



A COLORFUL COLLABORATION

Two designers bring artisanal style to a community clubhouse

Corporate interior design is not often thought of as vibrant, bold and energetic. For many of us, the term evokes images of beige walls, neutral carpet and unremarkable artwork designed to ensure that no one client, visitor or employee finds the surroundings distasteful. But then, few of us have ever seen a corporate interior designed by Renee Carman of Mandeville Canyon Designs and Stephanie Morrison of Morr Interiors.

The two women first met at a Meet the Designers Open House at Seaglass Village, an adult-focused seasonal cottage community in Wells, Maine. Each had been responsible for designing one of five model cottages. At the time, Stephanie worked at a corporate interior design firm, but she was planning to start her own business so she could work on both corporate and residential design projects.

WRITTEN BY ERICA HOLTHAUSEN PHOTOGRAPHED BY NAT REA

Previous page: The clubhouse at Seaglass Village opens to a welcoming great room that showcases local talent, including fabrics designed and manufactured in New Hampshire by Penumbra Textile and hand-blown glass lighting fixtures by Rhode Island's Tracey Glover. This page: Rose Bryant's commissioned painting of the Nubble Lighthouse, prominently displayed over the fireplace, coordinates perfectly with the color scheme and serves as the focal point of the great room.



"I walked through all of the cottages so I could meet the other designers," Stephanie says. But when she walked into Renee's cottage, she knew she had found someone with whom she could connect. "I was so excited to find somebody else who likes color!"

Not long after that first meeting Stephanie started Morr Interiors. Since both women have offices in Exeter, New Hampshire, they often got together over coffee to support each other's growing businesses and to exchange ideas. Before long, their professional relationship had grown into a personal friendship.

That fall, Renee was asked to bid on the interior design of a new 11,000-square-foot clubhouse at Seaglass Village. "The whole logistics of doing a commercial job was new to me. My experience is primarily in residential design, and I didn't really know commercial applications," Renee says. "So, I called Stephanie, and it turned out that she was available so we could do it together."

The clubhouse envisioned by Village Developers would be the primary social gathering place for the residents of Seaglass Village's 187 summer cottages. It would include an entry with a concierge desk, great room, library, fitness center and pavilion. The challenge presented to the designers was to create a space that could accommodate a large number of people while fitting in with the coastal setting.

"When Village Developers said they wanted something that didn't look like anyone else's space, we really listened to them," Renee says. "They liked our whole commercial-goes-residential theme. It was important to us to bring in environmentally friendly elements and to showcase local artists. We wanted people to walk into the space and feel like it was a home away from home."

"Because this is a commercial space," says Stephanie, "we had to think about the applications that were going on the furniture and how to make all of our other ideas work in a seasonal space that would be well-used each summer."

The need for commercial grade materials was dictated both by fire codes and the amount of wear and tear that the materials would have to endure. "That was a bit of a challenge," Renee says. "But that is also what made this such a great collaboration. I'd say, 'I love this and this and this and this,' and Stephanie would say, 'Okay, well this is what you can have.' It was a good balance."

"If the Fire Marshall ever walked in," explains Stephanie, "we would need specific paperwork showing that everything was up to code. For example, we needed to be sure that the foam used in the furniture was appropriate, that it would just melt and not—whoosh!—explode into flame if there was a fire."



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Because of these restrictions, all of the furniture and flooring had to be commercially rated. But tile does not have the same restrictions. “That’s where we went a little more towards the residential,” Renee says, “because we ended up with this beautiful Jerusalem tile, which you would probably never get in a commercial space.”

“Usually I just specify some porcelain tiles, nothing truly exotic,” Stephanie says. “It was fun to go to Daltile and have a free-for-all. We just had a ball!”

The only real concern regarding the use of tile was the weather. “The clubhouse is only open seasonally,” Renee says. “So with the tile, we had to use a special backing underneath called Ditra board so it wouldn’t crack over the winter. That’s not something I usually have to worry about.”

