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## EASY ELEGANCE

*Relaxed interiors in LONDON, SOMERSET, rural FRANCE and the CARIBBEAN*

# BAHAMIAN RHAPSODY



A George Smith sofa and armchairs, along with Fifties rattan chairs with cushions from *A Rum Fellow* and nineteenth-century bobbin chairs from *Westenholz*, form an inviting seating area at one end of the great room. The painted panels on the wall are by Suffolk-based muralist *Graham Rust*

The owners of this newbuild in the Bahamas turned to trusted interior designer John McCall to provide their house with a British sensibility, practical furnishings and interiors that are not 'too beachy'

TEXT DAVID NICHOLLS | PHOTOGRAPHS ALEXANDER JAMES







When a story begins with 'we'd been invited for drinks on Valentino's yacht one summer...', one might reasonably expect to be regaled with tales of glamour and of decadence, and with any luck a little indiscreet name-dropping. But those are not the details that stood out when the interior designer John McCall boarded the fashion designer's boat in Majorca eight years ago. Rather, he recalls how appealing he found the combination of mahogany and the colour blue on the 46-metre superyacht. 'It's not reinventing the wheel, but it really stuck in my mind and I wanted to be able to use that in a project one day,' he says.

That opportunity arose a few years ago, when a long-standing client bought a plot of land on a tiny island in the Bahamas. The owners, who have four children, had previously hired John to decorate their houses and flats in England, so they trusted him to devise an interior style for a beach house that did not feel 'too beachy'. Designed by the Miami-based architects de la Guardia Victoria, it is on a beachfront site of nearly two acres and is reminiscent of the eighteenth-century plantation houses more commonly found elsewhere in the Caribbean.

The U-shape building creates a courtyard through which the house is entered, a little like a Palladian villa. The wings comprise bedrooms and service areas, leaving the main body of the house dedicated to places where the family can congregate. The first of these is a large loggia,

OPPOSITE At the centre of the great room, books and objets are displayed on a table from William Yeoward, sitting on a dhurrie from Guinevere. THIS PAGE FROM TOP The loggia's dining area has an acacia-framed mirror from Guinevere. A second seating area in the great room





ANTICLOCKWISE FROM TOP Lights from Charles Edwards hang over the island in the kitchen, which leads into the television room (bottom left). Rattan chairs from Century Furniture on the rear terrace. OPPOSITE The cypress-panelled library walls are decorated with maps of the Caribbean



pillared and pleasantly shaded, and used as an outdoor sitting and dining space that overlooks the courtyard. Here is the first glimpse of how John made use of the combination he noted on Valentino's boat, as wood and cane furniture has been teamed with cushions in blue and white.

While the architects made good use of the neoclassical symmetry and formality, John's design has softened the edges. Enter the 'great room' from the loggia and you encounter a large and handsomely decorated space where loose-covered George Smith sofas and armchairs seem inviting, while patterned textiles and decorative accessories draw the eye across the room. 'It's understated,' John says. 'I hate it when you're upstaged by soft furnishings.'

That is not to say there is not a sense of drama. The high walls are made from a creamy white coral stone quarried in the Dominican Republic, a material pleasingly textured due to its fossilised inclusions. These are further enlivened on the interior of the great room by three of six painted panels commissioned from the internationally renowned muralist Graham Rust – the other three hang elsewhere in the house. They depict scenes from the *The Tempest*, the owner's favourite Shakespeare play, and hint at the severe weather to which this idyllic island can be subjected. John recounts a storm the night before the final installation of furniture: 'We woke up to find dozens of beach chairs from another island washed up in front of the house.'

Delicate fabrics are not a wise choice for a house where the boundaries of indoor and outdoor are constantly







blurred. With this in mind, John and Olivia Stirling, an interior designer he brought in to help, specified upholstery and soft furnishings that could handle the heat, humidity and salty air, not to mention the casual lounging of children in wet bathing suits. This laid-back attitude is reflected in not only the style of the kitchen and dining area, but also its position. Rather than being a behind-the-scenes area, it is to one side of the great room and very much a part of the home. It is also a buffer between the great room and the less formal television room.

