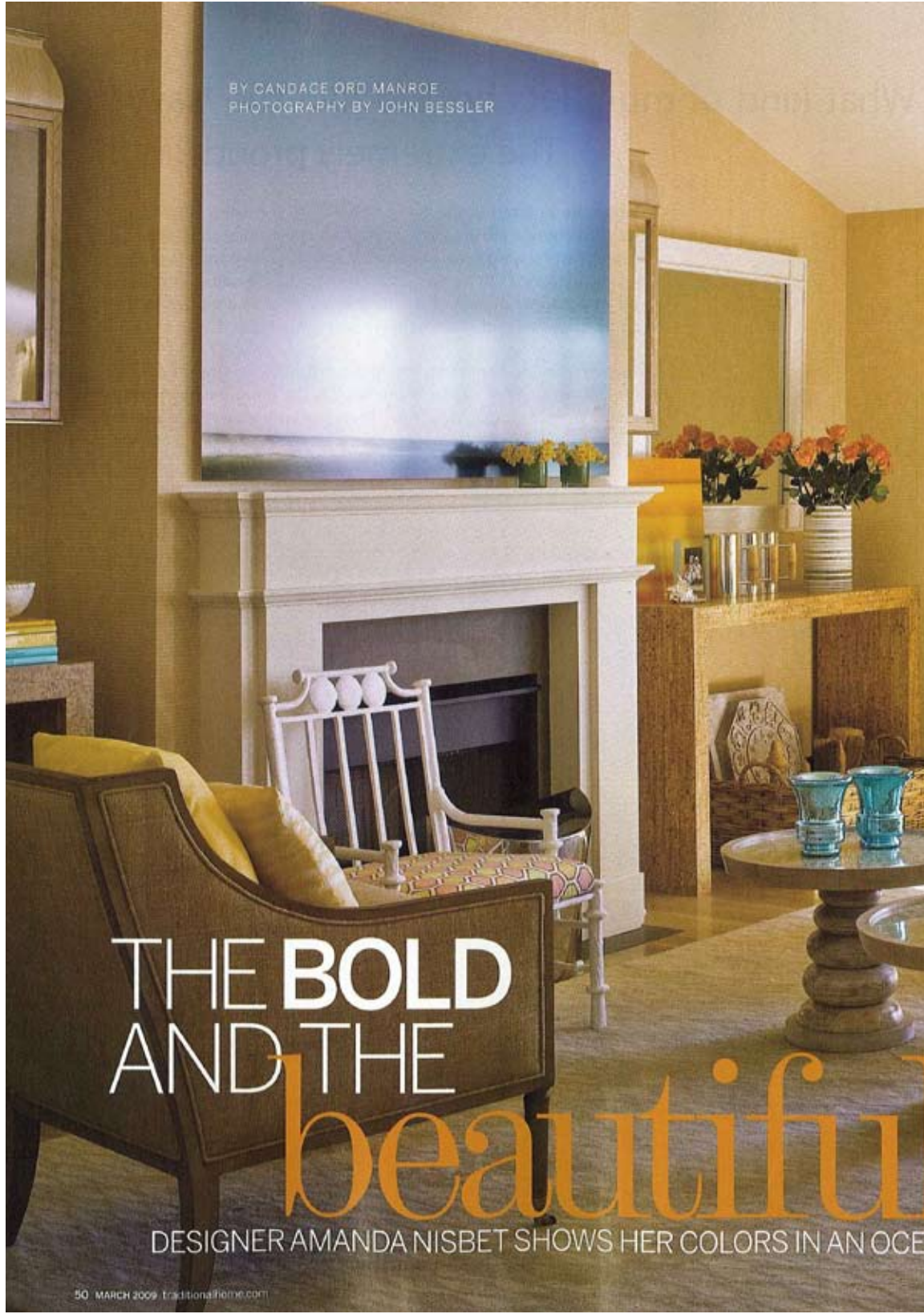




TRADITIONAL HOME  
MARCH 2009 / ALANNAH

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BY CANDACE ORD MANROE  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN BESSLER

# THE BOLD AND THE beautiful

DESIGNER AMANDA NISBET SHOWS HER COLORS IN AN OCEAN



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Amanda Nisbet covered a chocolate-finish Somerset Bay dining table with an acrylic top to step up the allure of her Lucite cube stools. Preceding pages: Sofa pillows in Vervain velvet bring bright blue accents to the neutral silk sofa. Natural cerused oak stools behind the Henredon sofa feature Nisbet's patterned silk.





