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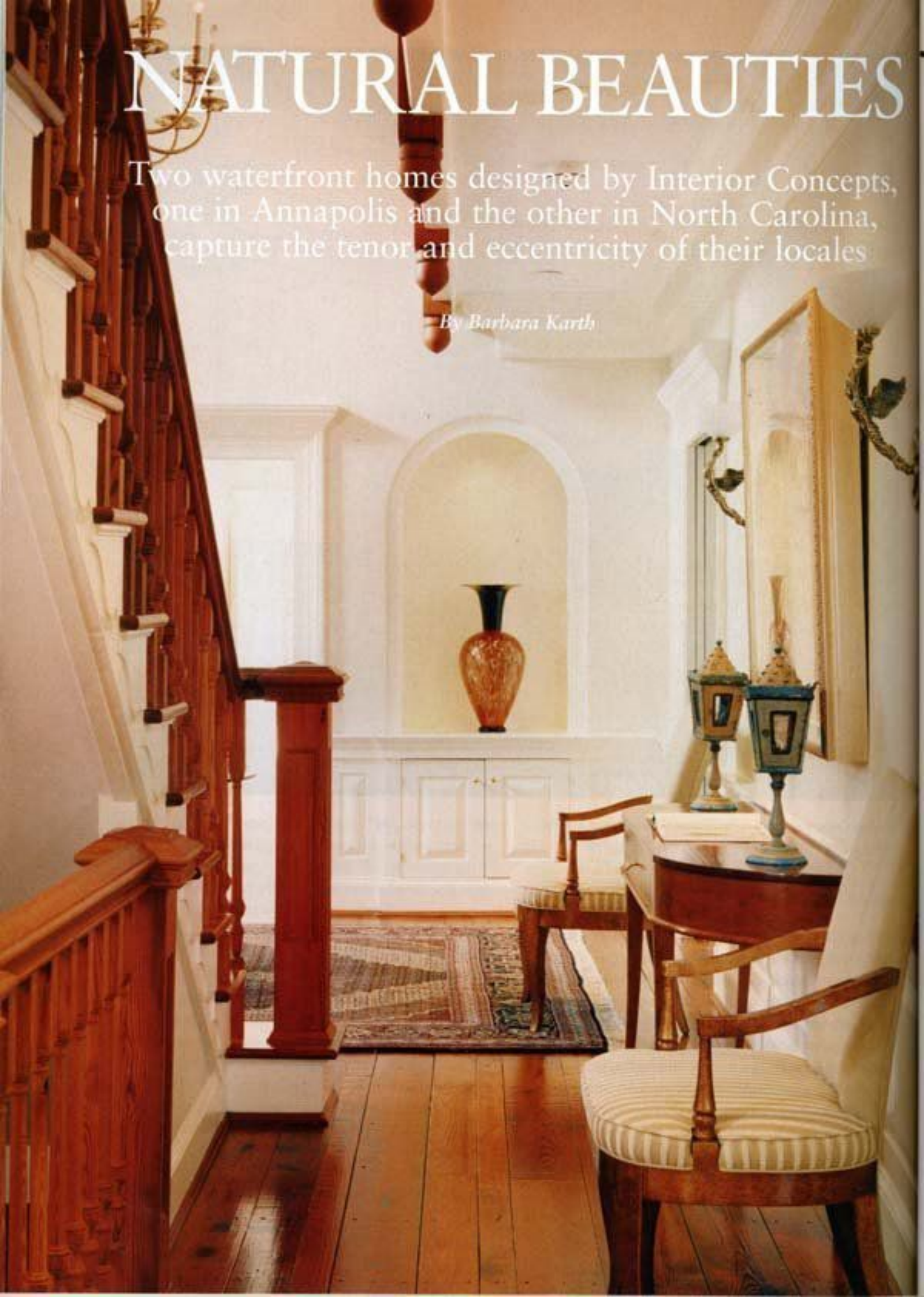
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NATURAL BEAUTIES

Two waterfront homes designed by Interior Concepts, one in Annapolis and the other in North Carolina, capture the tenor and eccentricity of their locales

By Barbara Karth



Water, essential to life, feeds the soul as well as the body. It has a mystical lure with images of foamy white waves crashing on a sandy shore, wetlands teeming with life amidst the tall grasses, perhaps a gently rolling river, or a quiet shimmering lake that churns in an oncoming storm. This primal draw to water has held its lure throughout the history of mankind. It is no wonder that creating a beautiful home by this essential life element attracts so many.

