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APRIL/MAY 2019

# HOME

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The display wall in the living room, holding an array of beautiful artifacts, creates a gallery feel.

# SEASIDE OASIS

A NORTH CAROLINA FAMILY'S BEACH HOUSE IS TRANSFORMED INTO A HOME THAT SPEAKS TO THEIR SOUL.





The home's exterior exudes a beachy-chic vibe with its cedar shingles, and coastal-inspired landscaping completes the look. *Opposite:* The renovated kitchen features a larger, more open layout and added windows to fill the new space with light.

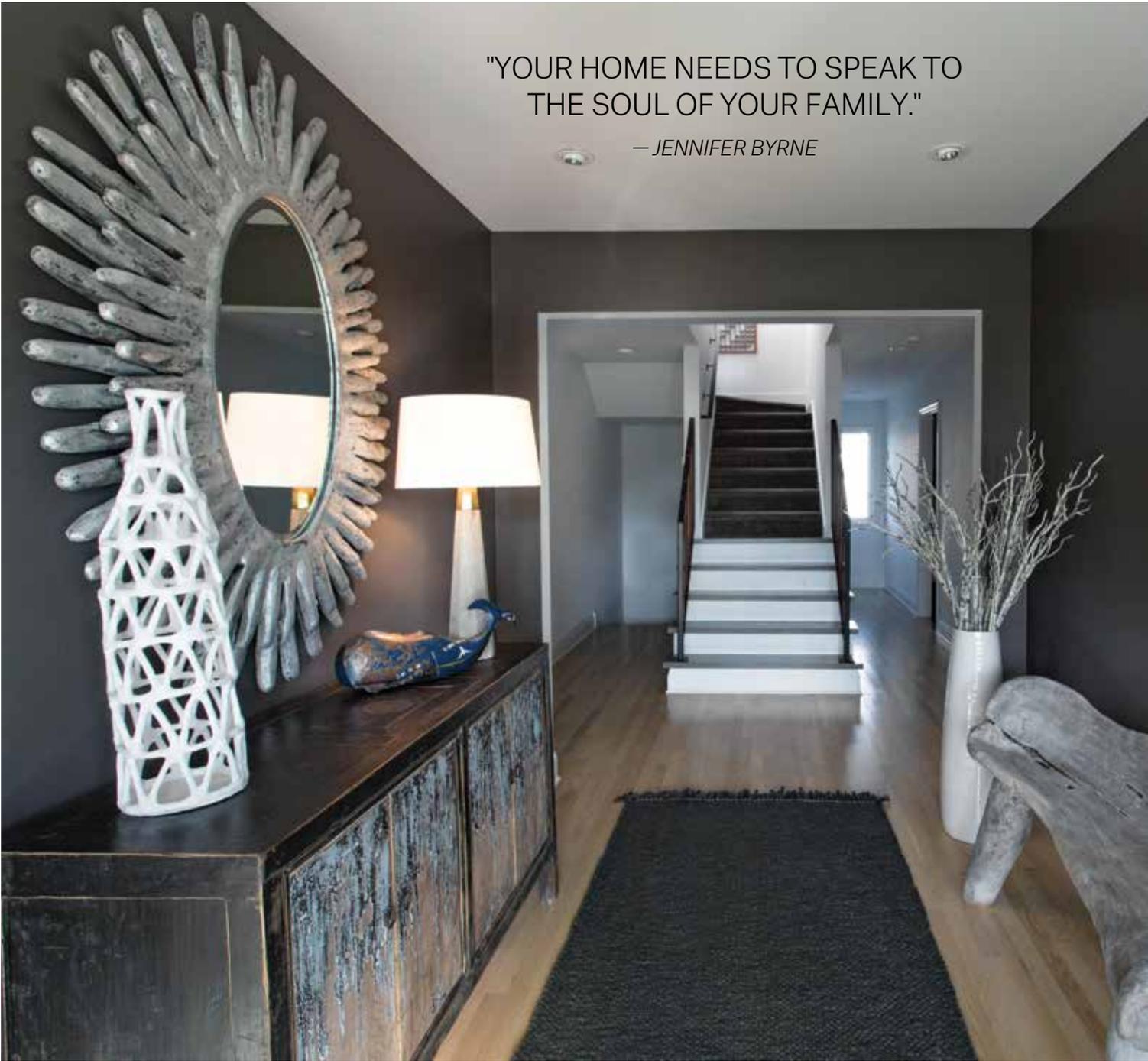


**A**s Jennifer Byrne talks about her reinvented beach house, she also muses about what makes a house a home. It's a simple question, but one with a complex answer. Her thoughts? "Your home needs to speak to the soul of your family," she says. This particular home – a seaside oasis with interiors of wood, texture, and found objects – speaks to the soul of her family by providing a stunning yet casual backdrop that lets the ocean and the coast shine.

