

HOME+GARDEN

THE LIFE AQUATIC

Capri meets Summerland at
Nora and Michael Hurley's seaside spread

In the living room, pillows covered in vintage Halston and Pucci scarves and velvet from Kevin O'Brien. A silvered art nouveau mirror hangs above the Gustavian settee.

Wallpaper in a bathroom is not particularly unusual. Flocked wallpaper, on the other hand, reveals...an obsession perhaps? “I went crazy with wallpaper!” confides Nora McNeely Hurley. “I took remnants and have different papers on each surface.”

Upon crossing the threshold of the modernist home she shares with her musician husband Michael and their two dogs, a cacophony of swirling blues and shimmering silvers wash over visitors as if the ocean itself—only yards away—has crashed into the living room and spilled into every nook and cranny, leaving behind shells and sea glass in every hue. And wallpaper on every wall.

Both Hurleys hail from Minnesota, and Nora’s childhood spent between an island in White Bear Lake and California’s Pebble Beach makes the watery theme no surprise. That Midwestern traditional (read: preppy) upbringing runs deep and infused her work as an event planner and interior designer with exuberant touches of Sister Parish meets *The Mod Squad*. Then in 2011, she was diagnosed with Ménière’s disease and now grapples with the loss of her hearing and extreme vertigo. A tough blow for a woman married to a musician and deeply engaged with the performing arts. “It’s been a journey,” she says, “but I wanted to turn that stress into creative energy, so the hunt for a new house was on!”

That lemons-into-lemonade spirit bubbles—literally—throughout the interiors. Inspired by all things oceanic, the color palette of turquoise, azure, sea foam, and silvery gray blurs the line between crashing waves outside and furry footstools inside. Serious, the Hurleys are not. In the guest bath, a finial of egret feathers sprouts like a fluffy fountain from the top of a vintage lamp. Or the white wood Buddha who is bejeweled from head to toe because “that’s how he likes it!”

Furnishing the entire space from Internet finds while nestled into the sleeping porch of her Minnesota family home meant few pieces from their previous home made the move. “Let me interject here. Probably 95 percent of what is here was bought on One Kings Lane,” says Michael with a sense of amused wonder.

But serious treasures do live along side hammer-wielding Viking gods. Tony Duquette whirligigs made of sea urchins and starfish sit astride a fireplace with Chinese dolphin andirons. An early 19th-century table handpainted with mermaids hovers in the reflection of a silver-leaf art nouveau mirror. And the piece that trumps it all—a small table displaying hundreds of tiny seashells collected during walks on the beach with her mother. “It’s my favorite thing,” says Nora.

“I’m going to make everything around me beautiful. That will be my life,” says a framed Elsie de Wolfe quote. “Only,” as Nora adds, “in a Technicolor way!” —DAWN MOORE



LEFT TO RIGHT: The Hurleys walk down their private path to enjoy a pod of passing dolphins; a patio break; a collection of vintage objets from Indigo Seas on a backdrop of Old Planks wallpaper.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A Tony Duquette shell-festooned finial atop a Chinoiserie pedestal; in the spirit of garden sculptures found at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory (named for Nora’s mother), a female nude found at Carpinteria’s Eye of the Day; Nora had her home looped with Bluetooth and is working with the Granada to install technology that allows the hearing impaired to enjoy the audio arts.



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LEFT TO RIGHT: A silver Mystery Fish flies over Sven Rohleder’s Tapeten der 70er Indra paper; Vogue—from Tapeten der 70er—adds drama behind vintage desk and chair with a Jonathan Adler pillow and hand sculpture in the Peace.

PHOTOGRAPHS: MEGAN SOREL



ABOVE: Whimsical navy and white umbrellas from Santa Barbara Umbrella hover over gargantuan clamshells and chunks of aqua and turquoise glass.