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DEPARTURES

Home + Design



When two lives and aesthetics come together—that of the designer Beth Webb and her minimalist-minded husband—the result is a match made in Lowcountry heaven.

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L O V E

M O D E R N

ATLANTA-BASED decorator Beth Webb, 20 years divorced and deep into a career devoted to beautification and problem-solving, sat enjoying cocktails with her best friend John Ferguson, an employee of the commercial real estate magnate Cushman Wakefield. At a certain point Ferguson leaned in and casually mentioned that he'd found *the guy* for her (Ferguson had a thorough understanding of Webb's romantic criteria; over the years, the two had made extensive lists of what her perfect mate might look like). Beth promptly fell off her barstool: "John, I've set you up with 800 women, and you've never once tossed anyone in my direction! I suppose I ought to sit up and take notice here."

As it turned out, Ferguson's match-making radar was finely tuned. The guy, Chuck Hanavich, had recently retired, trading a long career in commercial real estate for hunting and fishing and design. Hanavich, alongside James Choate, principal architect of Surber Barber Choate +



The front entrance to Chuck Hanavich and designer Beth Webb's 5,000-square-foot home at Brays Island Plantation, South Carolina.



From top: The foyer includes a cowhide rug from Jeff Littrell Antiques. The linen curtains in the library are from LinenMe, and the custom walnut-and-wenge desk is from Doug Honabach. Opposite: The living room includes a custom Doug Honabach coffee table and custom sofas with cushions using Dedar and Cowtan & Tout; the table lamps are from Rose Tarlow, and the jute rug is from Mérida. For details, see page 138.

Hertlein in Atlanta, had just built a very sexy two-bedroom glass masterpiece with 22-foot-tall ceilings in South Carolina. The house is a mix of concrete, stone, steel, limestone, and copper, as well as clear-cut wenge, white oak, and cedar. The location is equally stunning, wedged between a giant pond and a marsh bordered by live oaks dripping with Spanish moss at Brays Island Plantation, a tony sporting community.

At the behest of their mutual friend, the two met in February and a courtship blossomed. Burning up the interstate between Atlanta and the house on Brays, they eventually introduced their grown children to each other. “This is forever!” he declared. “Great!” she said. “I’m too old to get divorced again!” They married the following December at Blackberry Farm in the Great Smoky Mountains.

Webb was blown away the first time she stayed at her future husband’s house. “It’s like being on the Serengeti,” she says. On one side, you can look out the windows and watch a herd of deer wading through the marsh. On the other, 12-foot-long alligators sun themselves on the dry crest of the pond’s dike. All day, vibrantly colored pink spoonbills stab at fish. Cranes and ospreys soar overhead. The surrounding trees are home to several owls, and on any given night, a solo fox might trot through the yard. “With the number of snakes I’ve seen on the front porch,” Webb recalls, “I sure had to learn the hard way to close the front door behind me.”

As if the wild kingdom and thoughtful architecture weren’t seductive enough, Hanavich had previously carefully selected the decor himself, paying homage to the great French minimalist Christian Liaigre. “It’s seldom that you meet a man with such a refined aesthetic who isn’t gay,” Webb says jokingly. “Seriously, I already had so many gay husbands. I needed a straight one!”





Even though the house was a triumph, Hanavich had owned it since 2007 and was restless. So he listed it with a real estate agent and commissioned Webb's services as a decorator. "His realtor had advised him to warm the place up, so that's where I came in," Webb says. What followed was not just a presale fluff job but rather a soulful unlocking of the house's full potential.

Comfortable campaign chairs replaced stern Federal-style seating around the dining room table, which in turn facilitated longer, more relaxed dinners with friends. The walls were fairly bare, so Webb commissioned local artist Michael Dines to paint a series based on photographs she had taken of the quail fields. The master bedroom's gray walls were covered in muted grass cloth and new bedding was brought in.

Webb kept the windows mostly unfeathered, so as not to obstruct the views—"Why would I compete with Mother Nature?" she says. The too-small living room rug was exchanged for an enormous Mérida jute and layered with beautiful antique carpets and sprinkled with a few new pieces of furniture. After lime-washing all the kitchen cabinets, Webb organized the pantries. "Because Brays Island is remote—30 minutes from Beaufort, 45 from Savannah, and 60 from Charleston—grocery shopping is not going to be the easy part of your day," she says. Drinks drawers were lined with cold beers for post-shooting parties, refrigerators and freezers packed with meal-making necessities, and the hunting cabinets sorted so splendidly they would make an Orvis stock manager envious.

Naturally, the house is no longer for sale—they decided to keep it. With both fireplaces roaring and a giant television for watching football, friends and family now gravitate to Brays Island, and Webb and Hanavich have surrendered to the satisfaction—and beautiful stillness—that comes with staying put. ☺



From top: The master bathroom has a Victoria + Albert tub with Dornbracht fittings. Hanavich's hunting gear stays organized in the mudroom. Opposite, from top: In the dining room, Liaigre chairs surround a custom table from Skylar Morgan on a hemp rug from Ralph Lauren Home. The guest bedroom features a bed and side tables from Poliform; the chair is from Henredon.

