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TRADITIONAL HOME

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Character Building

TAKING STYLE CUES FROM THE PAST FILLS A NEW SOUTH CAROLINA

RETREAT WITH ALL THE CHARM BEFITTING ITS PICTURESQUE SETTING



Living room The coffee table is one of Renee Levow's favorite pieces. The mirror above the mantel reflects the room's calm atmosphere. **Porch** Sunlight streams through the semi-sheer drapes and onto the handsome Brazilian ipe wood deck. The outdoor sofa and chairs are from RH, and the sconces are from Circa Lighting. **Homeowners** Alan and Renee Levow on a walkway through the marshes that surround their home in South Carolina's Lowcountry. **Preceding pages** Italian architect Andrea Palladio's influence is evident in the home's exterior details, such as the peaked roofs.



There's a special beauty to the marshes in South Carolina's Lowcountry: the ripple-free water, the gentle whisper of the long grasses when they catch the breeze, and the way the scene turns to gold in the late afternoon sun. Unfortunately, for out-of-towners Renee and Alan Levow, the search for their own vacation home on Kiawah Island wasn't quite as magical. "We couldn't find anything we liked," says Renee. "It seemed everything we were seeing would require major renovations." So, rather than continue hunting for a lived-in, well-worn house, they decided to build a home they could fill with a history of their own.

That history, as it turned out, would date all the way back to the 16th century. Enlisting the help of architects Laura Howard DePree and Wayne Windham, Renee made clear her desire for a classic, beautifully proportioned house that would take its cues from the designs of Italian architect Andrea Palladio, with details like peaked roofs and thick columns. "Laura and I had just been to the Morgan Library & Museum in New York for a celebration of his 400-year anniversary, and all of his structures still seemed relevant and timeless," she says. "They'll never go out of style, and that's exactly what I wanted for my own home."

The house, nestled on three acres of undeveloped land, needed to look as if it had always been there and always would be. The interiors had to follow suit, all while deferring to the lovely marsh views that

PORTRAIT: JOSH GIBSON



Living room The coffee table's pebble-smooth honed marble top forms a compelling contrast with the heavily textured Belgian linen on the Verellen sofas.



Dining room Designer Beth Webb wanted the dining area to be more than just a place to take meals, so she filled it with mismatched slipcovered and upholstered seating for added comfort and function.



Kitchen The homeowners turned to kitchen designer Linda McLain to develop a plan for an entertainment-friendly workhorse of a room that looks bright and inviting thanks to honed Carrara marble countertops and GE Monogram stainless steel appliances.

Foyer nook This quiet space sets the tone for the rest of the house, mixing sharp architectural details like a built-in bench with understated fabrics on the cushion and pillows.

first attracted the couple to the secluded spot. While Renee tackled the job of furnishing the home with gusto, she soon realized she would have to call in reinforcements, which arrived in the form of Atlanta-based interior designer Beth Webb. “Renee had done a lot of research,” Webb notes, “but we were on the same page the whole time. We’re stylistically very similar. It’s what I would have done if I were designing my own beach house.”

Together, the two outfitted the spaces with elegant pieces of furniture that borrow their interest from shapely silhouettes and highly textural fabrics. They kept everything calm and neutral to allow the focus of each room to remain on the scenery outside the windows. Careful material and palette choices, like the wood floors in a soothing driftwood hue and the endless creams and whites on the walls throughout, ensure a seamless connection between the indoors and out. “I wanted the natural setting to be the main character of the house,” says Renee. “Everything we did had to enhance it.”

But things got a little tricky when Renee and Webb began to introduce the homeowners’ extensive art collection into the new spaces—many of the works came with instructions to avoid direct sun. Where to place them in the rooms presented a particular challenge considering the numerous large windows throughout. Luckily, though, DePree had already accounted for that. “Laura was really the genius on the project,” Webb says. “She thought of every-





Master bedroom Textures in the form of rich linen drapes, a rugged wicker bench from B.D. Jeffries, and a silky rug with subtle pattern from RH imbue the room with a peaceful, organic aesthetic.
Master bathroom The striking striations in the Calacatta Gold marble on the countertops and around the Waterworks tub bring artistic flair to the cool, calming space; sconces are from Circa Lighting.



thing. She gave us plenty of shaded walls but somehow lots of light too. It gives the home a real sense of balance.”

In fact, the entire house feels balanced: firmly straddling the line between old and new, classic and contemporary, sophisticated and informal. In the dining room, sleek wing chairs join slipcovered side chairs and a plush upholstered banquette in challenging the typical notion of formal dining, while the space’s tall, matching cabinets and ornate chandelier lend a certain gravitas. In the master suite, the bed’s oversized tufted headboard looks more laid-back and understated when paired with a roughly woven wicker bench and a cozy conversation nook. The traditional kitchen, with its raised-panel cabinetry, gets some unexpected midcentury glamour thanks to an eat-in area built around a Saarinen table and Emeco chairs.

For Webb, however, the true magic of the project only hit her during the grand reveal. “It’s poignant in so many ways to know that you’ve helped to build this thing that’s going to keep creating memories for that family,” she says. And, for her part, Renee can’t wait to do just that—even going so far as to install a small bunkroom for her not-yet-born but eagerly anticipated grandchildren.

“I love every inch of the house,” she says. “There are no regrets, no second thoughts. I’m never happier than when I’m here.”

Interior designer: Beth Webb **Architects:** Laura Howard DePree & Wayne Windham
For more information, see sources on page 102

