

A dedicated team imbues a dated Georgian home with fresh flair.

BRINGING BERMUDA TO JOHN'S ISLAND

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When Bob Lyles saw the house set back from a quiet, oak-shaded street in John's Island his first thought was what a beautiful setting. With long views of the waterway, golf course and adjacent tree-filled area the property was perfect. The problem was that the house, built decades ago, didn't take full advantage of the beauty Mother Nature had bestowed.

Realizing the home's renovation potential, Lyles, president of RCL Development, called on architect Peter Moor and interior designer Lisa DeFrances, ASID, to lend their expertise as he set about transforming the dated house into the stunning residence it is today.

"The original residence was Georgian in design," he says. "It had good bones and we wanted to respect the original elements. I chose to work with Peter because of his creativity; he can go beyond what you envision and take it a notch up. My assignment to him was to go with a Bermuda look."

Moor smiles when he hears comments like that. "The magic of architecture really boils down to taking practical things like brick, mortar and block and turning them into feelings," he says. "The beauty and uniqueness of the site were the views and the maturity of the landscaping. All of the oaks had been there for years and you could feel a sense of calmness, of peace. The question was how could we translate that into a house?"

Lisa DeFrances feels the same way. "Coming in as the third member of the team, I looked at the plans and caught Bob's vision. I also felt that this project offered something

A shared vision inspired a builder, architect and interior designer to renovate this home in John's Island; the result is a residence that integrates indoor and outdoor living. White walls slope up to meet the sculpted white roof paying homage to the best of Bermuda architecture, as does the covered courtyard garden that serves as a foyer leading to the main entrance.







The furnishings in the living room, with its exposed beam ceiling and multiple doors that open to bring the outside in, were inspired by a hand-woven silk Tibetan rug DeFrances chose as the springboard for her color palette of blue, white and subtle shades of green. An inviting conversation area with the focus on the fireplace comes complete with a sofa reminiscent of an oversize classic farmhouse wing chair updated with silver nail head detail.





For the master bedroom DeFrances used the calming textures of linen and sisal to reflect the natural elements of the design and infused a cerulean-colored block printed fabric as the ambient color. Both the king size bed head and foot boards have been upholstered in the same fabric as the draperies and a custom settee at the foot of the bed faces windows that look out over the waterway and golf course beyond.

a little different. The beauty of it was that the three of us were all on the same track from the beginning, and I think as professionals we shorthand what we do very well. A lot of people can build houses but not everyone can do what we've created here."

The renovation took just less than two years from conception to completion; today, the three-bedroom, den/office, four-and-half-bath residence has "award winner" written all over it – something you wouldn't have said when Lyle's construction crew first got to work.

"After we completed the demolition phase, the house looked like Stonehenge," says Lyles. "We raised the floor to meet current flood requirements and we also expanded on the existing footprint."

The result is a residence that, as Moor explains, pays homage to the best of Bermuda architecture. "The white walls that slope up to meet the white roof are not highly decorative; instead they're a nod to practicality as there's not a lot of wood trim that is high maintenance. The look, which is a little more minimal and sculptural, has the

DNA of both Bermuda and John's Island.

"The courtyard is an outdoor room which establishes a sense of arrival that is quiet and serene. It also accommodates multiple entries; for instance, if you were a guest staying there you could walk undercover to the guest wing, which allows for a lot of privacy. What Bob wanted was to integrate the house and the garden, rather than just create your typical front yard and back yard."

Mission accomplished, both in the entry courtyard and the graceful palm tree garden bordering the walkway between the garage and side entrance. Where a few plants and decorative rocks could have easily sufficed, Moor has created a visual delight for those who prefer to enter through a "family door" leading to an island-style kitchen, which in turn opens to the family room beyond.

For the dining room interior designer Lisa DeFrances selected a heavily-textured sisal rug and mahogany pedestal table surrounded by chairs slip covered in a blue and white geometric design that adds a modern touch. Overhead a circular light fixture spreads its glow and blue eucalyptus branches painted on velvet provide the perfect finishing touch.



“The kitchen is a fabulous space where people can gather without being on top of one another,” adds DeFrances. “Peter’s approach to the kitchen cabinetry was to have it look like furniture, particularly in the pantry where he used simple planking. For me it is very easy to imagine the family or friends gathered around the cook.”

DeFrances has enhanced Moor’s architectural details with carefully selected accessories and light fixtures. A perfect example is the circular chandelier in the family room which plays off the distinctive octagon-shaped ceiling. “Peter had made such a wonderful expression with the ceiling that I wanted to have just the right fixture. To me the biggest compliment is when the architect likes what I’ve done, and Peter actually called me to say how pleased he was with what I had chosen.”

