

# 'INVEST IN YOUR NEST!' At BB Abode in Darien

by G. Lisa Sullivan

If it were up to me, I'd move right out of my house and into the beautiful Hamptons home of Erica Barry, the fictional Manhattan playwright depicted by Diane Keaton in the 2003 movie "Something's Gotta Give."

According to a quote on architecturaldigest.com, director Nancy Meyers wanted Erica to reside in an elegant home, with the feeling of the ocean everywhere. "As a result, the interiors are awash in sea colors and blues," the writer said, and if you've seen the movie, you were probably as bowled over as I with the creamy white walls, light fabrics, beach artwork, beadboard, and such natural elements as shells and flowers. I don't know a single woman, at least, who didn't fall in love with this house.

So you can probably imagine my response upon visiting BB Abode, a similarly fashioned interior-design studio in the Noroton Heights section of Darien. Launched by design dynamos Roberta Ball and Dawn Beaver last summer, the business reflects the obvious love of its owners for all things natural and beautiful, and they might well have designed the interior of Erica Barry's unforgettable home.

In fact, when I first visited the studio, which also serves as a showcase and store for the company's furnishings, antiques and accessories, my first words to the two women and their art director, Manny DeMagistris, were, "Wow, it feels just like I'm in the Hamptons!" I'm pretty sure they took it as a compliment.

That isn't to say that the interior of this entire shop, with its nod toward casual elegance and its many layers of textures and colors, couldn't be picked up and dropped into any other area of the country. The pieces have been carefully chosen and edited by Dawn and Roberta, who, while having met little more than a year ago, could be mistaken for sisters, so similar do they seem in personal appearance and design perspective. Both confess to an inexorable passion for accessories, and the items in their shop would be suitable for virtually any style home, be it beachfront, Manhattan loft, traditional colonial, or contemporary.

## Girl Power

Located at 1 Ledge Road, next to Jake's Place – a small, well-known breakfast and lunch spot – the cozy, brightly lit design studio and shop with large south-facing windows and living room-like interior makes you feel immediately at home.



Dawn Beaver and Roberta Ball (l to r) create environments that have a subtle sense of style and beauty.

"We chose this location partly because of its proximity to the Noroton Heights train station and surrounding shopping mecca and to Exit 10 off I-95, as much as for its light, airy space," said Roberta, a New York native. "We just love the studio, and it's the perfect site for our business."

Roberta, whose passion is antiques and fine arts, had a previous career with retail giant Domain. Dawn worked as a sales rep for Gretchen Bellinger, a fabric company, and several furniture manufacturers until she had children. They divide their time between the studio, where they collaborate on design schemes for clients all over the country, and shopping for the furnishings – both reproduction and antique – and the one-of-a-kind accessories that distinguish their company from so many others.

The two visit the D&D (Decoration & Design) Building in New York every couple of weeks, and also spend a lot of time at auctions, flea markets and estate sales, according to Roberta. "When clients walk in the door of BB Abode, they get a firsthand sense of what we're all about," she says, referring to the shop's many furnishings and accessories, which

are complemented by a background of soothing dove gray paint and white trim.

Dawn and Roberta have a distinct knack for placing their wares strategically, drawing the eye from walls to ceiling to floor. A comfy loveseat, distressed crested leather chair, antique mirrors, small nesting tables, a copper urn, bamboo umbrella stand, colored glass bottles, silverplated flatware and flasks, votives, a vintage candy-store jar, stone-handle calligraphy brushes, vintage jewelry, and a selection of fine art combine to make a cozy, inviting spot to sit and plan a decorating project, have a cup of tea or just enjoy the scenery.

"Having lived in Darien for almost 10 years, I've come to admire the sense of design and style that exist in this area," Dawn says. "With the current state of the economy, I think people are really focusing on being grateful for what they have. One of our inspirations comes from a phrase that our talented art director and logo designer, Manny, said: 'Invest in your nest!'"

## House Of Style

Whether working with a client's existing, treasured furnishings or starting from scratch, Dawn and Roberta strive to create an environment that is often simple and utilitarian, while maintaining a subtle sense of style and beauty.

"Often, people coming into the shop will gravitate to a specific piece, and that helps us define their sense of taste and style," Manny says.

Offering in-home or in-store complimentary consultation, the BB Abode design team draws upon its expertise to choose just the right fabrics, furnishings, fine art, and accessories. "Editing of clutter and placement of accessories and fine art, as well as good lighting, are all key to developing a cohesive interior design," Roberta says. "We don't want to make a room look staged ... it should simply look like a million bucks by the time we're done!"

BB Abode is at 1 Ledge Road in Darien; for more information or to make an appointment, call 203-202-2840. ■



These colorful bottles are a sampling of the superb wares of BB Abode in Darien.