



HOMES
INTERIOR DESIGN

ISLAND OASIS

*Margaret Donaldson Interiors creates a
Kiawah Island haven for a family to gather*

by ROBIN HOWARD / *photography by* HOLGER OBENAU



previous:
Designed for family gatherings, the five-bedroom Kiawah Island home is comfortable and sophisticated. When the family isn't in residence, the home can be rented for vacations.

Two islands, one for prep and one for seating, have quartzite countertops that match the backsplashes behind the wet bar and cooktop. White oak floors and cabinets are anchored by black metal elements.

W

WHEN A VIRGINIA COUPLE DECIDED TO BUILD A GATHERING PLACE for their children and grandchildren, they envisioned a modern, rustic home where everyone could be together for holidays and vacations. Nestled into a tree-lined parcel just a block from the beach in Vanderhorst Plantation on Kiawah Island, this home has five bedrooms, six baths, two half baths, a media room, a bunk room, a sitting room and a reading nook. To bring their vision to life, the homeowners turned to a team of experts, including Margaret Donaldson Interiors (MDI).

MDI has decades of experience on Kiawah Island and is known for its proficiency with family-friendly design. Founder Margaret Donaldson and lead designer Alex Hendricks Feisal worked alongside Robbie Lesslie of Cumulus Architecture and builder Matt Byrd of Byrd Builders from inception, so they were able to help the client with every selection. "I wanted a home that was really comfortable," the homeowner says. "I wanted it to be casual but sophisticated with a little bit of California vibe with farmhouse mixed in—a compilation of the styles I love."

Though the team had to navigate a few COVID-related supply chain issues, the result is a welcoming home with an integrated interior design that serves as a cozy, elegant backdrop for living well and making memories.

From the exterior, it's clear this home is unique. A three-story rectangle makes up the vertical heart of the home, with four different sizes of house-shaped structures connected to it. The compact shapes make it feel as if the home has been added onto over time without making it feel sprawling or rambling. On the exterior, expansive black steel windows and warm stacked stone introduce the natural vibe.

The living room is designed to maximize seating with a large sectional that faces both a fireplace and the TV. Overhead, two streamlined black pendants were chosen to blend with fixtures in the kitchen and dining room.



The second floor has a game room with a large table for puzzles or cards. A black steel door leads to a balcony with comfortable seating.



Custom white oak cabinets are topped with quartzite countertops that match the backsplash behind the gas range. Floating shelves and triple-stacked cabinets flanking the range offer plenty of handy storage for cooking. The expansive square hood has a custom plaster finish with iron details that match the steel-framed glass doors. Behind the kitchen, a large butler's pantry provides storage and a second refrigerator.

For the dining room, the client wanted a large table that didn't require an extension. The custom 144-inch-long black table has ball-turned legs that add visual interest to the serene space. Using benches instead of chairs on one side of the table prevents the view from the kitchen from being disrupted by a row of chair backs. Here, and throughout the house, black design elements such as the table and fixtures echo the black steel windows and anchor the organic color palette.

One of the designers' most significant challenges was selecting light fixtures for the living, dining and kitchen areas because all are visible at the same time. The client fell in love with a Scudo Saraceno light fixture from Italian designer Fortuny, so whatever was chosen for the kitchen and living areas had to work with it instead of competing. In the living room, the designers chose two minimal round black pendants, while in the kitchen, they selected four simple glass pendants with a smoke luster finish. The result is visual harmony across the open areas, with individual fixtures contributing to the rooms' personalities.

The client's first-floor bedroom is soft and comfortable, with shiplap walls, high windows and a rounded white oak door. A floor-to-ceiling window and door provide views of the trees and pool. Two sets of arched white oak French doors lead to the primary bathroom, the highlight of which is a deep Japanese soaking tub placed in front of a large diamond-patterned window.

Up a half flight of stairs, the generous bunk room has four sets of built-in bunks with extra-long twin beds. Each bunk has a built-in niche with a reading light and outlet for phones and iPads. Instead of ladders, access to each upper bunk is via a broad set of stairs with white oak handrails and treads. Upper bunks have a double wood railing that makes these berths feel substantial, private and cozy. Rattan basketweave pendants hang from the vaulted ceiling, making the room feel extra spacious. Directly outside the bunk room is a walk-in closet-size nook with cubbies, hooks and a bench to corral visitors' bags, shoes and towels. The bunk bathroom has a white-tiled tub, shower and a separate powder room for privacy.

Up another half flight of stairs, a cozy reading nook is carved into a landing between the first and second floors. With a bookcase, built-in benches with storage and lots of pillows, this is the ideal place to curl up with a book.

