

Summer House Lifestyle

BY JESSICA HOLTHAUS

Picture your dream summer house: The perfect furniture, lighting and accent pieces; the rooms you'll gather to relax and dine in with family and friends and the bedroom you'll wake up in each morning before heading off to the beach or some other Gulf Coast adventure.

Now...how exactly do you make that dream a reality?

Enter Melissa Skowlund, owner and creator behind Summer House Lifestyle in Santa Rosa Beach. Originally from Wisconsin, Skowlund had a store up north that carried furniture and bedding – which eventually led her to interior decorating.

"I knew I had found my passion in this," she says. "I worked on several remodel and new construction projects and loved the entire process. Here on 30-A, there are so many great possibilities and this area is seeing so much growth; it's one of the fastest growing regions."

Open since spring 2012, Skowlund's small boutique offers 30-A her self-described style of simple beauty and classic elegance. Skowlund models her style after the timeless cities of Europe where quality and elegance go hand in hand and she has created a boutique full of "beautiful items for the home."

"In life, it is all about timing and opportunity. On 30-A, I saw an opportunity to offer quality, well-made furniture and bedding with a discerning taste," she says. "A home needs to be a story of your life and interests, a collection of style, with personal experiences sprinkled in. I love the mixture of old and new, such as a great European antique juxtaposed against a Lucite table to add a little modern twist."

If you visit her often, you'll notice she has many featured artists. She carries letterpress cards designed by her dear friend and designer Amy Graham Stigler of Smock designs; and custom framed, hand crafted European intaglios from artist Jon Freeman

of San Francisco. In addition, Skowlund offers a wide selection of bedding and lighting options, including Bella Notte linen and Lili Alessandra and Julie Neill designs of New Orleans, as well as work by local artist "Ginger" of the Workshop, Atlanta artist Melissa Payne Baker, and several more.

"I am so open to artists showing me their work and seeing how we can incorporate it into Summer House,"

According to Skowlund, "The most fulfilling part of my experience on 30-A has been meeting so many amazing people. I've created so many friendships."

Skowlund says she is blessed to have worked with many local designers on custom one-of-a-kind products for her store. One such relationship with acclaimed jewelry designer Melissa Rovner led to the Dune Lake jewelry line, where each piece is literally a work of art. **Another**

collaboration with graphic designer and artist Mary Catherine Folmar of Cotton and Quill created designs for shower curtains, pillows, placemats, wallpaper, and more that are unique to Summer House.

"I've fallen in love with wallpaper- specifically Phillip Jeffries," she says. "The community here is going to a whole new level. It's not just simple beach cottages anymore; there's a new level of sophistication that I am seeing emerge. I hope my store can be a resource for those wanting more than just the typical look."

"I recently had a client who bought a house as a rental and they wanted it to be an upscale place," she continues. "Rentals here are unique; people want something that's well-designed with quality pieces. People are starting to demand luxury when paying top dollar for a rental home."

While she's considered expanding Summer House into a bigger space, the idea moves away from her initial desire to have an intimate store and, well, Santa Rosa Beach is simply where she wants to be. "I just love this little pocket of the world, each community has its own personality. I've done a lot of traveling and there's so much here that reminds me of little towns in Europe. I knew I had to be on 30-A."

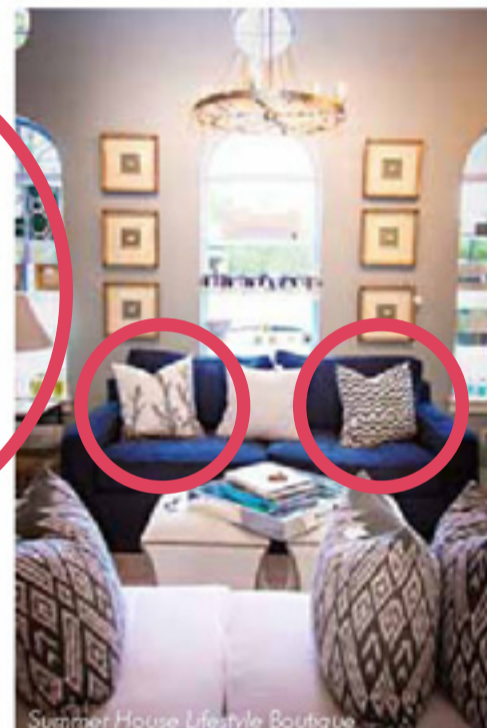
Summer House Lifestyle's studio gallery is located at 36 Uptown Grayton Circle, Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459. Contact the store at (850) 231-0133 or email mskowlund@me.com. Visit the website at www.summerhouselifestyle.com and find them on Facebook.



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Melissa Skowlund

she says "I have so much respect for the amount of talent on 30-A in the areas of architecture and interior design. I hope to be a resource to those professionals and help them find the quality pieces their customers are demanding. That is my ultimate goal."