



In the library, pecky cypress paneling, modern geometric tilework (Tabarka Studio), and a brick herringbone hearth. **BELOW:** The home's Mediterranean DNA and rosy hue are inspired by the property's original cottage.



INTERIOR DESIGN BY **SARA GILBANE** • ARCHITECTURE BY **THAD TRUETT**
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GOLDEN ISLES REVIVAL



On Sea Island, Georgia, the roaring twenties make a radiant return in a Mizner-esque getaway by *Sara Gilbane and Thad Truett.*



In the main salon, custom, back-to-back sofas are mounted on casters to easily separate and make room for mingling guests. Sofa fringe, Samuel & Sons



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A leaded glass window filters light into a deep-sea-green butler's pantry; a cozy cocktail banquette in the home's third-floor tower bar (fabric, Penny Morrison); the salon's backgammon corner makes a case for chicer daytime gaming—and seating. OPPOSITE: Tall steel-cased doors open the salon to an intimate patio. Rug, Studio Four NYC

SOME GRAND SPACES

call for prim, pinkie-raised etiquette. Others, though equally magnificent, exude a sense of kick-off-your-shoes mischief. For a recent project on Sea Island, Georgia, interior designer Sara Gilbane knew exactly which spirit to channel: a language of romance, fantasy, and play widely circulated in the 1920s and '30s by architect Addison Mizner in legacy-making projects like the Cloister (Sea Island's legendary hotel) and Palm Beach's now iconic Mediterranean-revival vernacular (a style he helped author).

It was a language Gilbane found ripe for adaptation for her clients, a gregarious family of six (plus three pets). They'd acquired a shingled pink cottage right on the ocean that they hoped to revive and reform into a lively second home. But however romantic their plans, they weren't practical. Sea Island, a slim,

five-mile-long barrier island halfway between Savannah and Jacksonville, sees its share of hurricanes as well as ongoing corrosion from damp, salty air. "Once they'd accepted that it was a teardown, the clients opted to build something that could fit them and their family and friends forever," says Gilbane.

Local architect Thad Truett was tapped to design the new residence. His goal was "to carry on the spirit of the original Mediterranean-style house, while making it as high-tech and sturdy as possible," he says. To ensure the structure could withstand the next 150 years' worth of tempests, Truett sunk 65-foot pilings into the earth to anchor the 8,900-square-foot house, then gave it 16-inch-thick exterior walls fitted with steel-casement windows and doors. As for that early-20th-century enchantment? There was plenty of that, too, with sweeping balconies, graceful arches, and grand fireplaces throughout, not to mention ceilings clad in dramatic,

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—INTERIOR DESIGNER SARA GILBANE



Mediterranean-inspired beams. He gave each bedroom a view of the sea and built a roof tower and terrace with a bar connected via dumbwaiter to the ground-floor barroom. “We intentionally gave it that quirky, rambling feel,” the architect says. He also lent it a faint, rosy blush by diluting the color of the house’s original pink exterior paint to 25 percent, then punctuating it with soft, moss-green trim.

Indoors, meanwhile, the clients wanted every wall painted a harmonious white. “Really, how smart for a second home,” says Gilbane. “If you need any kind of touch-up, it’s just that one color.” Yet the choice posed a challenge for the designer, a self-described wallpaper

and paint fanatic: how to bring a sense of identity, focus, and completion to the rooms without adding layers of clutter. Gilbane found the answer in vivid Moroccan- and Cuban-inspired tilework, which she used to punctuate fireplaces, baths, and other niche areas with rich hues and patterns. “It has such a wow factor, and it is ideal for houses with punishing climates.” To that end, sofas are upholstered in outdoor fabrics, and even antique and vintage furnishings, like the pen shell coffee table in the living room, are sturdy and durable.

Natural materials—rattan and leather furnishings, limestone floors, and mottled pecky cypress ceilings—further



LEFT: Addison Mizner-inspired beams and hand-forged iron bell-jar lighting by Formations balance the kitchen’s shimmering tilework (Mosaic House). Countertops, Caesarstone

LOWER LEFT: A regal powder room is “tented” with a painted canopy of stripes and tassels (Brian G. Leaver). The vanity is carved from a solid piece of limestone. Sink fixtures, Rocky Mountain Hardware

OPPOSITE: The loggia’s heavyweight, powder-coated furniture (McKinnon and Harris) is designed to withstand the barrier island’s harsh elements. Cushion fabric, Perennials. Custom chandelier designed by Thad Truett and Joanne Sims, crafted by Ma Maison



“Moroccan- and Cuban-inspired tilework has such a wow factor, and it is ideal for houses with punishing climates.” —SARA GILBANE

ground the spaces in their environment and bring calm gravitas, like “a walk in the woods,” says Gilbane. Meanwhile, the jewel-like teals, greens, and saffron yellows in the living room and family room suit the hues of the sea, which is “not a tropical turquoise,” says Gilbane, “but a deep, murky blue-green.” In the bedrooms, curtains enclose each poster bed, lending a sense of cozy containment to the lofty sanctuaries.

In the salon, which serves as a central social area for family and guests, back-to-back sofas are edged with a swishy fringe “for a sense of movement,” says Gilbane. The sofas actually move, thanks to industrial casters on the feet and an invisible hinge joining them, so they can

roll aside to accommodate larger groups. Because the room has entrances on four sides, Gilbane took care to find furnishings that look good from every angle and introduced a mix of playful details, like the teaspoon-curved backs on the armchairs and the ivory inlay of the side chairs, for their lively personalities. “It’s like a cocktail party of furniture,” she says.

This undercurrent of joyful energy was especially important outdoors, where the family spends much of their time, whether dining on the loggia, playing tennis, or swimming late into the evening. “Everything needed to be functional and fun and come in sets of 16,” says Gilbane. She filled the house’s cabinets with chic yet unbreakable melamine plates, rattan

platters, and a lot of Majolica pottery, “so they could just snip a few fronds and have an elegant centerpiece.” She also insisted on heavyweight, super-durable outdoor furniture with powder-coated finishes. “Being this close to the ocean, you do not want flying furniture,” says Gilbane.

Surely Mizner never envisioned a home where kids would sit down to dinner served on melamine plates beneath a painted, coffered ceiling while a bevy of cats and dogs frisked at their feet. But like all great visionaries, he recognized that true style grows and adapts. And, like the ancient live oaks that shade Sea Island, the more firmly rooted in the earth, the better to play for centuries in the ever-changing breezes. ♦