Moor made it a point to call because, as he says, “I wanted to thank Lisa for ‘getting it.’ I think if the architect is clear with his intention you need to respect an interior designer who honors it, and that’s not always easy.”

No, it’s not, yet because Lyles, Moor and DeFrances had collaborated in the past and shared a vision of what the residence would look and feel like when the final piece was in place, there weren’t as many bumps along the renovation road as there might have been. Lyles refers to the finished house as “comfortable and cottage-like.” DeFrances calls it “gracious yet informal,” while Moor prefers to describe it as “a little more minimal and sculptural.”

The sculptural look is seen throughout, beginning with the circular entrance that leads to a gallery defined by pillars. “The space is devoted to circulation – its main function is to move you through the house and create opportunities to display art work and add a little delight,” Moor explains.

The rusticated pattern of the Saturnia floors blends seamlessly with the warm walnut that has been used to define certain areas. A hand-woven silk Tibetan rug in muted shades of soft blues and greens that is located in the living room was the inspiration for the color palette DeFrances chose.

“The rug is an important element as the colors are quiet and acted like a springboard,” she says, gesturing towards a high-back sofa with nail heads defining the distinctive

The family room’s octagonal ceiling was dictated by the existing footprint and Moor designed a cornice that wraps around the room. DeFrances elected to paint the ceiling a sea salt blue and selected a spherical iron light fixture that further enhances the octagonal shape. A hand-printed grass green fabric adds interest to the quiet and calm of the natural linen fabrics and sisal area rug. DeFrances also designed the custom cocktail table in four sections, making it easily accessible to guests gathered for cocktails and conversation.







At dusk the house glows from the light within, further defining the unique sculptural elements architect Peter Moor incorporated into the design.

shape. “It’s another form of a classic farmhouse wing chair but with a modern interpretation – a lot like what’s going on in the fashion world today where designers are pairing very unusual things like a tailored suit with modern jewelry. We keep our eye on what’s happening in the design and fashion world.

“The living room has so much wonderful architecture going on, particularly with the ceiling, that we chose to complement what Peter had created and add a touch of graciousness,” DeFrances adds. The result is a seating arrangement that encourages conversation and takes advantage of the view of the waterway, golf course and pool-patio area. As Moor points out, “The pool, which has a retractable cover, mitigates the fact that there are oak trees – it’s really more of a landscape feature as opposed

to a recreational feature.”

In the dining room DeFrances selected a round pedestal table and chairs with a bold blue and white geometric pattern that adds punch. A sisal rug, circular chandelier and blue eucalyptus leaves painted on velvet and framed in off-white complete the picture.

“We’re always looking for new sources for interesting things – that’s why we travel to markets and shows,” says DeFrances when asked where she finds the perfect accessories. “I’m always inspired when I go places and see the local architecture and what others in the design world are doing. That’s when I ask myself, how would what they have done apply here? You can get so myopic just being in one area, yet architecture and interior design can be very regional so that you need to understand the people who

live in Vero Beach. The joy is that today's clientele is so very knowledgeable."

She pauses for a moment, then smiles as she adds, "It's funny how life is – no one in my family ever had anything to do with design or construction but I remember that when I was in my early teens I used to draw floor plans and put furniture on them. Then, when I went to college, my dad said that marketing was a good thing to go into, but I had a roommate whose mother was the head of the interior design department and so I decided to go in that direction instead. And here I am."

Lyles has a similar story, since construction was never part of his long-range life plan when he entered college. "I was actually enrolled in a business administration curriculum and planning to go on to law school," he recalls. "I had a fraternity brother who was kind of a mentor and he encouraged me to get into construction. When I did, I found I really liked it."

As for Moor, it took a long time before he realized he had the talent and desire to become an architect. "I didn't plan on going to college. Then one day I was having dinner at my aunt's house and there was an architect there who showed me some of his designs, and that was a defining moment for me. I went to the New York Institute of Technology, walked into the dean's office and now here I am, all these years later doing what I never thought I would and really enjoying it."

Lyles says he is happy that Moor decided to become an architect and collaborate on this project. "The number of details Peter was able to introduce is amazing. He used a lot of glass to take advantage of the views, and the radius construction in the master bathroom was something I'd never been involved with before. It's like walking into a bathroom at the Four Seasons."

He also has DeFrances to thank for creating that elegance with her choice of a faceted crystal chandelier which casts a soft, spectacular glow over a circular glass table in the center of the bathroom. She also introduced a modern piece of artwork that adds sophistication and encourages a long, leisurely soak in the tub.

"This house is like watching a really beautiful ballet where all of the dancers make it look effortless," says DeFrances. "When you know all of the hard work that has gone into creating something like this, it's always appreciated so much more."

Where Moor is concerned, he took his architectural cues from nature and the site. "The end result is that all of the spaces are very livable. It's a new house in old John's Island." ❀