Designers Arlene Critzos and Catherine Belkov have decorated two impressive waterfront homes—one in the company's hometown of Annapolis and another on an island off the coast of southern North Carolina—that capture the unique tenor and eccentricity of each locale. The designers underscored the personalities and characteristics of each home, which bear little resemblance in the way land meets water and the way light is distinctively absorbed and reflected. Each home is exceptional; yet there are similarities in their ultimate styles.



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Annapolis Tradition Today

Green grass, trees and shrubbery meet the calm, gray-blue water of a South River tributary, the site of a traditional house with a coastal ambiance. A deep-water dock provides refuge for substantial boats. The wood and stone façade, combined with a steep shingled roof dotted with dormers, foretells a climate of snow and ice alternating with heat and humidity.

The décor is designed as a backdrop to showcase the view. "Since there is so much glass, we didn't want

Throughout this sprawling Tidewater home (above), the designers juxtaposed period and style. In the foyer (opposite), a pseudo-classical console and antique Venetian lanterns contrast with a piece of modern art glass. In the dining room, wing back-style armchairs sport contemporary boxed skirts (below).

Interior Design: Arlene Critzos and Catherine Belkov, Interior Concepts, Inc., Annapolis, Maryland



PHOTOS © GORDON BEAL (2)

to compete with the outside," says Critzos. She selected neutral tones, mushroom to gray to beige, "foggy colors to allow the landscape to come through."

Yet the abundance of neutrals can easily become bland. "I think the heart pine floors add total warmth," Critzos says. "The floors are the anchor to all these non-descript colors. They are not only warm in color but variegated and distressed, so they have movement."

Her chosen fabrics reveal texture and subtle pattern, not matching but harmonizing. In the family room she accessorized the Henredon sofa with pillows of hand-woven textile from a remote village in Colombia. An old, wooden, hand-carved urn rests on the cocktail table as "contemporary slick" contrasts with "rusticated primitive."

Juxtapositions and melding of period and style flow through the house with clean and contemporary lines meeting pedigree and tradition. "It relates to country traditional with heart pine floors and multiple-piece crown moulding; and then there is a total juxtaposition with a clean, contemporary, artistic flair to the furnishings," says Critzos.

The homeowner says, "I lived in San Francisco for almost 13 years and had a lot of furniture that was reflective of that kind of living, which was much more contemporary with high gloss and straight lines—and I was loath to give some of it up. Then when I bought this house, clearly a Tidewater house, with these comfortable old pine floors and the wood and the stone, the contemporary look didn't fit. Arlene wanted to give my eye what I was looking for—the straight lines and the clean look but still make it compatible with the house. She managed to find the middle ground, keep me happy and make it look just beautiful."

This blending of styles begins in the foyer. "There is a pseudo-classical console table in fruitwood with two antique Venetian lanterns and in the niche is a piece of contemporary art glass," explains Critzos.

In the dining room, armchairs from Henredon, hinting at a traditional wing-back style, are upholstered with a simple, contemporary boxed skirt. Side chairs have only the slightest curve. "I think the table in the dining room is the architectural statement. We just let the power of the scale of the table be the weight of the room."

"I wanted my house to be elegant, but that wasn't my first consideration. I wanted it to be comfortable," says the homeowner. She wants people to put their feet up and children to spread their toys about the floor. It's a house for family and friends. And she is generous about sharing her home for charitable events. From guests at elegant dinners or receptions to children at an Easter egg hunt, everyone is comfortable in this Tidewater house.



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Pillows made from hand-woven Colombian fabric play against the classic sofa and armchairs in the light-filled family room.





