

New England HOME

Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building



A New Season of
ELEGANCE



Island Introspective

A Nantucket designer brings the senses and sensibilities of the island's seafaring heritage home. BY TOVAH MARTIN



Michelle Holland forged a dialogue between the bamboo shades, sea grass rug, and rush-seated bench to anchor eclectic nautical-themed works by contemporary artist Kevin Paulsen.



The long French table that serves as Holland's desk sits near shelves with baskets of swatches and paint chips.

If you find Michelle Holland staring out the window, that means she's percolating. "My inspiration comes from nature," says the interior designer, which explains the woody hues that prevail in her studio within Nantucket House Antiques & Interior Design. Holland holds forth in an idea-filled cocoon of a room with resources, from design books to fabric and wallcovering samples to a trove of antiques and art, at her fingertips.

The studio's palette pre-dates her tenure by a generation, but respect for the past is what she's all about. "Actually, several shades of green are layered here," explains Holland of the hues that move from fern to shamrock, developed over time and countless

coats of paint. "It's a charming mismatch," she says. "Imperfection lends authenticity to a space."

Nantucket House was the base camp of her mother-in-law, Sandi Holland, also an interior designer and an icon for style on the island. Sandi

TOP TO BOTTOM: Nantucket House has a stash of samples of custom muslin wallcoverings from artist and former Nantucket resident Kevin Paulsen. Holland's assistant Robert Friedhoff's desk is surrounded by his favorite art and antiques. Working on an island requires that everything be within easy reach.



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and her husband, Hudson, came to Nantucket in 1973, when it was a far-flung outpost, and Sandi saw to the needs of a clientele with no design resources within three hours. Michelle took the reins in 2012, leaving her antique shop in Shelburne, Vermont, and bringing her eclectic design eye to the business.

In the cozy studio, each client gets a wicker basket into which Holland tosses swatches, paint chips, and snapshots for the project. What won't fit in those baskets is the incredible inventory of antiques at her fingertips in the shop's catacomb of rooms layered with historic maps, sailor's valentines, and seafaring artwork. That vast collection gives her projects their depth while honoring the island's heritage and capturing the dignity and sophistication she strives to convey.

Nantucket House is the sort of place that invites you to simply sit and soak in the sense of past that defines Nantucket. That's exactly what Holland does with her days. For inspiration, she need not go far. She just breathes it in.

*Nantucket House Antiques & Interior Design,
Nantucket, Mass., nantuckethouse.com*