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the sea completely," she concedes. "Blue-and-white is lovely, timeless, and classic, but I wanted to show people that there are lots of other routes they can take."

Her preferred route began with neutrals on the main floor, with the living room that stretches into the dining area, which edges onto the kitchen. "Initially I brought in sandy, muted tones," she notes. Beach-like, to be precise. "She kept the backgrounds and major furnishings neutral with these golden colors," explains Elizabeth Bailey, Nisbet's protégé on the project, who has since joined her staff as a full-time junior designer

and project manager. The living room's Henredon sofa and pair of matched chairs are covered in a silk fabric the color of moist sand on a sunny morning. Nisbet papered the walls and added a rug in the same sandy hue, and she lightened the oak floors "to look cerused." She draped the windows in her own fabric, "Airdrie," a golden silk she designed with a slight undulation that suggests watercolored waves.

"Amanda liked the idea of relating to the sea," Bailey explains, "but with brighter, a little more punched-up colors." Instead of wielding a calm sea- or sky-blue palette, Nisbet introduced





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**AMANDA NISBET  
ELIZABETH BAILEY**

Not tethered by too many design rules, Amanda Nisbet's refined traditional interiors pulsate with fresh energy. Since opening her own design firm in Manhattan in 1998, her high-profile clients have included comedienne Caroline Rhea and *O* magazine publisher Jill Seelig. A sizable amount of her work is for clients with growing children. They look to her for sophisticated style that's family-friendly. Nisbet brought that expertise, as well as her signature manipulation of color and form, to *Traditional Home's* Oceans 3 Showhouse.

As part of the project, she was asked to mentor a design student through the creative process. Nisbet's protégé, Elizabeth Bailey (right), studied at Parsons the New School for Design in New York City, after obtaining an English degree from Princeton and working as an editor for *House & Garden*. "I learned all about comfortable elegance from Amanda," says Bailey, who has since joined Nisbet's staff full-time as a junior designer and project manager. Nisbet's work has been published in a variety of design publications. No stranger to designer showhouses, she has participated in both Kips Bay and Hampton showhouses.



**Above:** "Lizzie's Room," designed for a college-bound teen, sports a custom daybed from Albert Menin Interiors covered in S. Harris linen. The same fabric in "Silver Cloud" trims draperies in Nisbet's own fabric to coordinate with shades from Hunter Douglas. An abaca rug covers the room's floor.  
**Right:** Ralph Lauren's "Highbridge" desk is paired with a vintage chair.  
**Left:** The "B. Happy" bath.





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**Left and below:** In the master bath, American Leather's "Bella" chair in pewter Ultrasuede adds unexpected comfort; "Giselle" table by Henredon. A pair of Kohler's "Chalkstripe" vanities are accented with a duo of luxe mirrors from Modern History. Marble tiles from Ann Sacks.

**Right:** Fabricut's chartreuse velvet richly covers a custom chair found in the master bedroom.



**Left:** Henredon tiered tables with chunky crystal lamps from Circa Lighting flank the master bedroom's Louis J. Solomon bamboo headboard. The bed is dressed with "Sanibel" shams and duvet cover from Peacock Alley. Fabric on headboard and bedskirt is "Tibet" from S. Harris. Drapery and bolster fabric is a print silk in chartreuse and white by Nisbet. Wall and trim paint from Ralph Lauren helps set the mood.



brilliant bursts of peacock blue in the living and dining areas. That hue, in silk on the Lucite cube dining stools, triggers a tart visual rush that dissolves into deliciousness, like the first bite into a sour-apple gum ball. "Plus, I love that little bit of elegance you get with Lucite," says the designer.

"I also love mixing materials," she adds. In addition to enriching the main living spaces with sleek, sexy Lucite, she further enlivened the textural montage with a cork console table and a grouping of three custom wooden cocktail tables. Their round glass tops protect crushed seashells that have been dyed a brilliant blue—color that pops but only upon inspection. "The tension between the tables' rough cerused oak base and the glossy sheen of the seashells is the kind of dynamic I strive for in my designs," Nisbet says.