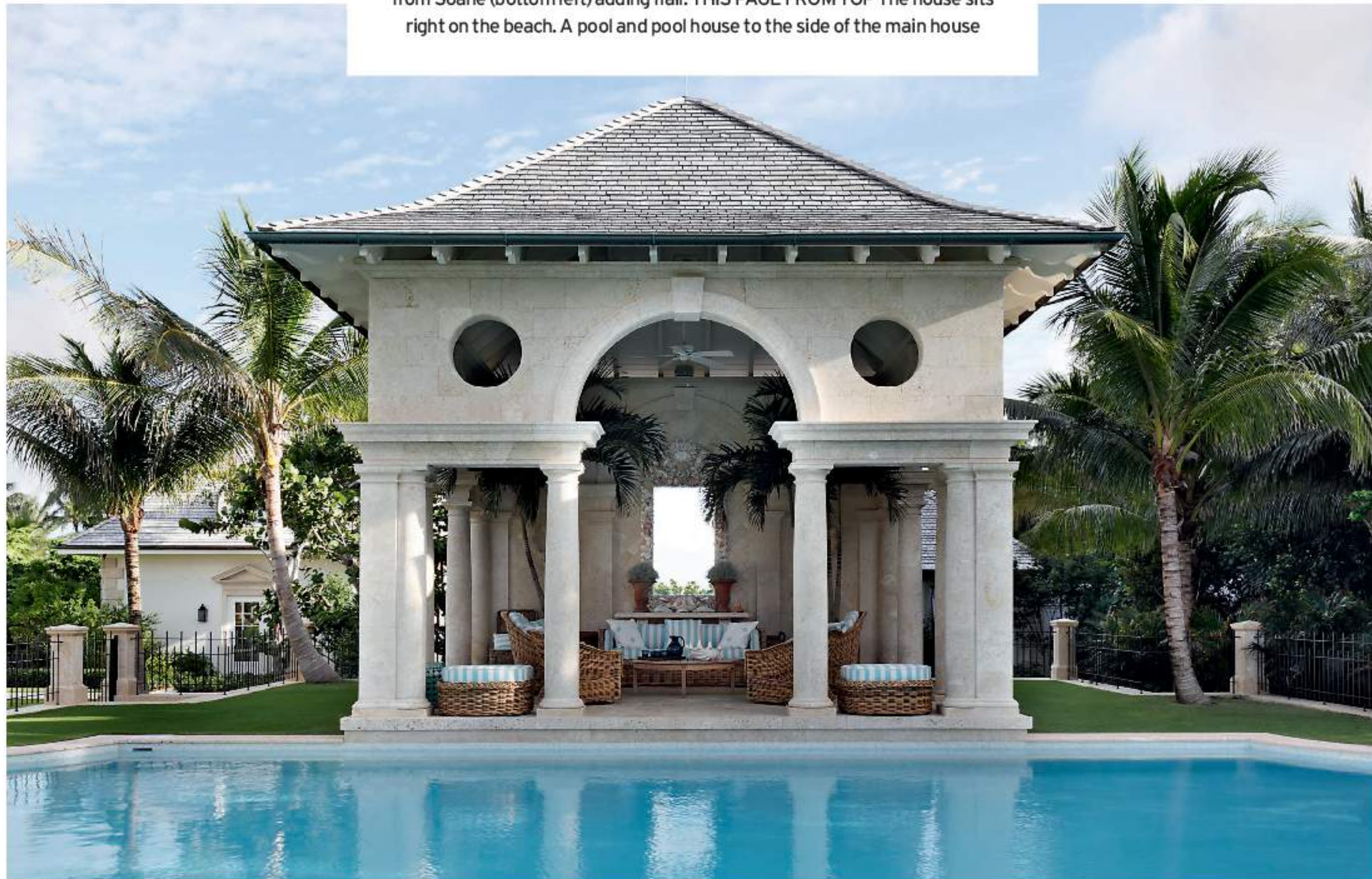
On the other side of the great room are six bedrooms decorated with a light touch. Printed textiles add subtle flourishes to these all-white spaces, while artwork and accessories give a nod to the seaside location. Most of the furnishings in the house were shipped from England, with crates filled with finds from John's favourite sources, including Soane, Charles Edwards and Christie's.

