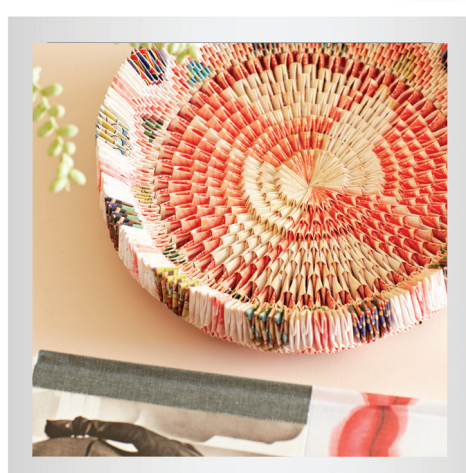
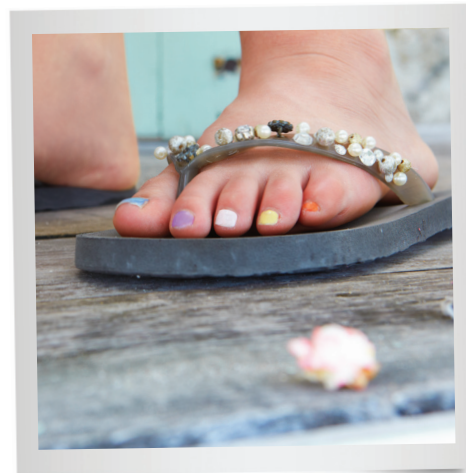




GLOBAL STYLE



Breezy / Tropical

TREASURE



Coral stone steps lead up to Colette van den Thillart's Barbadian home. Built in 2006, it reflects the local wooden chattel house style, with gingerbread detailing. The lanterns on the steps are a must since it gets dark earlier here because of the island's easterly location.



ISLAND

DESIGNER COLETTE VAN DEN THILLART OPENS THE DOORS TO HER CHARMING BARBADOS BEACH HOUSE.

Text by ALICE LAWLOR | *Photography by* VIRGINIA MACDONALD

H&H MAY 2013 113

OLETTE VAN DEN THILLART doesn't really do downtime. The creative director of NH Design in London is a skilled multitasker, balancing the needs of her clients with those of her two teenagers and a busy social life at home in Toronto. It's a happy whirlwind, of course, but escaping to her Barbados beach house is like taking a breath. This is where she walks on the beach, crafts with her girls and enjoys peaceful dinners at the seafood restaurant next door. Her three-bedroom bungalow is breezy and bright, with a glamorous coral-pink palette and lots of found objects from the beach. It was brand-new when she bought it in 2006, and that was a big part of the appeal: "We did not want a renovation project!" says Colette. "We just wanted to come here and enjoy." That relaxed vibe is reflected in the home's interior design, which is more casual than her regular work, but just as fun. Here, Colette shares the inspiration behind her island hideaway.

House & Home: What first attracted you to Barbados?

Colette van den Thillart: It has a very distinct island vernacular when it comes to design. It partly comes from a local style of building called a chattel house, and partly from Oliver Messel working for years on the island. He was an English designer who did everything: theatre sets, interiors and architecture. He took those local ideas and gave them a more sophisticated look.

H&H: How did Messel's style influence your own?

CT: I'm absolutely mad about Oliver Messel. Always have been, and once we started going to Barbados, I became a Messel stalker, schmoozing my way into all of the Messel houses on the island. But the funny thing about Messel is that he's so distinctly a part of Bajan history, and the houses are so obviously Oliver

Messel, that I wanted my house to be *my* house, not a pastiche. So I've used a couple of Messel touches — some colours like pistachio green, and the Chinese pagoda chandelier that hangs over the dining table, and the gingerbreading. But his spirit doesn't overwhelm the property. The coral-pink and tobacco-brown palette I used moved it away from him. The house is what I would call contemporary Bajan, so it's still distinctly Bajan, but much cleaner.

H&H: What big changes did you make to the space?

CT: The kitchen was the only thing we really changed in the house, because it was grey — if you can imagine that on an island! It was a really, really banal kitchen, and it's mostly window, so there wasn't really that much I could do. I painted out the cabinets and changed the hardware. What little was left in terms

CONTINUED ON PAGE 152



Designer Colette van den Thillart in Barbados.



The living room's hutch with shell-shaped pulls was found in Miami. Mismatched iron chairs were bought on the island and painted "sun-bleached" pink.



Colette upholstered the living room sofa in tobacco brown, then had the punchy coral slipcover made to mix up the look of the room, which she does regularly. An oversized shell-pink coffee table makes the room feel bigger, while large European-style lampshades add drama. The palette, trellis-patterned fabric and wicker furniture keep the space both whimsical and livable — the perfect combination for a relaxed island look. The jute rug tempers the pink, steering the room away from feminine territory.



RIGHT: Daughter Hannah holds a sea fan from the beach. "It's not pure white sand, so it's not for everybody," says Colette. "We think of the beach as an ever-evolving art project." FAR RIGHT: The shell lamp and weathered burlap shade are local finds. The books were carefully chosen for their spines. "And, yes, I did cover a few books that I wanted to have here that weren't pink. So if all else fails, cheat!" says Colette.



LEFT: In a work space off the principal bedroom, an Ionic column desk serves as a base for Colette's beachy craft creations. The shutters are a classic local touch: typically the windows have no glazing or screens, so the louvres tilt and can be locked shut. ABOVE: Beachcombing is a favourite activity for Colette. She creates "beach ephemera artworks," displaying them in shadowboxes and giving them away as gifts. "It could be seaglass hearts or coral that resembles Henry Moore sculptures," she says.

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Interior designer and friend Thomas Wiggins spotted the dining room's chandelier at auction and thought Colette would love its Oliver Messel vibe. "I carried that onto the plane," she says. "I didn't know birds would love nesting in all the little lanterns!" Green-striped slipcovers over teak furniture play up the lush greenery outside. The gingerbreading is a traditional detail on island houses.





ABOVE: Colette painted a pink and white "tented" ceiling in the kitchen and mirrored the walls to amplify the light of hurricane candles, displayed on wall brackets. The stripes pick up the pillow fabric in the indoor living room, a more formal (and less well-used) space than its outdoor equivalent.

RIGHT: Colette designed a Messel-inspired trellis screen outside so that she can leave the windows open and still have privacy while bathing. Seashell motifs appear throughout the house.

BELOW: In the outdoor living room — designed just as exquisitely as the indoor one — it made sense to use outdoor furnishings. The travertine floor continues inside, connecting the two spaces.



IPAD-EXCLUSIVE CONTENT
Learn Colette's favourite spots in Barbados in our iPad edition.



“I wanted a glam shack — the romantic idea of the room on the beach and the Robinson Crusoe fantasy”

“I lacquered all the panelled ceilings in a high-gloss white, and everybody thought I was bonkers,” says Colette. “Subsequently, a lot of people have done the same because it doubles the ceiling height.” In the principal bedroom, she also painted the brown four-poster bed white and draped it with mosquito netting (a romantic way to solve the bug problem). Red side tables add a grounding burst of contrast.