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BEACH MAGAZINE

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ROOM WITH A VIEW

Lamar and Gladys Beach's oceanfront penthouse is home to three generations and 30 years of Wrightsville Beach memories

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From the highest oceanfront elevation in southeastern North Carolina, two condos redesigned as one sprawling penthouse host three generations of the Beach family for a season of summering and celebrating 30 years of memories at Wrightsville Beach.

by marimar mcnaughton

photography by joshua curry | styled by Christopher Ostafin



The east wall of the Beach family's condo disappears behind a plate of glass, welcoming the vast expanse of ocean, tethered to the barest trace of the horizon line. Inside, a gray crab orchard stone slab over an iron base anchors the living room décor, unified by tobacco brown floors, sisal and sea grass rugs, woven wicker deck chairs and zebra striped cushions.



Interior designer Christopher Ostafin marries bare beach tones and tumbled sea glass tints to wed his white-on-white color palette. He commissioned local photographer Doug Kazantzis to create images of the beachfront, arresting the Atlantic in a mirrored likeness.



Sparks flew the day Lamar and Gladys Beach married 55 years ago, and they did once again on the occasion of the couple's wedding anniversary, one month ago, on July 4.

As their clan ended a day of sunbathing, swimming and grilling, more than two dozen well wishers gathered at the couple's swanky Wrightsville nest. The moon, nearly full, rose over the ocean, and the fuses were lit for a spectacular fireworks display that snapped, crackled and popped from the north to the south end of the beach strand, as far as the eye could see in all directions.

The penthouse balcony floats from the highest elevation on Wrightsville Beach, where patriarch Lamar Beach has relished his morning coffee for 30 years.



Even Beaches gather around the dining table. The zinc top, cured with salt water, was fabricated locally by Sellers Tile and Custom Countertops and the base by Flowers Metal Works. Through louvered shutters, Johnnie Mercer's pier appears to stretch into infinity.

Inside The Islander's top floor, the Beach family toasted to Lamar and Gladys. "Being here the week of the Fourth has become a kind of tradition with the family," Lamar says. The condo, he adds, is a gathering place, where the elders often reminisce about the past.

Abbamans who found their way to Wrightsville by way of Charlotte, North Carolina; Greenville, South Carolina; and Wyckoff, New Jersey, the Beaches landed once and for all in the Tar Heel state in 1970. They took up residence in Sanford before they discovered Wrightsville Beach at a time when their children, Jeff and Melanie, were very young. Gladys says, after summers spent in Myrtle Beach, she was afraid they wouldn't like it here, but Jeff, at 14, was hooked by pier fishing, staying out until 10 or 11 o'clock at night;

"Ostafin smoothed out all the wrinkles, seamlessly blending the two condos into one elegantly understated expression..."

and Melanie, then 12, took to the water. "I can remember taking the boat, all by myself, all over this island when I was 16 years old, before it got too crowded," she says. Gladys recalls, "We never worried about them."

In 1980, the family of four settled into its first summer home — the southeast corner, 10th floor, three-bedroom condo — commanding views of the barrier island that had become their year-round playground. With living rooms looking over the ocean, and the master suite overlooking the sound side, each sibling had a private bedroom and shared a bath. There was a small kitchen squeezed into the floorplan.

As the family grew — first with spouses, then with grandchildren — Lamar jumped at the chance to buy the adjacent, two-bedroom unit in 1990. Through a passage between the two — each with its own living area and kitchen — the square footage almost doubled. The second kitchen was converted into a wet bar and a sun deck was added on the rooftop.

Several years ago, after the completion of a permanent Landfall home for Lamar and Gladys, local builder Nick Garrett was called in to help with a massive renovation of the five-bedroom, four-bath condo that has been all but turned over to Jeff and his wife, Mary Beach,

and Melanie and her husband, Charles Abbott; though it's clear that Lamar, the patriarch, still calls the shots. "I remind them that I'm still the owner, and I'm still paying for it," he jokes.

With the hands of fate, fortune and foresight having been so good to the Beaches, Lamar, for the sake of fairness, conducted a lottery for first choice of the master bedroom. When Jeff won, he selected the oceanfront master suite in the two-bedroom wing that he and Mary now share with their niece, Casey.

Christopher Ostafin, Mary Beach's dear friend from their New York City stint at Bergdorf-Goodman, was hired to redesign the interior space. The two met 30 years ago, when Ostafin was consulting for the visual department, and Mary was a buyer of designer

evening wear. Since then, he has styled her wedding, her matrimonial New York apartment and the interior of her Greensboro home.

