

A COUTURIER'S COTTAGE

Alfred Birdsey watercolors animate the study, where a pair of vintage Lucite and bamboo armchairs flanks a custom skirted sofa (floral linen, Namay Samay; solid linen, Calvin Fabrics). RIGHT: The fashion designer with her son, Rafe (9)



Veronica Swanson Beard discovers an overlooked Nantucket house, imbuing it with poise, pattern, and the spirit of the centuries-old whaling port.

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A fieldstone path leads visitors past Green Velvet boxwood, calamint, hollyhock, and astilbe to the front door. **BELOW:** Oval gateleg table and custom Windsor chairs, Nantucket House Antiques & Interior Design Studios. **OPPOSITE:** The kitchen's pearly Moroccan wall tiles contrast a slate backsplash and rustic wood counters. Pendant lighting, Hector Finch



THE HOUSE WAS AS PLAIN as a dressmaker's model: white walls, white ceilings, a cut-and-paste contractors' kitchen. Other potential buyers had dismissed it. Then Veronica Swanson Beard showed up. The fashion designer, one-half of the sister-in-law duo behind the Veronica Beard label, has that enviable eye that can not only pick out the coolest treasure in a shop full of flotsam but also look at a blank canvas and see pure potential.

To her the 15-year-old house had the bones to become a second home for her family: husband Jamie and their three sons.

"It's sturdy and well-built," says Swanson Beard, "and the location is amazing—close to town and right on the bike path, which gives the boys so much freedom." Her family had been renting summer properties on the island for a couple of years and had no interest in a ships-ahoy-style beach house. "I envisioned us here in the off-season," she notes, "and I wanted our place to feel cozy and layered."

Even before she saw the property, Swanson Beard knew whom she would enlist for help creating this atmosphere of warmth: Michelle Holland of Nantucket House Antiques & Interior Design Studios. "I'd go into her shop and just daydream," says Swanson Beard. "I was obsessed—I wanted a house with wallpaper like *this*, floors like *that*."

And so, during a single off-season, the pair went about giving the Beards' new house an old soul. The first step was adding a patina of age to walls and floors. Hand-printed muslin wallpaper by artist Kevin Paulsen was hung above wood paneling layered with plaster





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LEFT: The table on the dining porch is set with Bohemian Vine plates and linens, Jardins du Monde vases, and woven placemats and napkin rings, all from Juliska’s Veronica Beard collection. **TOP LEFT:** The entry’s stenciled muslin ceiling (Kevin Paulsen) crowns painted and glazed beadboard walls (Tea Light, Benjamin Moore). **ABOVE:** The windows in Swanson Beard’s bedroom are draped in a vibrant damask (Hill Brown) that repeats on the bed pelmet, canopy, and skirt. Bench cushion fabric, Claremont

and rubbed, painted, and glazed for a timeworn look. Mostly decorative brass furniture tacks were yet another way to add imperfection and character to walls. Paulsen also painted a checkerboard grid of abstract, espresso brown swirls on the downstairs floors; upstairs, the bedroom flooring was splatter-painted, each in its own palette of five distinct colors.

As for furnishings Swanson Beard came well stocked. “I’m a collector,” she says, noting that her Long Island, New York, house includes a “working garage” full of finds. Holland laughs as she recalls the day the Beards’ shipment arrived. “It was a nice day, and we laid it all out on the lawn: mirrors, rugs, bamboo shelves, side tables, chairs,” she says. “We fixed, restored, rewired, and used almost everything.”

There were, of course, gaps to fill, with Swanson Beard’s

love of entertaining calling for generous, welcoming furniture in the open-plan gathering areas. In the living space, a large vintage sofa—upholstered in shades of sea glass green, claret, and Nantucket red—mingles with a giant Lucite coffee table from the 1970s, vintage wicker and rattan furniture, and Swanson Beard’s collection of shell boxes. Holland furnished the dining area with a broad gateleg table and sturdy Windsor chairs and found capacious storage pieces, such as an antique Canadian cabinet, where Swanson Beard stashes her extensive collections of dishware (“I collect majolica like crazy,” she says) and table linens.

On the walls went collections of shadow box ships, “woolies” (needlework sailing scenes), and Alfred Birdsey watercolors. Vivid lampshades were made from shirred

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sari fabrics and abalone shells, sailors’ lunch buckets, and vintage sap buckets to reflect the island’s spirit and history. The pair “nipped and tucked right up until the end,” says the designer. The sofa in the den was adjusted like a couture gown, its pleated skirt and arms going through several iterations before being deemed finished. To the custom Plain English kitchen, they added glazed tiles without grout to give the walls more rhythm. “We were each other’s last text at night and first phone call in the morning,” says Holland. “We just got into this groove.” In her professional life, Swanson Beard designs and curates a label known not just for blending the perfectly

tailored with the wildly bohemian but also for cultivating a strong sense of place in its brick-and-mortar shops all over the country, incorporating artwork and furnishings with distinct local flavors. It’s no wonder, then, Swanson Beard fell for Nantucket, an island with history layering classic Quaker simplicity, artisanal craftsmanship, and an influx of exotic global influences, thanks to its centuries-old whaling industry. “The surface of this place has gotten very polished, very resort,” says Holland. “But there’s still an element of the creative survivor soul that made Nantucket what it is. This is what Veronica fell in love with, the true energy of this island.” ◆



OPPOSITE: Refined nautical enchantment reigns in the children’s bedrooms, including this one cloaked in sea grass wallpaper (Maya Romanoff), with the ceiling and trim painted Jamestown Blue by Benjamin Moore. Armchair fabric, Elizabeth Eakins. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Brass bunk rails and ticking-stripe bed linens conjure dapper ship’s quarters. • Painted wicker rockers (Mainly Baskets Home, with Perennials and Liberty fabrics) invite afternoon sojourns on the front porch. • Collections of jewels and baubles shine in decorative trays atop a Chinese Chippendale secretary in Swanson Beard’s bedroom. Chair fabric, Morris & Co. • Radiant Rose hollyhock and Invincibelle Spirit II hydrangea frame the south porch; the rattan dining furniture is vintage. Cushion fabric, Jane Shelton

