors gave that narrative color, warmth, and depth.



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Photo by Dan Cutrona

“I think the most successful projects happen when everyone checks their ego at the door,” Collins says. “This wasn’t about putting a stamp on something. It was about making something beautiful for the client—and for the house itself.”

That collaborative spirit is increasingly rare, but Ahearn believes it’s essential. “Too often, designers try to rework the architecture, or architects try to micromanage the décor,” he says. “But when we trust each other to do our best work, the result is so

much better than what either of us could have done alone.”

That trust allowed the house to become what it needed to be—not a showpiece, but a sanctuary. Not a designer’s portfolio moment or an architect’s monument, but a truly livable, lovable space.

Despite its intended role as a guest house, the design lives like a full residence—complete with a kitchen, laundry, multiple living areas, and plenty of private bedrooms. Jamie Jaxtmer of E.J. Jaxtmer Builder, Inc., who served as project manager, says, “In order

to accommodate everything we needed, the lower level footprint exceeds the previous home’s above ground space. That way we were able to create space for things like a mechanical room to support the heating and cooling needs of the state-of-the-art theater. And the over-sized window wells provide so much light, you never feel as though you’re below grade.” But true to both Ahearn’s and Collins’ shared philosophy, nothing feels superfluous or overdone. “It’s a big house,” Ahearn says, “but it’s not grand for the sake of being grand. Everything has a reason.”



Photo by Dan Cutrona



And that reason is rooted in how the house is lived in. The family comes and goes throughout the year, spending summer weeks by the water, but also returning for holidays and long weekends. Collins was careful to make sure the décor wasn't too summery, but instead could shift gracefully with the seasons. "There's warmth here," she says. "It feels appropriate in January just as much as it does in July."



That year-round livability, paired with the narrative richness of Ahearn's architecture, results in a house that feels both timeless and timely. "When architecture and design work together, you get something layered, lasting, and loved," Collins says. "That's always my goal."

Ahearn agrees. "The best houses are the ones that suggest a life lived well, over time," he says. "Even if they were just built yesterday."

In this guest house by the sea—wrapped in tradition, softened with personal touches, and undeniably inviting—that sense of storied comfort is not just suggested. It's everywhere. 🏠

Julie Craven Wagner is the editor of Cape Cod HOME.

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 A collage of nautical-themed items. It includes a blue pillow with a white bird, a silver bowl, a blue hat, a sign that says "NAUSEET BEACH", a fish silhouette, a wicker basket with an anchor, and several glass tumblers.

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