

WARM WEATHERED

A beach cabin in the San Juans gets the un-designer treatment with raw, rustic finishes and surprising vintage finds.

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To furnish this island guesthouse, "I did a lot of junking and I found really interesting things," says interior designer Rocky Rochon—including the steel dining table, formerly used as a surgical table from World War II and now paired with antique steel chairs and white benches made by Gary Sisson, of Mt. Pickett Woodworking. The candlesticks are antique Chinese incense holders from the 16th or 17th century. The painting above one of the 19th-century French chairs is an abstract piece found in a junk store. The fireplace is original to the cabin.



DESIGN TEAM

interiors: Rocky Rochon Design Studio

architecture: Stephen Sullivan Designs

construction: Schuchart/Dow



A

beach cabin on an island in the San Juans was charming in all the wrong ways when a family from Seattle discovered it, tucked amid wild cherry and evergreen trees. To start with, there were the walls, made of 2x3 studs without any insulation. There was the roof that had to go, the numerous openings for critters, the lack of heating ... the list went on.

"It was in the right location, it had a form that was fairly workable, but it needed a lot of work," says John Hoedemaker, managing partner of Schuchart/Dow, the builders who handled the renovation along with interior designer Rocky Rochon and architect Stephen Sullivan. The whole team instantly saw the potential. "It was rife with opportunity," Hoedemaker says.

The cabin serves as "the front door," as Rochon calls it, to a nearly 200-acre property that was formerly an 1890s homestead and, later, a summer resort. As such, the property includes a scattering of additional buildings as well as a main house. But it's this cabin, which likely dates to the '20s or '30s, that visitors see today when they land by seaplane in a private inlet in front of the building. »

THIS PAGE: The windows in the living room are painted in Rochon's own Rocky Rochon Paint in an acidic green. The walls and bookshelves resemble driftwood, and the linen chairs and sisal rug echo the hue of the sand outside. A silver-tipped light bulb and its fixture are from Rejuvenation Hardware. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Jade-green chairs provide a perch in front of the cabin. Rochon recently painted the exterior window frames the same bright green as in the interiors, to add some zip to the façade.



BELOW LEFT: The ottoman, custom made from Ikea cowhide, “gives the living room some funk,” Rochon says. Bookshelves were made from cedar sourced from a nearby demoed building. When friends visited recently, “they were simply enchanted,” the client says. “They said they felt like they were a part of the sea, resting safely on the rocky shore with the waves lapping around them.”



ABOVE RIGHT: The kitchen retained its original upper cabinets, though they got a coat of green paint, as well as its vintage window. Everything else—the marble, butcher block, and perforated nickel screened cabinet doors—is new.

So it was important that the 900-square-foot guesthouse served as a signal of the kind of experience that the hosts wanted to provide. “The client has a highly sophisticated sense of creativity,” Sullivan says. “Houses and interiors are her art form. She seeks to create homes that are poetic, and have the resonance of history.” Rochon adds that she likes “traditional, romantic old architecture.” No cold or modern allowed—the house needed to be humble, warm, and eclectic.

After the much-needed roof repairs, the team replaced the walls and windows and stripped the existing linoleum flooring, exposing the concrete underneath. “The house is all about being imperfect and building on history,” Rochon says. Walls were recovered with reclaimed cedar and the ceilings were also completely redone in a bright, white, coffered pattern.


Since the furnishings needed to look like they were acquired over time, Rochon scoured all of his favorite haunts (he notes that finding undiscovered vintage stores is almost as hard as finding good vintage pieces) to source French chairs,

Chinese candlesticks, and a steel surgical table from World War II—now used as a dining table. Custom pieces, such as the bedframes and nickel-plated screened cabinet doors, were new, but made to look rustic.

Guests who have stayed at the finished cabin have raved in emails to the homeowners. One couple was so moved by the experience that they bought their own beach cabin for their family two years later.


Could the loving reception be because of the relaxed feel to the interiors? The clients think so. “I’ve always enjoyed living in a more eclectic and casual environment,” the wife says. “Raising a big family of five children, it was easy to go that direction. And with the beach home, it seemed like the right thing to do to create a place that was soothing.”

For the homeowners, unfussy interiors may have originated from practicality’s sake when they had five little kids, and yet, as they’ve found, that low-key style has a welcoming charm all its own. ✨



"She [the client] wanted something intimate and cozy. It needed to look like things had been collected over the years. And it had to look un-designed. Which is a very difficult thing to do."

—ROCKY ROCHON, INTERIOR DESIGNER



The master bed, made by Gary Sisson, has vintage wheels for moving around the room and a natural linen duvet from Restoration Hardware. The fabric on the bolster "was meant to look vintage, like it was from a 1930s curtain," Rochon says. "Every detail we put in here ... we wanted to look like it was original to the home."