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RHYTHM *and* BLUES

Madison-based designer Jules Duffy has an eye for rare finds and a sixth sense about color and style – opting a palette of rolling blues, from sea foam to true navy.

*Text by Alice Garbarini Hurley
Photography by Laura Moss*



The two upholstered sofas and benches shown were designed and manufactured in the USA by Jules Duffy Designs.



"Now I have that blue chest in my house," says the homeowner. "It's in the library nook, and it's great for storing the kids' puzzles and books so they're out of sight."

She and her husband gave Duffy carte blanche to go ahead and redo in blue, starting with the dining room and family room.

BLUE'S CLUES

Duffy has aquamarine-flecked eyes and wears strands of turquoise beads and crystals on the day we meet, sitting side by side in her office at the mahogany dining room table from her childhood. ("I had no room in my house for it, so I use it for business meetings," she says.) She learned as a girl in Ridgewood, NJ that color takes form in surprisingly delicious ways.

"My mother was ahead of her time," says Duffy. "She bought antique carved chairs and had them lacquered a beautiful spring green. They sat around a white table in our great room."

Since the homeowner for this project loved that painted chest so much – and she and her husband both loved the hue blue – the choice for a serene makeover was obvious.

Jules Duffy Designs is tucked in on the second floor of a building in Madison, down the street from a small-town pharmacy and around the corner from the hip Drip Coffee Shop.

That bridge from old to new also sizes up the treasures in the designer's trove – vintage items, from tea tins and Wedgwood plates, to new, must-have desirables, like a turquoise rolling cart with fat silver wheels and a library of fine fabrics for window treatments, upholstery, pillows and more. Walk in and browse or inquire about the magic of a stylist who has a beautiful way with colors. That's exactly what a young couple from a classic New Jersey town did when they were ready for a change.

MAGIC SEA-BLUE CHEST

Duffy was the designer for a home featured in *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine in 2010. A passionate antique hunter, she incorporated a pretty blue vintage three-drawer wooden chest in the redecorating. It was the perfect base for a lamp, small framed photos and a vase of bright coral flowers. The woman from the Jersey town looking for a decorator saw the article and fell in love with everything, especially the blue chest.

"We had lived in our house almost seven years. I kept looking for a decorator, but everything I saw was very formal and tailored. Jules used that chest in a very unexpected way, and everything wasn't all matchy-matchy," says the client. Not only did she and her husband hire Duffy to redo their toy-filled rooms (they have a son, 11, and daughter, 8), but they also bought the chest from the family before they moved, because it turned out they lived in the same town.

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"It took a lot of convincing to do the wallpaper and not paint," the designer says, "but it added so much more texture to the space. They had to trust me."



"I wanted to give them a very current, hip, yet traditional space," says Duffy. "Blue has always been an important color. It's easy to live with and it's timeless."





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"Today we use blues in different ways than 20 years ago. People are much more savvy and tuned in, and we have fewer rules. Your sofa doesn't have to match your love seat, and the coffee table doesn't have to match your end table. I don't pay attention to any rules."

Duffy likes to mix textures, patterns, and shades – she loves pale aqua with light blue, ivory, navy, and sea-foam tones.

CHILD-FRIENDLY STYLE – NOT ROMPER ROOM

In the common living spaces, Duffy was careful to make choices that kids and parents could comfortably live with – without sacrificing an ounce of style.

The carpet in the family room is indoor/outdoor and durable. "I wanted to create a room that cleans up in a snap," says Duffy, "where if the kids walk in with chocolate cupcakes, their mother is not going to freak out."

The coffee table is distressed wood, which is very forgiving, and all fabrics were treated to resist stains. The pillows can be thrown around.

The one thing Duffy had to convince the owners about? The wallpaper in the dining room, which previously had no furniture at all. "It took a lot of convincing to do the wallpaper and not paint," the designer says, "but it added so much more texture to the space. They had to trust me."

The young man of the house pulls up a chair in the tranquil dining room to do his homework and play on his iPad.

"It's his favorite room whether he's alone or has friends over," says his mom. "We all love the new space." ■