



*Florida designer Beth Dillard mixes tough materials with an easygoing attitude in her modern beach house.*

# Industrial Innovation



BY CATHY STILL JOHNSON  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIT HUCKABAY

Concrete and metal aren't just for framing high-rise condos anymore. Designer Beth Dillard uses these cost-effective building basics as sleek finishing touches in smaller seaside dwellings. Plus, they endure, which is especially important in tough ocean climates. "I like industrial materials because they're strong and really practical," she says.


And, as she's proved in her own Grayton Beach, Florida, home, they can be quite stylish.

Galvanized pipe and sheet and corrugated metal lend a cool edge to the home. "Beth wanted a cost-effective, functional house," says local builder Todd Ward. Together they brainstormed the plan. "It's a box with a roof," he says. "The simpler the architecture, the better it's going to be down here. Complicated details and multiple rooflines can create

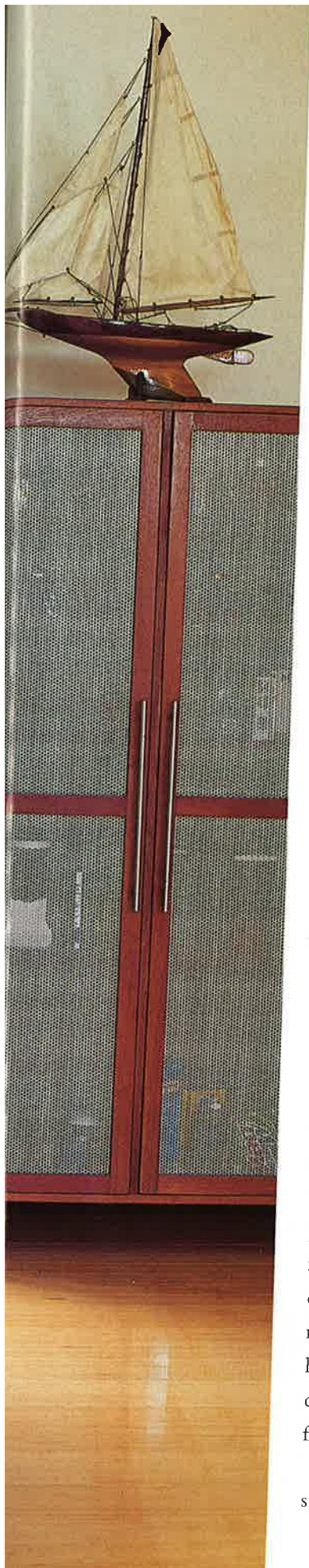




Beth's house nestles between scrubby pines and palms in the quiet community of Grayton Beach, Florida. The living space carves an L out of the square floor plan. In the seating area, hemp armchairs and a linen-clad sofa surround a coffee table Beth designed, with blue Provençal tile atop reclaimed cypress. Antique shell boxes were a find from a Parisian flea market.



In the dining area of the great room, Beth assembled catalog-order chairs around an antique French table. She designed a rolling cabinet, fronted in metal mesh, as a pantry. The cabinet serves the kitchen yet blends with the wood tones in the rest of the space. The family uses the island as a prep table and casual buffet. Stainless steel, mahogany, and galvanized metals blend into a cohesive, contemporary design. Beth's son, Bud, climbs a plumbing-pipe ladder to the loft on the third floor.



water problems.” Each level of the three-story house boasts clever use of industrial materials.

With its 12-foot ceiling, bamboo flooring, and ample square footage, the main living area on the second floor is reminiscent of a spacious city loft. “I like living in a big room,” Beth says of the all-encompassing living, dining, and kitchen area. “Your needs evolve as you get older. People live casually and cook casually.”

Having studied at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris, she likes to try out her culinary skills on friends. The open floor plan keeps her in the mix. “I don’t want to be stuck in the kitchen—I want to be at the party,” she says. “Everyone comes in your kitchen, so you might as well have the living room in there, too.”

At a restaurant-supply store, Beth found stainless-steel prep tables she uses as virtually indestructible countertops. “You can make stock items work,” Beth says. “You just have to think them out. They have good classic design, and they’re less expensive than some upscale products.” Todd custom-built individual mahogany chests-of-drawers on casters to fit underneath the prep tables. Cubes hung on the walls above the counters provide neat storage for everyday utensils.

Other traditional hardware store supplies crop up in the







adjacent seating area. An exposed, galvanized flue-liner crowns the fireplace, which is flanked by thick mahogany shelves like the ones in the kitchen. Symmetrical square windows, high on the wall, give privacy and sunlight.

Like the rest of the high-ceilinged second floor, Beth's bedroom and bath are airy and bright, enhanced by transoms above the doors. Lamps are hard-wired into the wall beside the raffia sleigh bed for nighttime reading. (Before having a builder frame walls, Beth suggests, "visualize where shelving, mirrors, chandeliers, and ceiling fans will go." Then plan supports and outlets accordingly.)

The third floor, designed for her teenagers, offers three bedrooms, two baths, and a common den. Spiral stairs access the widow's walk on the roof, and a galvanized pipe and sheet metal ladder leads to a sleeping loft. More sheet metal, painted tan with leaf cutouts, bounds the loft. "I always try to make a fun space for kids," Beth says.

In this user-friendly house, every room has a purpose. And now that everything's in place, this family can enjoy a beach home that's anything but the industry standard. 🍀

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### LOFTY IDEAS

Beth chose readily available weather-resistant building materials to cut costs and reduce maintenance. If a modern look is what you're after, follow her lead.

- Consider bamboo flooring. It stands up better to humidity than most hardwoods because it doesn't expand and contract.
- Shop building-supply stores. Corrugated sheet metal gives an indoor shower outdoor style.
- Find inspiration in the ordinary. Plumbing pipe forms stair rails, towel bars, and shower rods.
- Pick time-tested materials. Beth chose commercial-grade fixtures for all the baths. She says, "If they hold up in public facilities, you know they will last."
- Customize the standard. Beth added a butcher-block top and nickel mesh to a restaurant-supply table for a kitchen island.
- Put outdoor fixtures inside. Galvanized exterior lighting works well with stainless steel.
- Think like a sailor. Use stainless steel and mahogany, seen on yachts, in the kitchen and baths.
- Pour concrete inside. It's easily formed into countertops.