This is fitting since it was the lure of salty air and the sound of the surf that first drew the Byrnes to the carefree coastal community of Wrightsville Beach. Byrne, her husband, Austin, and their two sons had vacationed in the area for years and felt a pull to it. Byrne recounts how, while house hunting, her youngest

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THE SOUL OF YOUR FAMILY."

— JENNIFER BYRNE



son was initially resistant to many of the prospective homes. But when they entered this particular home, he said, "I can see myself here."

The house today looks drastically different than it did on that day seven years ago. The renovation was a three-phase approach. Byrne partnered with Christi Barbour of Barbour Spangle Design, who says, "Jennifer has such a great aesthetic. It's similar to the way she lives her life: grounded, authentic, and genuine."

Initially, the Byrnes painted, both inside and out, and incorporated intriguing artwork. The second phase involved a significant overhaul in the kitchen and stairwell, as well as new lighting and carpeting. And most recently, the family gave all of the bathrooms a facelift.

"The renovation was not a one-time event, but really a continual transformation," Byrne explains. "It's an ongoing process, even today."

This doesn't preclude it from getting plenty of use, as both a beloved destination for the Byrne extended family and their friends and also as a business retreat. Byrne is CEO of Javara, an integrated research organization, and founder of the non-profit The Greater Gift Initiative. "Jennifer brings team members and business associates to the house as a space of inspiration and thought-provoking, world-impacting conversation," Barbour explains.

Those conversations can begin in the entryway, a harmonious mix of eclectic pieces, including artwork by French painter



Garrick Yroni. The Brynes traveled to Yroni’s home island of Bora Bora to commemorate their elder son’s high school graduation. “That was a special trip and [the painting] is a way for our family to memorialize that experience,” Byrne says.

The bench resting beneath the painting came from local Wrightsville Beach vendor Airlie Moon, and Byrne stumbled upon it the weekend the family moved in. “That bench really represented the beginning, and it shows what fits with our lifestyle,” she explains. She reveled in the idea of, as she says, bringing the outdoors in, and the subtle transition this represents.

Heading up the stairs to the main-level living space, the subtle transitions continue. There’s a breezy, open-air layout, as one

area becomes an extension of another, from the family room into the kitchen into the eating area.

Ceilings are sometimes said to be the next design frontier, and the Brynes chose to stain the family room’s wooden ceiling to give it more panache. Alternately, they opted to tone down the room’s display wall, which was previously a bold color. They

*Left:* The entryway is a treasure trove of unique furnishings, accents, and artwork, all specifically selected for this home.

*Right:* The master bath is a harmonious mix of materials, including marble flooring and a tiled wall.





Painted it white and incorporated a collection of found artifacts. “It suddenly felt more like an art museum or a gallery wall versus just a collection of stuff,” Barbour explains. Finally, they installed beautiful roller shades that can be opened to showcase the ocean view fully.

The ocean is also visible from the kitchen, where clean lines and simplicity reign supreme. “Where a house becomes a home and where people are drawn to be, it’s not because of tile or carpeting or cabinetry,” Byrne says. “With cleanliness and simplicity, it allows you to be focused on who you’re with and allows the people to be the center of the environment.” People inevitably gather around the large island, the heartbeat of the entire space. Wood columns frame the island, which has a waterfall countertop with a niche underneath. The kitchen has many functional features as well, from the appliance garage to the hidden dog bowl to the self-serve guest coffee bar.

*Opposite:* The spacious island allows ample space for seating, cooking, and entertaining.

*Top:* A local surfboard builder created the one-of-a-kind wall art in the eating area.

*Bottom:* This stairwell took on a new personality with the renovation; it now features a custom railing with leather strapping between each metal post.





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The guest bedrooms and bathrooms also cater to visitors, with unique spaces and open shelving for travel items, guest-friendly vanities, and a palette of mixed materials and layered tones. All of the bathrooms are distinctly different, and Byrne admits that she stepped out of her comfort zone, style-wise, to create spaces that would be pleasing to her guests. Her favorite bathroom, however, is the boys’ bathroom, as she finds the white subway tile and black accents to be an ideal aesthetic for the young men and their friends.

Finally, the home’s already-gorgeous exterior may become part of the home’s next big transition. But for now, the family likes the unpainted cedar shingles, keeping them natural to maintain the original integrity of the house.

“That was one of the design elements that we were committed to not changing,” Byrne says. “It looks like a beach house.”

“There is something really magical about being near the ocean,” she says. “We love the way we all feel as we are driving over that last bridge. You feel something come over you that reminds you what life is all about.”◆

*Opposite:* The homeowners have created a coastal-inspired oasis to be lived in and loved by as many people in their family and friend circle as possible.

*Top:* The classic black-and-white motif gives the boys’ bathroom a youthful edge.

*Bottom:* The bird knickknacks are part of a collection that honors nature and the outdoors.