

AT HOME

White on white provides a bleached-beach chic look

Accessories can be used to add a splash of color

By Merlisa Lawrence Corbett
Special to The Washington Examiner

Soothing and serene, an all-white color scheme provides the perfect tone for a laid-back lifestyle.

"I have always loved white. It's a nice backdrop for any color and easy to work with," said Gayla Reed, co-owner of Coco Blanca, a home



furnishings store at National Harbor that specializes in vintage white furniture. Reed and co-owner Elizabeth Squire approach decorating in white



as a way of life. The two Alexandrians hope their Coco Blanca style catches on like Rachel Ashwell's Shabby Chic. Think Cape Cod bungalow or coastal Carolina beach house with windows open and a breeze blowing white cotton drapes.

Both sea lovers, Reed and Squire enjoy creating bleached-beach chic. "It's tone-on-tone decorating," said Reed.

Tynesia Hand-Smith, a D.C.-based interior designer, decorated the first floor of her row house in all white.

"Designers are adamant about using color," Hand-Smith said. "Use white as a color, instead of having white as absence of color, such as when people have white unpainted walls or a beige sofa that looks like it's missing something. Using layers of white and texture, she noted, creates a palette.

Rather than merely altering shades of white, Reed suggested using natural fibers, such as burlap, sisal rugs and linens to add texture to a room. She recommended adding metals, glass and silks for sparkle and glam.

"Throw in a splash of color. We used a turquoise chandelier," Reed said of a setting they created in the store.

Woods anchor an all-white room. Nothing says beach like white-plank wooden floors topped with a plush white sofa. Reed said they use a milk paint to coat vintage wood furniture, giving pieces a distressed, antique feel. Accessories created from driftwood add depth to the all-white hues. Many of the pieces serve more than one function, such as a vintage white writing table with fold-down top, which doubles as a laptop desk and vanity.

If you are trying to create the



PHOTOS COURTESY COCO BLANCA

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Coco Blanca style at home, Reed and Squire recommend reading "At Home With White" by Atlanta Bartlett and Karena Callen, a book they used as inspiration. Bartlett and Callen demonstrate how white-on-white interiors can create moods from warm and homey to cool and

calm. Whether romantic, classic or contemporary, an all-white room becomes a canvas to showcase accessories.

Reed and Squire plan to design the interiors for the model home at the Fleet Street condominiums at National Harbor in Coco Blanca.

"It's perfect for this area," said Reed. "Every time I come here, I feel like I'm on vacation."

Squire's father purchased a beach house in the Bahamas when she was 10, and decorating with white evokes memories of vacations on the beach.

"It's so soothing. I love that island feel," Squire said.

Sure, all-white feels easy and breezy, but what about keeping it clean?

"I wouldn't do it in the family room," Reed said. "But my living room is done in this theme and everybody loves it."

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