



AT HOME

Lowcountry Love Story

A design-savvy couple's diamond in the rough

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ABOVE: A hand-painted desk from renowned decorative artist (and Savannah resident) Bob Christian, who moved to Savannah the same year the house was built.



WE ALL KNOW PEOPLE who could talk endlessly about how easy their move was — how the house was perfectly ready, save for a few rooms in need of painting. Jay Massey and James Martin are not those people. When they stumbled upon their cottage in The Landings, they weren't greeted with the airiness of a coastal charmer, but rather a home seeping garish, early 1980s style.

Acres of popcorn ceilings, dark beams and built-ins, bright orange carpet and slate floor tiles (each cut at a different angle) created a discordant effect. "It looked like a Steak and Ale," Martin says, laughing, referring to the now-defunct steakhouse chain. Overlooking the design sins of decades past, Massey and Martin were captivated by the home's site. Situated on a nature reserve, »

the property in The Landings features ample windows looking out onto the golf course. But even this selling point was not spared its own early '80s touch; all the windows were tinted. "They became mirrors at night, Martin says. "It was creepy."

For the veteran renovators (the couple owns Massey Martin Design, a full-service architecture and design firm located on Skidaway Island), the home proved a welcome challenge. "We love the Lowcountry sea cottage style we nicknamed 'Low Lines, High Design,'" says Martin of the niche architectural style that dominates developments like The Landings and Sea Pines on Hilton Head Island. "We wanted to honor the historic vernacular but totally transform the interior," Massey adds.

The couple began by overhauling the home's living space, opening up the foyer, dining and living rooms to one another. Raising the headers, painting beams and bookcases (they chose White Dove by Benjamin Moore), and replacing slate tile with white oak from North Georgia, Massey and Martin made the once-cramped space feel expansive and comfortable.

With an antique Oushak rug providing fresh color inspiration, Massey kept the living room light and neutral, adding pops of orange and pale blue in throw pillows, paintings and a festive orange pagoda fabric on an antique wingback chair. Together, the designers carefully considered the scale of each piece, creating cozy seating clusters without overcrowding the room.

The formal dining room, elegant in its simplicity, features dark-stained antique dining chairs surrounding a natural wood table; a verdigris lantern and antique painted screen scored at a French flea market balance the geometric profiles of the furniture. The kitchen happily accommodates guests lounging comfortably at the large island, breakfast table or adjoining den. Forgoing the classic white subway tile, the couple selected chic, green tiles for the backsplash to, as Martin says, "bring the colors of the landscape inside."

Although self-proclaimed traditionalists, Massey and Martin are quick to admit they prefer mixed furniture styles to rigid decorative orthodoxy: "It's really all about beauty," Martin says. In the den, the mix includes a Eero Saarinen Tulip table, pair of brown leather armchairs, casual, woven sofa and a one-of-a-kind, hand-painted desk by legendary decorative painter and Savannah resident Bob Christian.

Tucked away from public living spaces, Massey and Martin created a gracious master suite decked out in neutral linen upholstery and layered rugs, hidden from passing golfers and deer by a thick wall of trees. "You can't see another house from any window," says Massey, explaining the couple's preference for simple sunshades over more traditional window treatments. These understated shades »



An antique Ouashak rug provided inspiration for the living room's color palette: light and neutral with pops of soft blue and orange.




Massey and Martin found this painted screen at a French flea market.





let light flood the room and adjoining bath.

Formerly three dark, cramped rooms, the ensuite was a decorator's nightmare outfitted in brown tiles and fixtures. "Everything was chocolate brown — the toilet, sinks, shower, all of it," Massey recalls. Now, the space feels luxurious with a marble-tiled shower and free-standing soaking tub (the only bits of brown are on an antique French sign and *étagère*).

As owners of Massey Martin Design, Massey and Martin have a professional interest in watching a second generation of homeowners snatch up numerous properties ripe for transformation in The Landings. But as homeowners enjoying the fruits of a heartfelt renovation, their interest is personal, too. "We just want to show people there's so much you can do with these houses." 



RIGHT: An antique French sign sits over the marble soaking tub in the master bathroom.

BELOW: A guest room features a dreamy canopy of chintz and stripes in a classic palette of blue and white.



DETAILS

Owners: Jay Massey and James Martin

Year built: 1982

Year purchased: 2018

Square footage: 3,165

Number of bedrooms and bathrooms:
4 bedrooms, 3.5 bathrooms

Time to complete renovation/remodel:
8 months

Architects/planners: Original architect William Dye; renovated by Massey Martin Design

Interior designer: Massey Martin Design

Contractor/builder: T.D. Reese Construction

Tile/flooring: Coastal Heart Pine, Garden State Tile, Floor & Decor

Paint/wallpaper: Sharpe Painting

Windows/doors: Guerry Lumber

Kitchen design: Showcase Kitchen & Bath

Bath design: Massey Martin Design

Lighting: Circa Lighting, Pace Lighting, antique fixtures

Landscape lighting: Anderson Outdoor Lighting

Electrician: Maxwell Electrical

Plumbing: Sandpiper Supply

HVAC: Old Coast Heating & Air

Furniture: Bob Christian Decorative Art, Bungalow Classic, One Fish Two Fish, Marston Luce Antiques, 24e, Susanne Kassler, Alexandra Antiques, Alex Raskin Antiques, collected antiques and family heirlooms

Appliances: Livingood's Appliances & Bedding

Accessories: Get the Gusto, Clutter Furnishings and Design, Gogo Ferguson

Art: French painted panels from Marston Luce Antiques, Andre Fraye, Gerard Langlet

Rugs: Antique Oushak rugs, Moattar