

SUSAN ORPIN • The Boston-based interior designer creates an ocean-inspired oasis in her new condominium



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EVEN WHEN THE BANKS OF THE NEPONSET RIVER ARE ENCRUSTED WITH ICE, SUSAN ORPIN'S condominium in Milton, Massachusetts, feels like a warm, beachy oasis. The Boston designer moved to this fifth-floor residence in Milton Landing (a 73-unit building in the Lower Mills neighborhood once home to the Baker Chocolate Co. and the H.P. Hood ice cream factory) with her husband, civil engineer Gregg Thomsson, a year ago from a house in North Easton, Massachusetts.

"My office was at home, and it had taken over five rooms," says Orpin. Her residential and commercial interior design firm, The Orpin Group, is now located on Farnsworth Street in Boston's Fort Point area. "I had to make a change."

And change she did. Downsizing from a 2,200-square-foot house to a 1,600-square-foot condominium meant reevaluating a household's worth of furniture and artwork. She cut the couple's possessions by about 60 percent, keeping only the items that fit the scale and personality of their new digs and donating the rest to charity.

► COOL BLUE WALLS set a soothing tone in the living room (ABOVE), where interior designer Susan Orpin (FACING PAGE) was able to rework furniture from her house in North Easton, Massachusetts, by re-covering the chairs and sofa with tactile fabrics in sandy hues.



ORPIN PLAYFULLY MIXES designer pieces in her office (TOP), including a Jonathan Adler lamp, Piet Boon desk, and a white-lacquer Cappellini rolling table. She replaced a pass-through between the living room and kitchen (ABOVE) with a custom media center.

“I’m a designer, so it was fun, and I got to create a whole new home,” says Orpin of the process. “I loved reworking the existing pieces — reupholstering, et cetera — and redesigning the unit to my specific lifestyle.”

That meant tweaking some elements that came standard with the condo. She had the original prefinished oak floor sanded (it had to be done by hand, so as not to wear down the veneer), then stained a custom shade and coated with a satin urethane for a glowing sheen. “I was trying to get the look of driftwood, but settled for sand,” she says.

“I love all beaches and in particular beaches in the Caribbean,” says Orpin. “I lived in Puerto Rico for 10 years, so I love the aqua color of the water and the lightest-colored fine sand.”

A pass-through that connected the kitchen to the living room with a breakfast counter was closed off. This allowed Orpin to turn the living room into a cozy hangout by replacing the counter with an Orpin-designed white-lacquer built-in bookshelf that serves as a media center.

The guest bedroom does double duty as a home office with the addition of a honeycombed-cardboard “BeeBoard” desk by Piet Boon, which Orpin snagged before Design Within Reach discontinued production. A sleek brown sofa



pulls out into a bed for when her daughter Adriana comes to visit.

She ripped out the tile, vanities, and lighting in the two bathrooms. Floors in the guest bath were resurfaced with skinny rectangular marble mosaic tiles. In the master bathroom, floors and walls were finished with watery-blue glass tile for an overall effect akin to swimming in a shimmering pool.

Orpin is known for her sophisticated approach to neutral palettes, and her new condo exemplifies her ability to make magic with just a few colors. Her old house was restricted to black, white, and taupe. Here, she painted the

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walls with Benjamin Moore's "Woodlawn Blue," "Manchester Tan," and "Sailcloth," to reference sand and sea. Furniture was re-covered with similarly ocean-inspired fabrics. Orpin was even

able to integrate some of the furniture she used to create the dining room of the Boston Design Center's 2007 "Dream Home," including a woven-leather fabric reminiscent of fishing nets.

"Since I tend to design with contemporary classics, they are timeless and can be reworked into a new space and look totally different," she says.

Now, with work and home life clearly delineated, Orpin's new condo has become a soothing space that is at once comfortable and refined — although she admits she finds herself compulsively researching new furniture and fabrics from home. "I am one of the extremely fortunate people whose work is also my favorite hobby." ■

THE WOVEN-LEATHER FABRIC that Orpin used in her design for the 2007 "Dream Home" was discontinued. She loved the fishing-net quality of the curtains so much, she had them recut to fit her new condo. Mercury glass candle holders add a touch of glamour, while simple birch boxes reference nature.