Knowing the clients well meant John was able to make many decisions without sign-off. It is one of the reasons the project took a relatively short period of time: from the initial meeting with the architects to their first night in a fully furnished home, it took just two years. 'The neighbours couldn't believe it,' John says. 'It usually takes three to five years to complete such a project.' The neighbours are also intrigued by the interior style of the house. 'They think it looks so British,' John says with a smile □

*John McCall: 01635-578007; mccalldesign.co.uk*



OPPOSITE ALL PICTURES A mostly white palette characterises the bedrooms, bathroom and hall, with details such as the 'Daisy' hanging light from Soane (bottom left) adding flair. THIS PAGE FROM TOP The house sits right on the beach. A pool and pool house to the side of the main house



# The KNOWLEDGE



**HERE TO STAY** Pages 78-85

## 1\_LIGHT

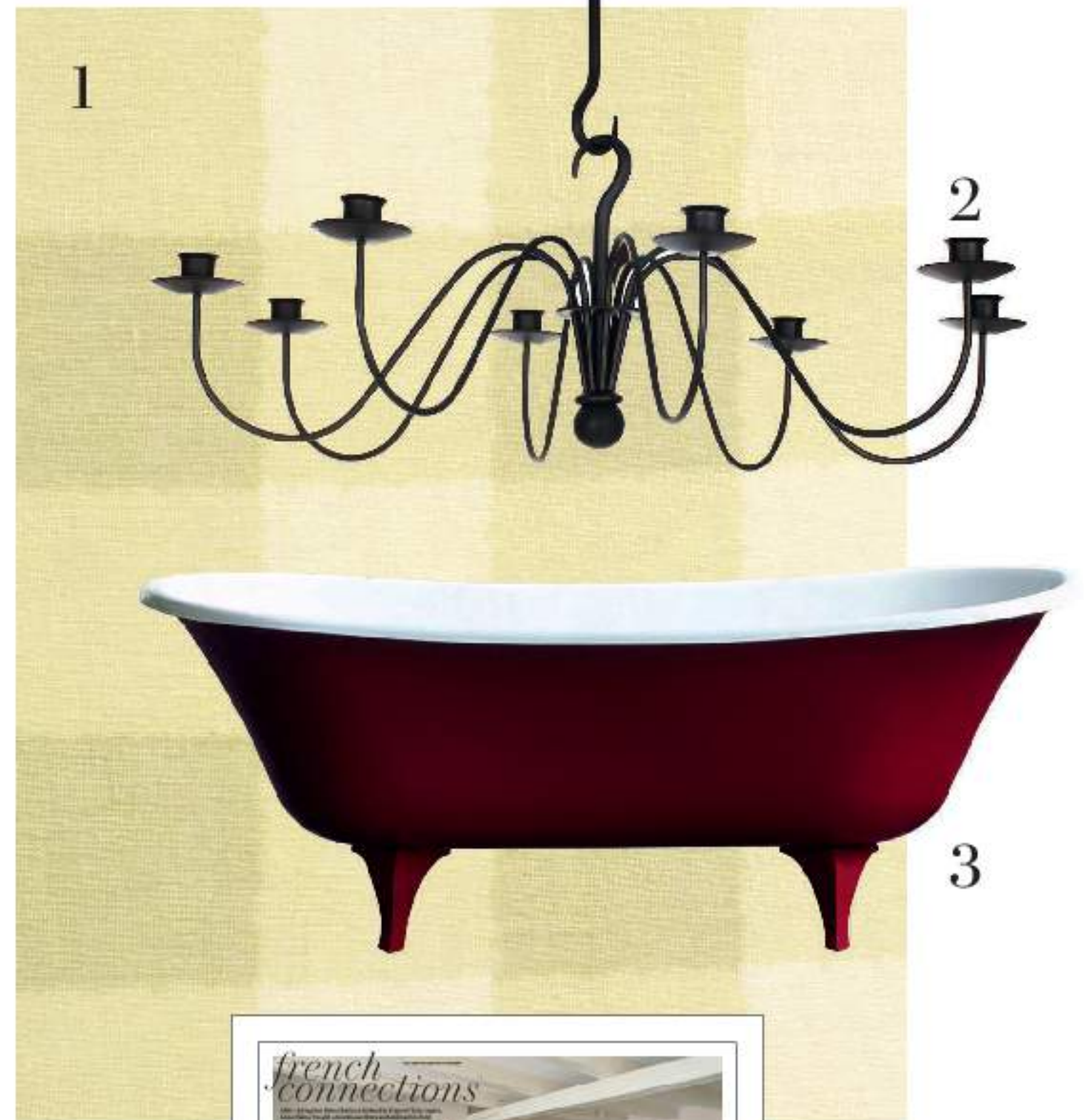
Tom Dixon's pendant lights have been used in a couple of the rooms in this Somerset house. The brass 'Beat Stout' pendant, which is spun and hand-beaten in India, hangs above the table in the main kitchen. This one has a black finish, but it's also available in plain brass, grey and white. It measures 50 x 52cm diameter and costs £725. 020-7183 9737; [tomdixon.net](http://tomdixon.net)