The second floor is home to a game room, media room and three bedrooms. The game room has a puzzle table and cabinets for storing games. Pocket doors lead to a media room where a massive sectional sofa takes up most of the



The small study is ideal for working from home as needed.

left:
The star of the homeowner's bath is a Japanese soaking tub in front of a large diamond-patterned window.

The custom 144-inch-long dining table is always ready for a crowd. A small niche carved into the arched pass-through provides storage and a display for family treasures.



A reading nook between the first and second floors has built-in seating, storage, and a bookshelf, making it the perfect place to curl up with a book or an iPad.



For interiors, the client wanted a home with organic materials, lots of natural light and layers of texture. "The client had a distinct vision," Hendricks Feisal says. "She wanted a mix of clean lines and light colors, and she wanted things with character." Throughout the home, the soothing neutral color palette is infused with texture and character in the form of soft, fluffy wool rugs, textural fabrics, iron details, and warm white oak floors, beams and cabinets. Most windows run floor-to-ceiling and walls are trimless, creating an ultraclean look that's also practical.

Up another half flight of stairs, a cozy reading nook is carved into a landing between the first and second floors. With a bookcase, built-in benches with storage and lots of pillows, this is the ideal place to curl up with a book.

As we enter, the foyer has a stone floor with a small pattern later repeated in a larger scale in the adjacent sitting area. The verdant view is through the back of the home to the extra-long infinity-edge pool and trees. The living room is to the left, and the kitchen and dining areas are to the right. The sitting room has a unique aesthetic, with a groin vault ceiling and plaster walls and ceilings. Intended as a transitional area, this room serves as a clutter-free landing zone from the entry or as an overflow while entertaining.

In the living room, the client wanted to be able to seat as many people as possible, which required creative furniture orientation. "The way the room is laid out, to maximize seating, the sectional had to face the fireplace," Hendricks Feisal says. "But the client didn't want a TV over the fireplace, so we put a picture frame TV on the other wall." When turned off, the TV blends in with its surroundings. You can face the TV or the fireplace by shifting where you sit on the sectional."

The kitchen is an essential functional area for the family. It features two islands: one with an extra-wide prep sink with two faucets and two dishwashers, and one with seating for drinks and casual meals. To the left, a bar has a sink and plenty of room for mixing drinks, plus upper cabinets with steel-framed glass doors to corral drinkware.

The homeowner's bedroom is cozy and streamlined with floor-to-ceiling black steel windows and a view of the trees and pool.



room. A handy bar with refrigerator drawers for beverages, remote-controlled blackout shades, a large TV and surround sound are at the ready for movie night.

There are three spacious guest bedrooms on this floor, each with an en suite bathroom and unique touches such as statement light fixtures and vinyl wallcoverings in the bathrooms. The fourth guest room on the third floor is purposefully special. "The client wanted this bedroom to feel a little more old-fashioned, like an attic bedroom," Hendricks Feisal says. A four-poster bed, shiplap walls and a marble vanity with an antique vibe give this suite its own personality.

Outside, the pool deck has enough sun loungers and seating for a crowd. A covered patio with a fireplace, seating and a TV is perfect for watching sports or movies outside on cool evenings. To the left, an outdoor dining table for eight next to a built-in grill station is the ideal spot for lunch or a casual dinner.

Because the designers, architect and builder worked together as a team from the beginning, the home radiates functionality, comfort and unified design. Though this was built primarily as a family home, the clients also rent the house through ESPM Vacation Rentals.

"I love every part of this house," the homeowner says. "It's my dream house, and it's exactly what I envisioned. We had the best team—the architect was amazing, the builder was fantastic, and I loved every minute of working with Margaret and her team."

"We really loved this project," Donaldson says. "It was a very cohesive team in very challenging times. When the entire team has the client's best interest in mind, we all want each other to do their very best. We all benefit, but the client benefits most of all."

"Working with Matt Byrd and MDI has become an easy recommendation," Lesslie says. "The craftsmen Matt employs on each jobsite and his natural eye for how things should come together make our work as architects much more enjoyable. Margaret and her team bring a distinct vision to each design, and their eagerness to home in on the detailing brings life to that vision. Working with Matt Byrd and MDI on this home resulted in what we view as a work of art." *

Robin Howard is a freelance writer in Charleston. See more of her work at robinhowardwrites.com.

» **MARGARET DONALDSON INTERIORS**
1557 MEETING ST.
CHARLESTON, SC 29405
843.722.2640
MARGARETDONALDSONINTERIORS.COM

BYRD BUILDERS INC.
3690 BOHICKET ROAD, #4C
SEABROOK ISLAND, SC 29455
843.243.0343
BYRDBUILDERSINC.COM