

Beyond the Sea

Designer Suzanne Kasler imbues a Mediterranean-inspired coastal home with sophisticated interiors and thoughtful details.

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Architecture: Thad Truett, Thomas Thaddeus Truett Architect **Interior Design:** Suzanne Kasler, Suzanne Kasler Interiors
Home Builder: Chip Evans, Evans & Varnadoe Construction, LLC **Landscape Architecture:** Alex Smith, Alex Smith Garden Design, Ltd.



Architect Thad Truett used stone flooring from Materials Marketing and a forged stair railing by Calhoun Design & Metalworks to create an old-world feel in the entryway of this Sea Island, Georgia, home. Designer Suzanne Kasler mixed vintage finds—such as a chair from Caché Antiques in Los Angeles upholstered in Fortuny fabric—with contemporary furnishings, such as the Ironware International table and Formations lantern.

Once upon a time—in 1928 to be exact—The Cloister at Sea Island opened its doors and, with its enchanting Mediterranean style (markedly different than the prevailing vernacular of the surrounding Lowcountry), the hotel laid the groundwork for a local aesthetic that has reverberated over the decades. The resort’s telltale hallmarks—terra-cotta roof tiles, sheltered courtyards, elegant archways—inspired one Atlanta-based couple as they sought to build a vacation home on the Georgia island. For this, they turned to their longtime designer, Suzanne Kasler, and local architect Thad Truett. “I wanted something that exuded old Sea Island style,” the wife expresses.

A location with outstanding Atlantic views—formerly home to a rambling 1930s cottage—proved ideal for a materials-forward concept. “The owners wanted something in stone and stucco, and we took painstaking effort to get the color and texture right,” Truett notes. Working with general contractor Chip Evans, the architect settled on Texas shellstone, whose sandy tone and chiseled face melded organically with the home’s cream-colored walls and reclaimed French roof tiles. In a nod to The Cloister’s influence, Truett employed pecky cypress on ceilings throughout the house—most evident in the covered loggia, breakfast area, upper stairwell and study. Rooms were positioned to take advantage of the seascape (“every bedroom, except for the nursery, has a view of the ocean,” the wife reveals), while Mediterranean flourishes, such as the classical quatrefoil, serve as consistent decorative accents. “We carried that motif throughout the house, from the entry gates to the kitchen tile backsplash,” Truett explains.

For the interiors, Kasler capitalized on the architecture’s elegant, old-world precedent. Having designed an Atlanta residence and lake home for the couple previously, she and the clients already spoke the same design love language—which translates to sophisticated yet relaxed interiors. “The wife really has a love for classic, timeless design,” says Kasler who, collaborating with project manager and designer Keith Arnold, delivered comfort without

compromising refinement. And while location was imperative to the design, “it really doesn’t feel like a beach house,” she notes. “It’s more like a primary home, with its antiques and beautiful pieces.”

To wit, a joint buying trip Kasler and the wife took to Los Angeles produced Murano glass mirrors, French chandeliers, an Italian shelf and substantial antiques with a gravitas befitting the home’s scale. The designer offset these with a backdrop of luminous Venetian plaster, employing framed scenic panels in striking aqua as living room accents. “She really gets into beautiful, subtle colors,” the wife effuses, pointing to the airy blue in the kitchen, as well as a sand-and-blue palette in the main bedroom. Though colors traditionally thought of as “beachy,” in Kasler’s hands, they’re decidedly elevated.

More vibrant moments come from an eye-catching Turkish silk tapestry in the entryway and punches of burnt orange—appearing on the living room’s sumptuous damask draperies and a boldly lacquered bar. Thanks to multiple seating groups, the living area is conducive to gatherings but suitable for moments of solitude, too. “I love just sitting in this room when no one’s here,” the wife muses. The poolside patio overlooking the ocean offers another favorite escape: It’s where she begins her day with coffee, then ends it with the same view and a grapefruit cocktail.

For the grounds, landscape designer Alex Smith likewise referenced a Southern European vernacular. “We planted a very old specimen olive tree to give the entry courtyard an instant aged quality,” he notes, adding that the same effect was achieved through custom-grown lavender trumpet vines for the courtyard walls. “On the ocean side, we had to consider variables such as wind, salt spray and sun exposure,” Smith continues. So, he brought in salt-tolerant Bougainvillea from South Florida to pin against the rear of the house.

Collectively, these thoughtful details from the design team pay faithful tribute to Sea Island’s past paired with a timelessness to carry the home forward for generations to come. “Theirs is a big, and growing, family,” Kasler notes. “So, this project was about more than decorating; it was creating a way of life.” ■

Beachy hues imbue the family room, seen in sandy-colored Venetian plaster walls, linen-upholstered seating from Bungalow Classic, a 19th-century Italian cabinet from Provenance Antiques and an abstract canvas by Peter Burega, through Pryor Fine Art. Accent pillows in a florid Hodson McKenzie fabric and ceramic vessels from Joseph Konrad give the home a sophistication befitting a primary residence.





Above: “My favorite room is the living room,” says Kasler, who set the tone with a triptych of de Gournay panels from Ainsworth-Noah and burnt-orange Fortuny draperies fabricated by Willard Pitt Curtain Makers. Kasler surrounded a custom Bjork Studio ottoman with swivel chairs she designed for Hickory Chair. Vintage pieces acquired in Los Angeles—a 1960s faux-bamboo side table from Dragonette Ltd., a chandelier from Navona Antiques—reinforce the palette.

Opposite: Hickory Chair counter stools upholstered in an ice-blue Holland & Sherry leather and cabinets coated in Farrow & Ball’s Shaded White play off a backsplash of Walker Zanger’s Duquesa Fatima cement tiles in a cool blue called Mezzanotte. Gregorius Pineo’s Chiavari medium lanterns keep the kitchen island well-lit for the wife, who loves to cook for friends and family.





Above: With its stained pecky cypress walls and Julian Chichester antique-bronze-and-leather bookcase, the study reads as unabashedly masculine. But the comfortable Cameron Collection sofa, roll-arm chairs designed by Kasler for Hickory Chair and the clients' own club chairs—above which hangs Paul Ferrante's Tuscany chandelier—create a welcoming coziness for all.

Opposite: Atlantic views were a priority in the home's design, and multiple gathering spots provide a plethora of opportunities to enjoy them. In this sitting area within the covered loggia, Kasler positioned Lee Industries swivel chairs—covered in Janus et Cie outdoor canvas—around an RH drum table where both coffee and cocktails are meant to be enjoyed.





Right: The main bathroom continues the home's recurring quatrefoil motif, seen in custom Waterworks marble-and-limestone mosaic tiles that provide an eye-catching backdrop for the Hydro Systems freestanding bathtub and honed Thassos marble from Walker Zanger spanning the floors. latesta Studio's Cain pendant illuminates the scene.

Opposite: Truett's design ensured every guest room included a seascape, so even doing a little work at the Kasler-designed Hickory Chair desk—paired with the clients' own chair—is enjoyable. Inspired by Mother Nature's palette, the designer turned to Willard Pitt Curtain Makers for draperies in a muted-blue motif by Holland & Sherry, from which she also purchased the throw.

