

SPRING 2025 ISSUE

# blue

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WATERFRONT LIFE

## A New Dawn

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Lots of seating and large windows await family and friends at this Harsens Island home, where the views are part of the entertainment.





# Island Time

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PHOTOS BY  
Trevor Long/  
Maconochie  
Photography

**A second home on the St. Clair River consists of  
a veritable campus, including a bridge and a fish shack**

**Architect (and Landscape Designer):** Infuz Architects, Detroit and Port Huron, [infuzarchitects.com](http://infuzarchitects.com)  
**Builder:** South Channel Homes, Romeo, [southchannelhomes.com](http://southchannelhomes.com) **Cabinetry:** Matthew Griffor, East China  
**Interior Design:** Nicole Withers, Rachel Hartung, and Gabrielle Estes, Jones-Keena, Troy, [jones-keena.com](http://jones-keena.com)



# W

ho hasn't dreamed about having their own private island getaway? For the lucky owners of this Harsens Island second home, that dream is now a reality.

Designer Nicole Withers worked with the Marine City-based homeowners, Vince Cataldo of Infuz Architects, and South Channel Homes on the project. Withers, of Jones-Keena & Co. in Troy, began working with the couple more than 20 years ago after Cataldo introduced them, when the architect and designer worked on the couple's primary residence. "We've all basically grown up together," Withers explains.

With an enviable 300 feet of St. Clair River frontage, the second home's site on South Channel Drive offered "a unique opportunity to create a campus feel," according to Cataldo, a Port Huron and Detroit-based architect. The property consists of a private island, requiring a bridge to reach the main residence. The architect's website explains: "A large boathouse and

'fish shack' are located on the primary parcel. The design solution was to create three separate buildings ... allowing privacy for the owner."

Surrounded by water on all four sides, the 4,600-square-foot main house, known as the River House, is accessed from the other structures by a bridge. The homeowners purchased the land in 2014, and built the boathouse first. With upstairs living quarters that includes five bedrooms, 3.5 baths, a full kitchen/bar opening to the great room, a game room, and a roof deck with an additional bar/kitchen, the homeowners were able to use those accommodations initially, although they always intended to expand. The fish shack, which Cataldo calls "a funky little building," came next.

"Visually, the plan always was to make the compound look architecturally connected," he explains, adding that the three segments "have the same vocabulary" and a "Coastal Michigan" aesthetic.

Planning for the main house began in 2021, and construction got underway in 2022. Withers and the homeowners traveled to the High Point (N.C.) market twice that year to purchase furnishings, accessories, art, and unique custom items.

The multiyear project was stalled by the Covid pandemic, and additional DNR permits were needed for the unique site,



**Left:** With some 300 feet of St. Clair River frontage, the homeowners' second home's site on South Channel Drive features a campus feel.

**Opposite page, top:** There are outstanding views from every room, including this lovely primary bedroom. Of note is the venetian plaster ceiling, which wonderfully reflects light from the sparkling water outdoors. **Opposite page, bottom:** While the designers were inspired by the expansive and color-rich vistas outdoors, they used color sparingly inside. In the kitchen, neutrals provide a peaceful palette.









**Left:** The primary bathroom is one of two rooms with blue accents. The house is more about texture, though, than color. For example, the mirror's ultra-tactile driftwood surface adds plenty of "wow."

**Right:** The orange and blue shades in this rug are used sparingly in other areas of the home. Head-turning artwork by Linwood provides interest and picks up on outdoor colors like sandy beiges and watery blues. The abstract was the first serious piece of art the couple purchased at High Point, N.C.



which is reached by a ferry and bridge. The extra permits and approvals added "a lot more red tape," the designer explains, and the site had to be elevated to make it easier to build on, Cataldo notes. "The scale the client went to, (in order) to get it right, was impressive," he says.

The result is a three-bedroom escape that all parties agree was well worth the extra work and the wait. With views from every room, it's everything the owners hoped for, Withers says. "Every window you look out, you see water."

The homeowners' priorities include "making everything comfortable," the designer explains, adding that "it was also really important that it be family-friendly." To achieve that, she and associates Rachel Hartung and Gabrielle Estes used performance fabrics in the great room and dining room, and incorporated a lot of texture so that "even if it wasn't perfect, it would hide things."

While the designer was inspired by the expansive blue horizon beyond, she used the color sparingly in the home's interiors. The palette was drawn from the dining room rug, which features hints of orange and blue, and the Moroccan Tulu rug in the great room. "We wanted it to have a more California, beachy feel," Withers says.

"There are two rooms with blue accents, but it's pretty subtle.

"The house is more about texture than color," she continues, noting that they added color in the artwork, accessories, and in some surfaces, including the powder room walls, which feature a Detroit Wallpaper Co. design that resembles a sunset. A nod to blue is also seen in the primary bedroom and bath, which grew from a porcelain tile chosen for the shower that's reminiscent of a geode, Withers says. The white-painted mirror, meanwhile, calls to mind driftwood.

The homeowners' goal was to create a quiet getaway, yet Withers says they don't often find themselves alone. The compound attracts their grown children and grandchildren, as well as neighbors of all ages. Local children love the built-in pool. "They're all about entertaining," the designer says. "They're the most generous people and it's a large boating community, (so there are) often gatherings at their house."

The property is used two-and-a-half out of the four seasons. "The beauty of Har-sens Island is that if you're a boater, it's close and you're not spending hours in the car. For my clients, it's really all about the boating," Withers says. "They're there as soon as they can put the boat in the water." ~





## DESIGN SAMPLER

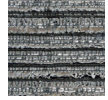
A few of interiors pro  
**Nicole Withers'** favorites



STYLED BY  
**JAMIE FABBRI**

**1.** Entryway painting, "Losing Dreams" by Linwood, South + English, High Point, N.C. [southandenglish.com](http://southandenglish.com)

**"Art makes a home. This was the first important and big piece of modern art the homeowners purchased," Nicole Withers says.**



**4.** Michael Aram Gotham Steel tile from Artistic Tile, available at Beaver Tile & Stone, Troy. \$85 sq. ft. [artistictile.com](http://artistictile.com)

**"The island tile (behind the bar stools) adds texture and detail."**



**2.** Isabella Rope Pendant Light, M2C Studio, High Point, N.C. Price upon request. [m2cstudio.com](http://m2cstudio.com)

**"The braided rope in the Isabella pendant is a modern nod to the nautical nature of the property," Withers notes.**



**3.** Hickory Chair Saint Giorgio Bar Stool, available at CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy. Price upon request. [hickorychair.com](http://hickorychair.com)

**"The bar stool has so much intricate detail. The top wooden handle makes it practical for families, protecting the leather upholstery when pushing and pulling the stools in and out."**



**5.** Cade Blue Box (not shown in story), set of two, \$340, Currey & Co., [curreyandcompany.com](http://curreyandcompany.com)

**"The blue boxes repeat the tribal feeling of the custom bedroom rug."**



**6.** Artefact Wildwood Upholstered Poster Bed, Century Furniture, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy. [michigandesign.com](http://michigandesign.com)

**"I particularly love the silver leaf finish over the wood. I chose a Schumacher (Michigan Design Center) Heceta Embroidery fabric in blue for its custom upholstery."**