

 The Island Idyll

TYBEE ISLAND

What is it about the beach? What is it about the idea of owning a seaside hideaway that prompts so many of us to window-shop for properties on weekends and do drive-bys a flip-flop-throw from the sea? Why is it that the picture of a sandy trail of footsteps up a flight of stairs and a wet beach towel flung over a wooden balustrade will move us more than the sight of a slick city penthouse? And how is it that waves crashing at night, especially accompanied by the satisfying sound of a beer or champagne bottle being opened, will do more for our nerves than any chemical remedy?

There are few things closer to our hearts – or our dreams – than the idea of owning our own great little beach getaway. High-flying businesswoman Diane Kaufman realized this. Several years ago, she stepped back from the pressures of executive life and cross-country travel to purchase a little house on Tybee Island, which is fast acquiring a reputation as an ideal place to stop, sit back and chill out for a while. (Sandra Bullock also owns a house on the island, and the Miley Cyrus film *The Last Song* was recently filmed here.) But sitting back and chilling out wasn't enough for Diane Kaufman – not in the long term anyway. So she came up with a way to combine her love of

beach life with business: she launched a company that acts as a portal to all the best beach houses on Tybee Island, and through it, rents beach houses to people who are seeking a slice of island serenity. The mantra for Mermaid Cottages is “Discover the magic in slowing down”, and although Diane perhaps isn’t the best advocate for this (she still goes a hundred miles an hour in her businesswoman’s way!), the beach houses she has in her portfolio certainly encourage a lower speed.

Diane Kaufman’s own house on Tybee, Mermaid Manor, is a shining example of how to live the beach life. Okay, there’s an office with a phone that seemingly rings non-stop, but the office is in an enclosed porch, which shares space with a fabulous Southern-style sitting area designed for meeting guests, clients or simply serving afternoon tea. Inside, the open living and dining room / kitchen, centered around a fireplace, is decked out with squishy sofas covered in beige-and-white striped fabrics (courtesy of Jane Coslick), vintage cane chairs, antique luggage, and framed botanical and bird prints. With a color palette of sand, white and seaweed, and a definite “beach house” feel (thanks to bare floorboards and stairs, rough-hewn timber





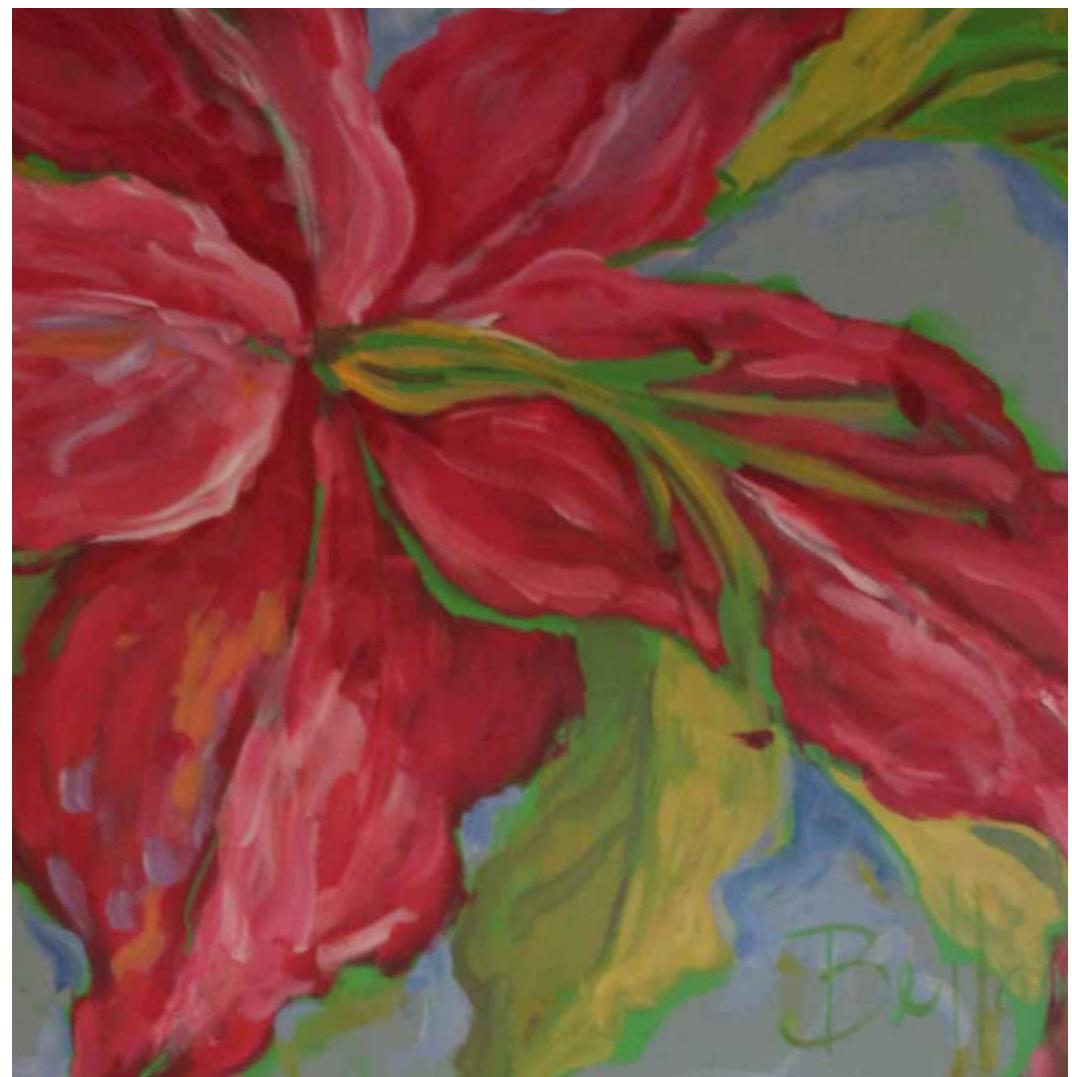


panels in the kitchen, and white timber elsewhere), it immediately encourages residents and visitors to relax – and yes, to chill out. Upstairs, there are more Jane Coslick touches, but the color is brighter – hot pinks and citrus greens feature prominently.

Looking at it, it's hard to believe that this house was once a potential tear-down. In fact, Mermaid Manor was saved when it was moved by Jane Coslick several years ago. It used to sit on the back river with views of the water and sunset, but the new owners of the waterfront property didn't want the inconvenience of a restoration job, and preferred a more modern beach house. So Jane took it away and put it in its present location, where it has blossomed and become a beauty once more.

Diane Kaufman adores it, and so do her two dogs. And it's no wonder. It's a house that makes everyone feel as though they've stepped away from the everyday, even if only for a little while.









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