For the family compound, Ostafin smoothed out all the wrinkles, seamlessly blending the two condos into one elegantly understated expression, inspired by the sunlight, welcomed through floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors; the water, mirrored in textured white wall coverings; and the sand, restated in the selection of sisal and sea grass rugs, woven chairs and baskets, and crisp cotton/linen upholstery.

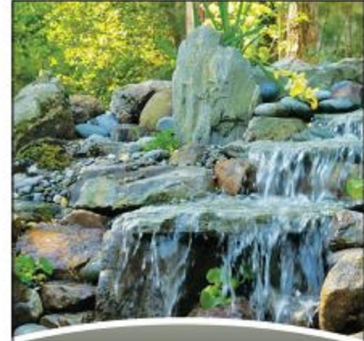
Ostafin says, "The interior should look contemporary to now and should also look appropriate to the style of the building. What I like about it is that it's simple, clean and very serene."

Removing all remnants of the condos' origins, Ostafin redirected the primary entrance toward a new foyer. From this port of entry, the penthouse floats from the highest elevation anywhere on Wrightsville.

In the shared spaces, Ostafin modified the interior living room, dining room and kitchen. The former wet bar was incorporated into the fabric of the open kitchen, and that area, now a gaming corner, also functions for satellite dining.

During the renovation, Garrett and his

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“Sand-blasted wall coverings in secondary rooms and a vermicelli pattern in a master bedroom are subtle variations of an all-white palette.”

team took the interior down to the studs, while Ostafin narrowed the elements in his design presentation.

Corrugated walls in the main gathering areas revive an age-old technique of dragging plaster with a wire comb. Sand-blasted wall coverings in secondary rooms and a vermicelli pattern in a master bedroom are subtle variations of an all-white palette.

Ostafin married Mary's attachment to earthy tones with Melanie's love of sea glass colors, which opened the door for some pale blue and green tints. "It was a great inspiration for me," Ostafin says. "It was very easy for me to work with."

The selection of finishes continued with the choice of flooring. Conveniently, Jeff Beach owns a prefinished flooring company and worked with Ostafin to select rift-and-quarter-sawn white oak stained chocolate brown to resemble old tobacco barnwood. The one-quarter-inch planks are laid in five-inch and seven-inch widths in a five-five-seven-five-seven pattern, grounding the interior. "The floors were very important," Ostafin says, "because they were going to be the one unifying factor."

To anchor the long sofa, he adapted the design of a stone slab-and-iron conversation table that was fabricated with rock from Sellers and then welded by a local ironworker. The dining table was also a variation of a previous design. "The goal was being able to seat the primary family members all at one table," Ostafin says.

"We wanted to have a place where we could all be together," Mary says, "and when we are all together there are 11 people."

Covered with zinc, the round table was doused with salt water to oxidize the metal, creating a unique patina that will continue to cure over time. A burlap fixture enlightens their gatherings and illuminates a still life of white candles, shells and starfish.

Generations of family notwithstanding, the

Still life with candle pillars, sea shells, starfish and sand dollars reiterate the larger context of the essential design elements: light, water and oceanfront beach. The gaming table, right, is where the elders match wits with the younger generations.



Quartz counters anchor the all-white kitchen, open to the dining room, the balcony and the Atlantic Ocean. Tropical split leaf philodendron leaves drink from dear glass vases, above, placed throughout the rooms to add a dash of vitality to the tonal palette.

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“The blending of personal styles was achieved with select accessories and through a collection of photographs — squarely matted and framed abstract vignettes of local scenes.”

blending of personal styles was achieved with select accessories and through a collection of photographs — squarely matted and framed abstract vignettes of local scenes — articulated by Doug Kazantzis.

“I thought it would be neat to have a local artist’s work on the wall,” Mary says.

Each family member chose the photos that spoke to them, and Ostafin commissioned Kazantzis to photograph the Islander beachfront, creating images for the living room that were very personal to the space.

“I was pushing him,” Ostafin says, “to have a single line through it — the water and land line — and then we manipulated it to get the color.”

The powerful imagery captured in pier pilings, rock jetties and gnarly live oak allées, and the rustic simplicity of sand fence at a south end beach access are mindful of Johnnie Mercer’s, Crystal Pier, Fort Fisher and Orton.

The elevated views of Wrightsville’s watery moat are staggering. With the light adjusted by shuttered white screens, this is the scene that Melanie and Charles awake to each morning and where the sun sets each evening over their private balcony. Their bedroom is simply furnished with oversized lidded baskets purchased locally, covered with glass tops to double as tabled blanket chests.

