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# Home

ONLINE Colorado's rich culture of craft on view at DIA »BLOGS.DENVERPOST.COM/COLORADOATHOME/



A dining nook in Kristy and Brian Bigelow's kitchen is finished with a mix of colorful Cuban-style wall tiles.

Photos by Cyrus McCrimmon, The Denver Post



Kristy Bigelow in her home with architect Jonas DiCaprio of Design Platform, who handled the remodeling. She co-owns Cuba Cuba with her husband, Brian.

## My House Kristy Bigelow



# Beach view

Remodel brings touch of Miami to restaurateur's home

By William Porter *The Denver Post*

A dark brick Tudor in Denver's Bonnie Brae neighborhood is not the sort of place where you would expect to find a dash of Miami sunshine and Caribbean heat, although maybe the bright blue door should be a tip-off, even on a January day when the sky looks like a pewter dome impervious to warmth.

But walk inside, where light pours through the windows to illuminate floors of bleached red oak, and that is the precise effect.

Take a dozen more steps and turn around, and the point is driven home: The living room's south wall is a vivid turquoise, just like the expanse of sea-meets-sky found in Miami Beach, the hometown of owner Kristy Socarras Bigelow, who shares the house with her husband and three children.

Delve a bit more into Bigelow's family history — her parents were exiles from Castro's Cuba — and you realize the wall evokes something with even more reso-

nance. It conjures Havana's famed seawall, *El Malecón*, which looks north across the Straits of Florida to the southernmost tip of the United States.

A lot of dreams have passed back and forth across those 90 miles.

"I grew up in Miami, and I love the beach," says Bigelow, a restaurateur who owns Cuba Cuba in Denver and Cuba

Cuba Sandwicheria in Boulder. "We still have a place there, and I wanted my living room to feel like something oceanside even during a Denver winter."

Three large photographs atop the fireplace mantel reinforce the vibe. One is of a group of Havana residents perched in front of an old home. The other is a view from the city's seawall. Another is a picture of a vintage 1950s automobile, perhaps a Chevy Bel-Air, judging from its sky-blue color — a model still found on Havana's streets.

The house itself is of a similar vintage, built within months after the United

**BIGELOW » 10C**



The living room chandelier subtly echoes the hue of the accent wall.



Underfoot on the main floor, bleached red-oak floors set off eclectic furnishings. The big photo of the Caribbean is one of the many Miami- or Havana-oriented items.

## Bring It Home by Vickie Heath, The Denver Post

### GO

#### Cowboy up

Colorado's cowboy craze is still going strong as the 107th National Western Stock Show continues (through Jan. 27, [nationalwestern.com](http://nationalwestern.com)) and there's still two more days of the **Colorado Cowboy Poetry Gathering** at the American Mountaineering Center in Golden Saturday and Sunday. Bill Barwick, Chuck Pyle, Liz Masterson, Skip Gorman and the Yampa Valley Boys are among the entertainers. There's also a mouth-watering chuckwagon menu, Cowboy Church and more. Times and tickets vary. 710 10th St., Golden, [coloradocowboygathering.com](http://coloradocowboygathering.com)



### PLAY

#### A sporting chance

The 36th annual **International Sportsmen's Exposition** continues this weekend and offers everything you ever wanted to know and more about fishing, fly-fishing, hunting, adventure travel and off-roading from more than 500 exhibitors. An archery range, a trout-filled 40-foot aquarium, a Youth Sports Fair presented by Colorado Parks & Wildlife and contests are just some of the highlights. Hours are 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$15, free for youth under 16 and active members of the U.S. Armed Forces with military identification. [Colorado Convention Center, 700 14th St., sportsexpos.com](http://ColoradoConventionCenter.com)

### IMPROVE

#### DIY and FYI

Remodeling and design are the key words for the **Northern Colorado's Home Improvement Show** happening in Loveland, noon to 5 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Jan. 26 and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Jan. 27. More than 100 professional retailers and designers will showcase their home-improvement and remodeling ideas for indoors and outdoors at the annual show. Admission and parking are free. [First National Bank Exhibition Hall, The Ranch, 5280 Arena Circle, Loveland, greatwesternproductions.com](http://FirstNationalBankExhibitionHall.com)

### PLAN

#### Dirt is the word

Can you even see spring from here? Gardeners can. Registration is open for the High Plains Landscape Workshop, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Feb. 23, and High Country Gardens founder David Salzman is the featured speaker — which could make this annual Fort Collins teach-in sell out faster than usual. Sessions will cover flowering perennials, native shrubs, small trees and ornamental grasses for both homeowners and professionals; local landscape experts will also be on the schedule. Fees vary, but there's an early registration discount before Feb. 1. 970-416-2486; [bit.ly/11XPWAB](http://bit.ly/11XPWAB)



A door made of reclaimed wood flanks the refrigerator and bar nook in the kitchen of the Bigelows' Bonnie Brae home.

