



dream getaway in March 1996. After putting the house on the market, they were astonished at how quickly it sold—in under three months. The buyer coveted the furnished house, down to the last designer detail. “In June we received an offer that tripled what we had invested in the house, including the furniture,” says JoAnn. “That wouldn’t have happened without Kristin.”

The couple didn’t wait long to start planning a second Delaware custom beach retreat—and again sought Peake’s counsel. The designer created a peaceful seaside sanctuary that conveys all the charm of Nantucket in its Dewey Beach setting. “The Pearlman’s wanted a cozy cottage feel,” says Peake. “They wanted an escape that would be comfortable for their friends and family. With the grandkids, that meant no maintenance.” The house is all about relaxed beach living. The design and color scheme complement the seascape, rather than distract from it.

By mixing painted furniture with antiques, Peake balanced a kick-off-your-flip-flops sensibility with refined style. Beadboard prevails throughout the house, and Peake even used rough-cut cedar for the owners’ bedroom ceiling to enhance the architectural detail. But the bedroom’s real standout feature is its three-sided water view. The Pearlman’s wanted to enjoy the third-story bedroom’s dynamic panorama from their bed. The challenge: where to place the bed. Peake solved the dilemma by



ABOVE: The Pearlman’s Dewey Beach owner’s bedroom. BELOW: The lower-level sitting room and main-floor kitchen. OPPOSITE PAGE: Dewey Beach living room.

creating a knee wall and positioning the bed in the middle of the room. When resting, the couple feel like they’re floating on water.

The ocean also takes center stage on the second floor, the main living level. In this open space, Peake abandoned window treatments for an unobstructed view. In fact, after visiting the construction site, Peake and her client realized that the planned first-floor kitchen looked out over the dunes. So they decided on the spot to flip the floor plan, moving the four guest bedrooms to the

first-floor entry level and relocating the kitchen, great room, and office to the second floor, with its ocean vistas.

Peake added shore-inspired details that avoid beach-house clichés. The sitting room features a whimsical hand-painted mural that wraps the outside coastal scene around the interior wall. A star compass rendered on Stanley’s office floor was sanded down for a weathered look. Even the utilitarian elevator received a brush of Peake’s creativity: It resembles a hot-air balloon,



Kristin Peake.

The *Peake* of Perfection

Interior designer Kristin Peake isn’t backing down from her detail-driven reputation.

By Catherine Funkhouser Photographs by Morgan Howarth

KRISTIN PEAKE was born with a self-described “perfectionist gene.” Her family members teasingly call her “Martha” (as in Stewart). But Peake is not apologizing for her trademark ambition. As an interior designer, Peake insists on not leaving a client’s house until it’s flawless. She enjoys that sense of confident closure. “At the end of a project, I can say, ‘It’s done. It’s perfect. Now I can walk away.’ That’s the joy of what I do,” says Peake, principal of Rockville, Maryland-based Kristin Peake Interiors. “I want the client to have

that ‘ta-da’ moment, whether it’s a whole house or one room. Every client gets that from me.”

One couple, Stanley and JoAnn Pearlman, have had three such moments with Peake. The Pearlman’s first approached Peake in 1995 to help with a custom second home they were building in Bethany Beach, Delaware. It was the start of a partnership that has lasted well over a decade. JoAnn and Peake worked together on that first vacation-home venture. Peake’s perfectionism paid off: The Pearlman’s started enjoying their



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ABOVE: The Pearlman's Potomac TV room. RIGHT: Pearlman's Potomac dining room.

with sisal carpet on the bottom for a basket effect and a *trompe l'oeil* rendering of the balloon on the ceiling.

True to her penchant for perfectionism, Peake didn't leave the house until the monogrammed towels for each grandchild were folded just right. "Kristin's flair and attention to detail really stand out in this beach house," says JoAnn. "It has so much charm and is so welcoming. And that is all Kristin."

The success of the two beach-house projects convinced the Pearlman's of Peake's prowess. So naturally the couple turned once more to the designer when they decided to build a custom 10,000-square-foot primary residence in Potomac, Maryland. Peake worked closely with Hammond Wilson Architects and Natelli Homes, the builder, to create a luxurious yet livable design. JoAnn had a strong idea of what she wanted and a detailed wish list. "JoAnn had laid out a map in her head," explains Peake. "The process was easy because the client communicated her needs and the team worked well together."

Above all else, the couple wanted space to display their growing fine art collection—oh, and they wanted to be able to comfortably seat more than 30 people in their dining room. From the ground up, the Potomac house had to meet these two must-haves. An open floor plan would have created a gallery-like setting for the artwork, but the Pearlman's wanted to avoid an overly curated

look. So while Peake developed space and lighting plans to showcase the art, she also introduced comfortable, welcoming furniture. A neutral color palette for fabrics and walls created a quiet backdrop for the color-popping art pieces.

"Kristin went outside the box and did an unbelievable job," says JoAnn. "She has a strong sense of color. She lets the space speak for itself, but in a noncontemporary way—in a relaxed, embracing way." Creating that embracing feel was important to the couple, who entertain often. Their parties go beyond the here's-a-bowl-of-chili-and-grab-a-seat variety: The Pearlman's host large sit-down soirées and wanted a dining room that could handle their guest lists. So Peake and her clients came up with the perfect solution: four square tables that can either fit together to form one large surface or be separated and reconfigured in numerous ways for flexible seating options. A round table in the bay window seats an additional eight. The couple have squeezed in as many as 40 guests.

Their two homes party-ready, the Pearlman's began referring each of their four grown children to the designer. "All our children have used Kristin's talents in some way," says JoAnn. "Even for people with smaller budgets, Kristin can make it work." *Kristin Peake Interiors, 103-A West Edmonston Drive, Rockville, Maryland, 301-545-0441; kristinpeakeinteriors.com.*