Above the dining table hangs one of her own creations, a white metal chandelier that preserves the airiness of the space while adding an interesting geometric shape on an appropriately large scale. The white of the fixture segues into the kitchen, which features white Wood-Mode cabinets that are accented with a sandy-hue backsplash of genuine onyx tiles from Ann Sacks and a Caesarstone quartz countertop. "The onyx tiles bring incredible richness to the kitchen," says the designer.

Unlike a typical Hamptons house, this one is intended for year-round living. "This is not a weekend house or a summer house," Nisbet clarifies. "I designed it with a coziness and a sophistication that can work all year long."

The best example of this is the oddly angled downstairs bedroom, reassigned by the designer as a family/media room, which she dubbed the "B. Happy" room.

"It's a fun, happy hangout," says Nisbet, who ensured that result by adding unexpected bubble-gum pink piping to the indigo Ultrasuede sofas from American Leather. "People couldn't believe the pink welting, but it's just the happy lift I wanted." Long, skinny lumbar pillows covered in a multicolor stripe spread cheer down the full length of the sofas, and hefty square pillows in a splashy cantaloupe paisley designed by Nisbet further break



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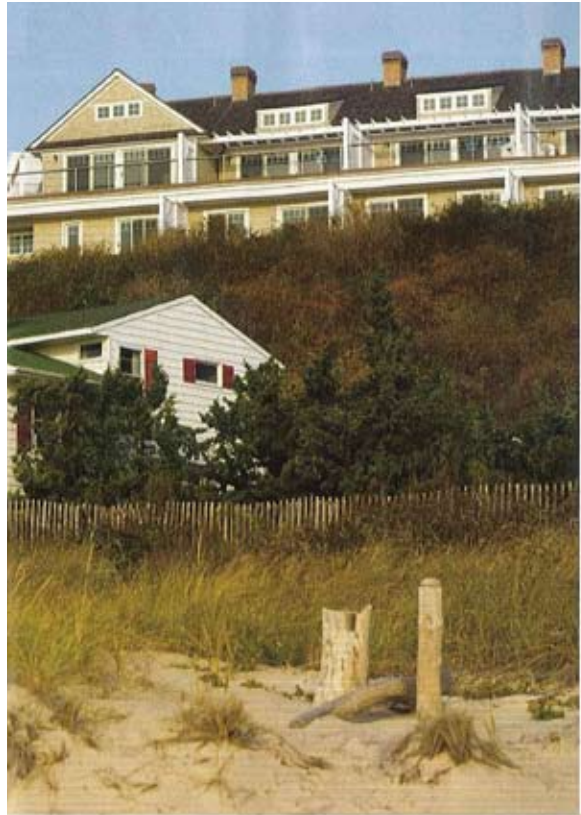
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The "B. Happy" room is an almost triangular space adjacent to the master bedroom on the lower level. Surfaced with Belgard pavers, the adjoining patio overlooks the Atlantic. Below: The powder room sink is by Kohler; tiles from Ann Sacks.

up the seating's ode to indigo. She cocooned the room in indigo faux shagreen, which covers the walls. "It recalls the sea, and it's incredibly dramatic," she notes.

Adding dazzle to the drama are the silver-papered ceiling and silver-upholstered cocktail-table cube. A Tamarian rug's white dotted swirls on a blue ground suggest waves but, more important, energy itself. "This is the room everyone gravitates to," Nisbet says proudly.

The remaining bedrooms retain their function as places to sleep, but "Lizzie's Room" doubles as a living space. "It's designed as a college girl's bedroom. I wanted it to be fun but practical, so a daybed serves as a sofa," Nisbet explains. There, and in the master bedroom, she covered shapely, tufted chairs in eye-popping chartreuse. "I like to give traditional forms unusual colors for zip," she notes. Just as a peacock is known by its full-feathered fan, a pepped-up palette "is my signature as a designer."

For more information, see sources on page 132

Left: The cozy "B. Happy" room is Nisbet's version of a family/media room, perfect for cocooning and old movies (the TV is located at the "wide" end of the room) on facing American Leather Ultrasuede sofas with long lumbar pillows. Indigo striped walls are lightened by silver-leaf ceiling paper from Phillip Jeffries Ltd.; trim paint is Ralph Lauren. Henredon's "Cara" mirrors add shape, as does Tamarian's "Diamond Swirl" rug atop a black sisal carpet. Roman shade is a Fabricut fabric.



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