## BIGELOW

◀FROM 1C

States entered World War II. It doesn't quite qualify as the classic English "pile," those manors that litter the British landscape like hedgehogs dodging the fox-and-hounds set, but at 4,000 square feet, it is big.

But the interior of the house, which the Bigelows bought in February, is a departure from its period roots.

"Kristy really wanted a historic shell with a modern interior, which I thought was really exciting," says Jonas DiCaprio, the architect and owner of Design Platform, which oversaw the redesign and refurbishing.

The renovations took six weeks, a feat Bigelow describes as "kind of a miracle." It was not a top-to-bottom overhaul. The kitchen had been remodeled by its former owners, save for a new island and range that Bigelow installed, plus some new tile work.

An entranceway was realigned, a master bath installed, and the kids' bedrooms were tweaked. Bigelow's son, who is in elementary school, has a garret space with nooks and a sharp angle. "Boy heaven," she calls it.

The two younger girls share a room that has a crawl-through into a little play nook. The room is finished in lots of pink, a color Bigelow has little use for, except for indulging her daughters. "It's a super girly room that I never had, because I was such a tomboy as a kid," she says.

The master bedroom features a walk-in closet for Brian Bigelow, and there's an anteroom for Kristy's clothing.

A redone bathroom also boasts some eye-catching features, including a sink for two made out of poured concrete. The ivory-colored basin has no hard edges. And it's served by two faucets, but just a single drain, leaving more room for cabinet space underneath. A walk-in shower and bathtub area is lined with white penny tile, and the center wall features a sheet of small, rectangular glass tiles fixed vertically to give a sense of flowing water.

In a sense, this is not the first older home that the Bigelows have converted. Cuba Cuba restaurant in the Golden Triangle neighborhood, which they opened in 2001, was a joining of two pre-Depression clapboard houses. But that was a commercial retrofitting. And while attention had to be paid to the interior aesthetics, the main challenge was installing a professional kitchen and a hip bar to dispense the nightly array of ropa vieja, empanadas and mojitos.

A home is a far different animal.

Here, the collaboration between Bigelow and DiCaprio proved critical.

DiCaprio, 36, is a Minnesota native whose parents built custom houses. "I kind of grew up on the job site," he says. He earned his degree at Boston Architectural College, a five-year program with internships that jump-started his career, including historic-preservation work on Nantucket Island.

He launched Design Platform after moving to Denver. It's a design-build firm that uses a mix of subcontractors and in-house fabrication to create special touches, including a sliding door of multicolored reclaimed wood separating the Bigelows' dining room from the sleeping quarters.

The house's core is the stretch running from the entranceway and living room through the dining room and the kitchen. The living room features a glass-fronted gas fireplace in that turquoise wall, and a rugged, steel-wheeled cart serves as a coffee table.

The original arched passway into the dining room was replaced by a squared-off version. "I know that's a departure from what these houses generally look like, but we felt the additional sightlines that were created open the room up," Bigelow says.

The dining room is anchored by a big, battered table that Bigelow bought for a song because of its broken leg, since repaired. She removed one of the 2x4-foot table leaves, painted it a mustard color, and mounted it on an adjacent wall.

"We didn't have much in the way of art, and so that functions as a sort of painting," she says with a laugh.

The bulk of the kitchen is finished in white subway tile. A charcoal-gray grout was used to provide a contrast with the black cabinets, which are lightly distressed. But one stretch of wall is a crazy-quilt of various Cuban tropical tile, some of it left over from the remodeling done on the couple's Boulder sandwich shop.

Save for the five-burner Kenmore gas range, mounted in a rectangular island, most of the appliances were inherited. Folks with knowledge of the restaurant biz will recognize some of the utility tables, such as a small work table at the end of the black-topped counters that front a bar separating the counter from the dining room.

"It was awesome because we were on the same page," Bigelow says of working with DiCaprio. "It was a real collaboration."

And now, in the depths of winter, she can look out from the kitchen, gaze at that aqua wall, and dream of Miami Beach — and a certain city to the south.

William Porter: 303-954-1877, wporter@denverpost.com or twitter.com/williamporterdp



The south Florida blue on the walls and subtle reflective touches give a summery feel to the Denver home of Kristy and Brian Bigelow, owners of the restaurant Cuba Cuba. Photos by Cyrus McCrimmon, The Denver Post



Bigelow's two younger daughters share a girly-pink upstairs bedroom that has a crawl-through space into a small play nook. Architect Jonas DiCaprio of Design Platform worked with Bigelow to make over the Bonnie Brae Tudor into a home that would evoke her Floridian and Cuban roots.

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