They share the southwestern bedroom wing with their sons, Justin, 17, and Clark, 15; and nephews, Taylor, 20, and Drew, 18. The two boys’ rooms were similarly decorated with different bed linens and tableside books reflecting shared interests in sports (baseball for Justin and Clark) and travel (to Africa, for Taylor and Drew). The cousins share a bathroom tooled with private toiletry drawers and monogrammed towels.

“It’s nice to be able to come down and stay here to visit mom,” Melanie says.

The distance is only two hours from her



Jeff and Mary Beach share the oceanfront master bedroom, a rite of passage earned through the luck of the draw in a family lottery. Photos of Orton Plantation's live oak allée hang above the upholstered headboard.

10!

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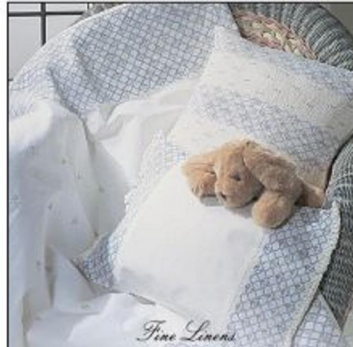
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Lamar & Gladys Beach, Jeff & Mary Beach,
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BUILDING CONTRACTOR:

Nick Garrett Development, Inc.

INTERIOR DESIGNER:

Christopher Ostafin

Subcontractors

APPLIANCES: Ferguson Enterprises, Inc.

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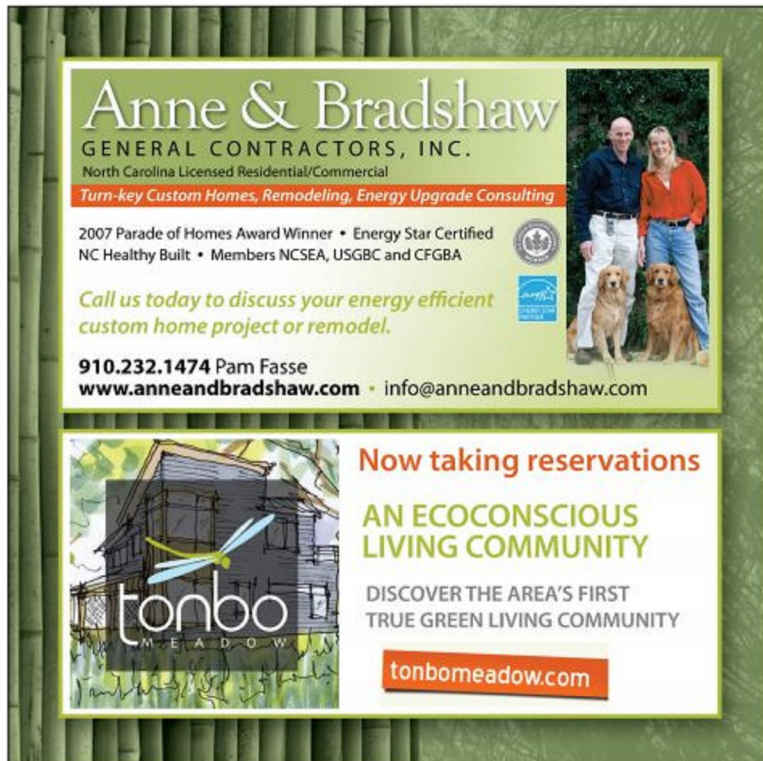
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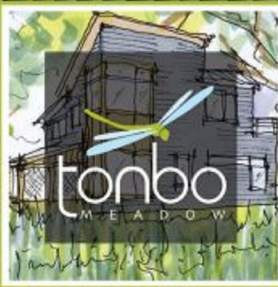
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Cymbidium orchids are placed throughout the master suite, on the red crab orchard bathroom counter, bottom. Right, a stark work surface for Jeff and Mary is enlivened with potted palm, left and a Do ug Kazantzis' photo of the ubiquitous Wrightsville Beach sand fence, beach access and blue water beyond.



home in Raleigh and for Jeff and Mary, just three hours from their Greensboro address.

On those occasions that all are assembled, everyone gathers at the condo for Lamar's hearty Sunday breakfast after church: a feast of scrambled eggs, garlic cheese grits and country ham and biscuits. "That's kind of been tradi-

tion," Melanie says. "It's come from when we were all here together."

In the mornings, Lamar likes to take his coffee out to the balcony, furnished by Ostafin with low seating to preserve the horizon line. On summer afternoons, when the sun arcs to the south, shaded and cooled by

the ocean winds, it is a perfect place for Mary to sit and read. Melanie, the sun worshipper, sets up camp on the beach. "It's my favorite place in the world," she says. "I could stay out from early morning until dark, if it was my choice. I just love it. I love the ocean, I love the sound. I like the peacefulness." ✨