An Island Paradise

Located on an exclusive private island off the southern coast of North Carolina, this southerly home is blessed with a more temperate climate. To the east, waves lap on the broad band of white sand, filling in and taking away for an ever-changing shoreline as storms and tides do their work. On the west side of the island, wetland grasses give way to calmer waters for north- and south-bound vessels passing through the Intracoastal Waterway.

The house is sited on a point with three divergent views of water juxtaposed with the stately clipped and pruned entrance. It's a grand house of rounded balconies and balustrades, of towers and cupolas and a gracious curved staircase.

Before Arlene Critzos and her Interior Concepts crew got hold of it, the house was decorated in the formality of another era. The new owners wanted something less foreboding, a comfortable home that respected the classical elements so prevalent in the architecture. The very scale of the house, with its large rooms and high ceilings, presented both a bonus and a challenge. Critzos and her team eliminated the formality while retaining the sophistication the house deserves.

The expansive living area is divided into seating areas with a step up to a room within a room, one for intimate chatter with two unparalleled views. The designers draped the windows simply, with sheers filtering light from hot summer rays. Hung just below the moulding, the draperies both emphasize the height while bringing the room into a human scale—a seemingly contradictory application.

Four curved-back chairs swivel to take advantage of the ever-changing rays bouncing off the water and filtering through the landscape. A round table from Maitland Smith adds panache as it emphasizes the circle within a square configuration. "The table is unique, dark, made of tree bark with a fossilized top strung together with iron," explains Critzos. Underneath she placed an English garden ball as shape plays against shape and architecture and décor intertwine.



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Inside this grand house of rounded balconies, towers and cupolas (opposite), Critzov and her team created a comfortable home that respected the classical elements of its architecture. A sitting area within the living room affords unparalleled ocean views.

In the dining room, dark blue draperies emphasize the tall windows and ceiling height. Critzos calls it "cadet blue," using an adjective reflecting her Annapolis base. A chest from Niemann Weeks pairs a painted finish of this same cadet blue with natural wood for an informal punch. A large oval table is surrounded by comfortable, upholstered armchairs in ebony; curved backs link them to the shape of the table.

The master bedroom is bursting with soft textures. Furnishings are upholstered in chenille, the sky blue duvet in raw silk. The designer updated the balloon wing-back chair from Henredon by upholstering it in a contemporary fabric. An oversized mirror behind an antique English walnut table adds up-to-the-minute flair.

Critzos and her team focused on comfort and livability with a deep and genial bow to the view. Antiques are paired with contemporary as the designers play off the classical elements of the architecture. Fabrics are luxurious, free of excessive pattern, yet rich in texture. They whisper to one another as to retain the calm. In this timely redo, pompous and stuffy has been replaced with fresh and chic to underscore some of the best nature puts forth.

In each home, Critzos tempered tradition with cleaner lines; she kept the individuality of each as she emphasized nature's beauty where water meets the land. ♦

Contributing editor Barbara Karth resides in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

RESOURCES

ANNAPOLIS HOME

FRONT HALL

Antique Mother-of-Pearl Desk & Leather Console: Maitland, Washington, DC.

DINING ROOM

Table: Niemann Weeks, Washington, DC. Head Chairs: Henredon, Washington, DC. Chairs: Council, Washington, DC.

LIVING ROOM

Cocktail Table: Salvations, Silver Spring, MD. Ottoman: Swain, Washington, DC. Console: Maitland, Washington, DC.

FAMILY ROOM

Cocktail Table: Salvations, Silver Spring, MD. Chair & Sectional: Henredon, Washington, DC.

NORTH CAROLINA HOME

LIVING ROOM

Chairs: Henredon, Washington, DC. Wood Table: Maitland Smith, Washington, DC.

DINING ROOM

Table: Henredon, Washington, DC. Chest: Niemann Weeks, Washington, DC.



In the dining room, "cadet blue" draperies accentuate the tall windows and expansive ceiling height. A chest from Niemann Weeks pairs a painted finish of this same blue with natural wood for an informal punch.

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