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Coastal style

A boutique hotel on the South Coast of New South Wales gets the personal treatment from fashion designer Collette Dinnigan.

In one of the Collette Dinnigan suites at Bannisters by the Sea, Hugh Stewart and Murray Hilton photographs overlook MCM House 'Joe' sofas and rugs by Madeline Weinrib and Robyn Cosgrove. On the balcony, a sun lounger with cushions in Stuart Membery fabrics and an antique Indian daybed enjoy sweeping sea views..

An off-hand comment to hotelier friend Peter Cosgrove was the catalyst for Collette Dinnigan's first foray into commercial interior design. "I would say to him, 'When you're on holiday and you want

to relax, you need nice furnishings — it shouldn't feel generic,'" explains Dinnigan. So Cosgrove challenged her to redesign two penthouse suites at his Bannisters by the Sea hotel, in Mollymook.

It has been a big couple of years for Dinnigan. Since shuttering her boutiques and ready-to-wear line in 2013, she has released a book, *Obsessive Creative* (Lantern, \$100), and collaborated on a retrospective exhibition of her 25-year fashion career, *Collette Dinnigan: Unlaced* (at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, until 28 August 2016). But she has a country house in nearby Milton and had always wanted to design a hotel, so she accepted Cosgrove's proposal enthusiastically.

Dinnigan tackled the project with her signature verve, tearing down walls and replacing doors, windows and balconies to completely restructure the suites. She credits her background in pattern-making with developing the necessary understanding of space and dimension, saying: "They are both kind of mathematical as well as aesthetic."

The new interiors demonstrate Dinnigan's talent for personalised, considered design. Vases of fresh flowers are arranged next to the latest coffee table books, while classic novels wait by the bedside. Nautical charts from the designer's childhood sailing trips line the white timber-panelled walls alongside artworks that are typically Australian: John Witzig's 1970s surfing images, Martine Emdur's underwater paintings and Hugh Stewart's floral photographs. The bathrooms feature Carrara marble vanities and generous recessed shelving for toiletries. "I'm so sick of going to a hotel and there's nowhere to put anything," Dinnigan says. "People always discount the bathroom."

Given her résumé, it's no surprise textiles are a focus. The sofas are linen, the quilts are embroidered, the cushions are covered in fabrics by Penny Morrison, Kathryn Ireland and Stuart Membery, and the wool rugs are by Madeline Weinrib and Robyn Cosgrove. "I love tactile and interesting finishes," Dinnigan says.

Custom timber and cane furniture, louvred shutters and antique chairs from Paris complete a look more reminiscent of a Hamptons hideaway than a hotel. "I wanted it to look feminine and elegant, and just beachside ...relaxing, cool and comfortable." *VL*
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