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TRADITIONAL HOME

Treasured Collectibles and Ocean-Inspired Colors Fill This Nova Scotia Island Home

A cottage on a Canadian isle is both home and homage to its collection-minded owners.

By **Sally Finder Weepie** | July 30, 2021

Like the well-loved books in its library, this house perched on an island just a five-minute boat ride from the Nova Scotia peninsula tells a story—of collections, of memories, of lives well-led.

"The homeowners are huge collectors," designer Philip Mitchell says. "They love original Canadian artworks, soapstone sculptures, Inuit weavings, antique decoys. They love craft."

That affinity for beautiful works, fine detail, and hand-touched artisanship flows through their new home on Gooseberry Island.



CREDIT: ANNIE SCHLECHTER

"It's like paradise," Mitchell says of the island setting for this Nova Scotia home.

"Before they bought the property, it was almost like a summer camp: cottages and a turn-of-the-20th-century boathouse," Mitchell says. "They were excited to move it forward while respecting its history."

First, they protected the island's 70-plus acres of Acadian forest by putting it into a land trust, and they restored existing structures. Then they worked with Mitchell to build a new home that they can enjoy year-round.

"We were inspired by the other cottages and used architectural details like beaded board and reclaimed plank flooring that speak to that," Mitchell says. "But we also made the home live for today. Comfort was a key factor."



CREDIT: ANNIE SCHLECHTER

From the first step inside, the home feels at once intimate and airy—thanks to one of Mitchell's design tricks. He built the foyer up three steps from the rest of the house, giving it a cocooning scale and a bird's-eye view. "You look over the living room furniture to the ocean," he says. "It's really lovely."

In the hall, a painting by Canadian artist Jean Paul Lemieux crowns a rustic vignette.

The homeowners are huge collectors. They love craft.

— DESIGNER PHILIP MITCHELL



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In the living room, pretty fabrics play off classic stained wood, ceramics, and a fireplace surround crafted of beach stone reclaimed from the property. Blue, the homeowners' favorite color, gently swells like the ocean waves against a backdrop of white and cream that embraces paintings ranging from traditional works to modern abstracts.

Dividing the large living room into two seating areas maintains an intimate feel. Mingling patterns and textures brings life to the neutral space without overwhelming art or outdoor views.



CREDIT: ANNIE SCHLECHTER

Both the blue hues and the wood tones intensify in the adjacent dining room, which also opens to the kitchen. "I wanted it to feel warm and intimate but still have the same flavor as the rest of the house," Mitchell says. A paisley fabric on chairbacks continues the home's blue-and-white theme.

Stained walnut accentuated by navy grass cloth creates a cozy vibe for dining. The grass cloth continues the home's blue-and-white color story with a twist in saturation. "It's a nice pop between the kitchen and living room," Mitchell says. "With all the rooms open to each other, it was important that they feel cohesive but each have its own character."





Classic architectural details set the tone for the cooking space wrapped in white. The setting turns attention to the blue island, topped with dark butcher block, and the homeowners' collection of copper pots.

An envelope of white keeps the kitchen light and airy while bright blue paint on the island provides happy energy. An overhead rack keeps the homeowners' collection of pots and pans in easy reach. "This is a home full of beautiful things, but nothing feels precious," Mitchell says. "It's always welcoming."



Left: CREDIT: ANNIE SCHLECHTER



Right: CREDIT: ANNIE SCHLECHTER

Blue takes a dynamic turn in the servery next to the kitchen. "Because the homeowners don't spend hours at a time living in this space, using a bold blue doesn't feel overwhelming," Mitchell says. "It's fun to create a small space with this kind of impact." Globe light fixtures honor the island's nautical heritage. Natural brass on hardware and sconces provides beautiful patina.



CREDIT: ANNIE SCHLECHTER

I love houses that have a story to tell.

— DESIGNER PHILIP MITCHELL

Detail is everywhere, including on the hand-carved corbels on the range hood and in the ship-inspired beamed ceiling in the library. "We have an amazing ship-building history on Nova Scotia and amazing local craftsmen," Mitchell says. "Almost everything in this house was made by hand on the island. I love the signs of handcrafting that you see everywhere. There's something beautiful about things that are imperfect."

Wood paneling, a fireplace, and a warm palette make the library feel cozy and welcoming.



CREDIT: ANNIE SCHLECHTER

In the master suite, embroidered bedding and a hand-sewn wall hanging again speak to artisanship, each a different take on the same compelling story.

Soft creams and blues create a sanctuary space, warmed by a toasty fireplace, for the homeowners. "They're big wood-burning fireplace fans," Mitchell says. "There are nine fireplaces in the house, and they use them all."



CREDIT: ANNIE SCHLECHTER

A beloved Inuit wall hanging graces a prime display spot above an antique table. "The wall hanging is a graphic Inuit piece that they love and wanted to highlight," Mitchell says. "People usually put favorite works in the living room, but why not put a piece you especially love in the bedroom? You get to wake up and go to sleep seeing it every day."



CREDIT: ANNIE SCHLECHTER

Mitchell sited a freestanding tub in a bay window to take advantage of ocean views. Vintage-look Waterworks fixtures are the jewelry in a room that the designer purposefully made very neutral. "I didn't want the design to compete with the view," he says. "I love how they can open the windows, enjoy the ocean breeze, and just relax."



CREDIT: ANNIE SCHLECHTER

Beaded board and grass cloth speak to the details in this space, where a handmade quilt from Newfoundland covers the bed and hand-painted lampshades sit atop antique nightstands.