With the major elements of the design plan in place, Renee and Stephanie started to recruit local artists, who could make their vision a reality. For custom tile work, they turned to Greg Durant at G & N Flooring By Design in Stratham, New Hampshire. Bridget Bleckmann of Penumbra Textile in Rollinsford, New Hampshire, was hired to create upholstery fabrics and to design lamp shades for custom lighting fixtures created by Pawtucket, Rhode Island, glassblower Tracy Glover. Artwork was also commissioned from Matthew Smith of Quincy Pond Print Works and Rose Bryant, both in Exeter, New Hampshire.

“We had complete trust in everyone we worked with,” Renee says. “As a designer, I’m just the conductor. And in this case, everybody knew their part, and they are all really good at their instruments.”

Wherever the opportunity presented itself, Renee and Stephanie brought in a local artist, and the clubhouse showcases the immense talent available right in the seacoast area.

The entry to the clubhouse leads directly to the great room. Inlaid into the tile floor is a custom-designed compass rose. Greg Durant created the compass rose to match the vibrant blues and soft yellows of the great room. “We could have purchased one that could just be dropped right into the tile floor,” Renee says. “Instead we were able to bring in an artisan who could design it specifically for the space and now Village Developers has something that nobody else in the world has.”

In the fitness-center locker rooms, linear mosaic glass tiles installed from floor to ceiling create the illusion of a waterfall. “That visual element makes people want to know what’s around the corner,” Renee explains. Just around the corner, prints by Matthew Smith tie together bold color combinations of green, grey, purple and orange.

In the library, mahogany shelves and leather furniture surrounding a huge fireplace add warmth to the room. It is



Above: Leather armchairs in the library face a large, flat-screen television, an ideal gathering spot to watch the big game. | Below, from left: Friends can gather in the library for a companionable game of poker or enjoy a cocktail in one of the seating areas in the great room.



The library is lined with mahogany bookshelves filled with great reads and local antique-shop finds. A comfortable armchair and custom lamp beckon the booklover to settle in and spend some time with a favorite author.





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Above: Bold color combinations of purple and orange brighten up the women's locker room. Below: In the men's locker room, linear mosaic glass tiles create a visual waterfall effect that adds interest and texture.



the perfect place for a game of cards or to watch the football game on the big screen. Here, it is the accessories that really add character to the space. "We spent countless hours shopping around for things that were unique," Renee says. "One of my favorites is a propeller that we got from an antique store in Maine. It's the perfect addition to the room."

In contrast to the library, the great room feels cool and breezy. Though all of the furniture is commercial grade, many of the pieces are upholstered in fabric designed and manufactured in New Hampshire. "We took these beautiful fabrics from Penumbra Textile and placed them on the commercially rated furniture," Renee says. "It was a perfect example of blending commercial with residential."

The seating arrangements are also designed to encourage small gatherings. "It's easy to just order chairs and put them in a corner," Stephanie says. Instead, the corner features an L-shaped bench with a small coffee table. "That little seating arrangement reminded me of *Sex and the City*. I could imagine a group of women sitting together having a cocktail."

Throughout the library and great room are custom-designed lighting elements. The sconces, light fixtures and lamps were designed by Tracy Glover, and each one features handblown glass. The lamp shades for the floor lamps and overhead drums are created from fabrics designed by Bridget Bleckmann. Although these two women have wanted to work together for some time, this was the first time the opportunity presented itself—and the results are stunning.

The focal point of the room, however, is the large fireplace on the back wall. Prominently displayed in the floor-to-ceiling stonework is one of many paintings commissioned from Rose Bryant. "We gave Rose samples of all the fabrics we were using and all the wall colors," says Renee. "She could just take a big panoramic view of all the different colors we used. Her paintings complemented our design perfectly."

From the large painting of the Nubble Lighthouse to the smaller, panoramic pieces throughout the clubhouse, the paintings showcase local sights and bring a sense of place into the resort community. "It would have been just as easy to toss something up on the wall," Renee says, "but we wanted to bring in pieces that were created locally."

When the clubhouse opened in May 2010, Renee and Stephanie were installing the final touches. "It was pretty cool to see people coming in and actually sitting down and enjoying the space while we were still working," Stephanie says.

Soon, the residents of Seaglass Village will be back on site for the summer. As intended, the clubhouse is at the very heart of the community. "It's a pretty great feeling," Renee concludes. ■

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