## 2\_PAINT

The owners have opted for shades of grey for the walls and woodwork. The drawing room is painted in Little Greene's 'French Grey', which provides a good backdrop for the brighter pieces of furniture and art. It costs £45 for a 2.5-litre pot of matt emulsion. 020-7935 8844; [littlegreene.com](http://littlegreene.com)

## 3\_WALLPAPER

The intricate floral wallpaper in the daughter's bedroom is Designers Guild's 'Jacaranda' in delft, which is 52cm wide and costs £59 for a 10-metre roll. The blue tones chime well with the throw on the bed. 'Jacaranda' is available in four additional colour ways: indigo, oyster, chartreuse and gold. 020-7351 5775; [designersguild.com](http://designersguild.com)



**FRENCH CONNECTIONS** Pages 86-93

## 1\_FABRIC

Many of the fabrics in Anne Halsey's French farmhouse are from Kathryn M Ireland. Particularly pretty is the linen 'Small Check' design in sage used in the main bedroom on the half-tester, headboard and valance. Available from Tissus d'Hélène, it also comes in blue, red, yellow and peony, and costs £230 a metre. 020-7352 9977; [tissusdhelene.co.uk](http://tissusdhelene.co.uk)

## 2\_CHANDELIER

A simple red chandelier illuminates the main bedroom. For a similar style, choose the 'Wickham Chandelier' from Jim Lawrence. This eight-candle design is hand-forged and has a diameter of 69cm. Shown in the beeswax finish, it can also be finished in a range of other colours. Prices start at £151. 01473-826685; [jim-lawrence.co.uk](http://jim-lawrence.co.uk)

## 3\_BATH

A red cast-iron roll-top bath brightens up a corner in a spare room. The 'Serpentine with Deco Feet' bath from Drummonds would create a similar effect. It is pictured here in a ruby-red hue, but Drummonds can paint it in a colour of your choice in a matt or a gloss finish. It measures 62 x 170 x 76cm and costs from £3,390. 020-7376 4499; [drummonds-uk.com](http://drummonds-uk.com)

Inspired by the houses in this issue, **ELIZABETH METCALFE** gives directions on how to achieve similar style



**BAHAMIAN RHAPSODY** Pages 94-101

**1\_DRINKS TROLLEY**

The smart brass drinks trolley in the great room of this Bahamas newbuild is 'The Nureyev Trolley with Side Rails' from Soane. Inspired by a Forties French trolley that was owned by ballet dancer Rudolph Nureyev, it is made by craftsmen in Sheffield. It measures 90.5 x 101 x 60.5cm and costs £4,900. 020-7730 6400; soane.co.uk

**2\_STOOL**

The cross-leg stools set by the table in the great room are the 'Sigaro Stool' from Paolo Moschino for Nicholas Haslam. Measuring 47 x 62 x 43cm, it costs £1,800. For a similar fabric, try Clarence House's cotton-polyester 'Addison' in mid-blue; it costs £302 a metre from Turnell & Gigon. 020-7730 0445; nicholashaslam.com 020-7529 9800; turnellandgigon.com

**3\_MIRROR**

In a bathroom, a large-scale white shell mirror by British artist Tess Morley hangs above the vanity stand. Reflecting the beachside setting of the house, the mirror measures 200 x 130cm. It is available through Tarquin Bilgen and costs £14,000. 020-7259 0111; tarquinbilgen.com



**PARTICULAR PRACTICE** Pages 102-107

**1\_WALLPAPER**

The walls in the daughter's bedroom of this Chelsea flat are lined with the 'Romeo' wallpaper in carrara, from Martyn Lawrence Bullard's collection for Schumacher. The swirling marble pattern transforms the room into a calm, soothing space. Available through Turnell & Gigon, it is 138cm wide and costs £188.40 a metre. 020-7259 7280; turnellandgigon.com

**2\_TROPHY**

In the son's room, two papier-mâché trophies, available from Anthropologie, hang by the window. Made by Caribbean Crafts, a collective of fair-trade artisans in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, the trophies are pieced together from old books and cement bags. The 'Savannah Story Zebra', pictured here, measures 28 x 41 x 33cm and costs £58. 020-7529 9800; anthropologie.com

**3\_BOWL**

A large hand-painted ceramic bowl by the illustrator and ceramicist Laura Carlin sits on the glass table in the sitting room. Laura's pieces are sold through The New Craftsmen and include this small painted earthenware 'Dark Ceramic Bowl'. It measures 7 x 12cm diameter and costs £190. 020-7148 3190; thenewcraftsmen.com □