
Color

OUTSIDE THE LINES



CHARLESTON DESIGNER AMELIA HANDEGAN BRINGS A
NEWLY RENOVATED 1890S HOUSE ON SULLIVAN'S ISLAND
BACK TO LIFE WITH A BOLD INTERIOR MAKEOVER

Photographed by ERIC PIASECKI *Styled by* GIL EVANS



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POOL TIME

Landscape architect Sheila Wertimer surrounded the pool with a row of palm trees underplanted with rosemary. The crisp blue water, green borders, and white house convey a sense of cool—even in the heat of summer.

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BRIGHT READING

A room that might feel somber comes to life within its wood-paneled walls, thanks to a vibrant Oushak carpet and upholstered chairs, whose soft blues and strong corals seem to be an outgrowth of the rug. The simple overhead light keeps the room casual.

In every Amelia Handegan house that has been featured in *Southern Accents*, there has always been at least one room that becomes the editor's obsession. Which room depends on the house. It may be the entry or the dining room, the library or sitting room. Often, it's the bedroom. That's not to say that all rooms are not fabulous, but there is always one that stands out, for its color or collections, its originality or timelessness.

In this Sullivan's Island, South Carolina, house, it's the modern edge of every room. The colors pop a bit more, as a subtle nod to the young homeowners, whose school-age children and active schedules make for a lively atmosphere. But that does not take away from the Handegan approach—bold art and screens; exotic, international fabrics; warm colors; and studied selections of Oushak and jute carpets that give each space its individuality.

The entry is quintessential Handegan—with a bit of a twist. There is a bold piece of art, but instead of using an antique screen, she chose a contemporary painted encaustic triptych. Accessories are few, but they make a statement—a colorful Oushak carpet, a pair of bright turquoise lamps, shagreen cubes to fill negative space and hold collections of books, and a pair of antique French rope chairs for guests just popping over for a visit. The entry is a reflection of the rest of the house, and it conveys a warm welcome. Full of Handegan's signature style, there are enough elements to intrigue even the most cosmopolitan traveler.



COLORFUL CHARACTER

An encaustic painting by artist Timothy McDowell makes a grand introduction in the entry. "It inspired the color that followed," says Handegan. The turquoise glass lamps draw the blue out of the painting, while an Oushak rug picks up shades of red and coral. The painted 19th-century Italian lantern "was an amazing find because of its colors," she says. Its exuberance is tamed by the sleek console and shagreen cubes against the walls.





PERFECT PAIRING

The living and dining rooms are separated by function, but the decoration in each space refers back and forth. In the living area, a jute rug holds a facing pair of canvas-slipcovered sofas accented with cantaloupe-colored pillows that make a visual connection to the Matisse-inspired mural painted on the dining room walls. Modern upholstered chairs hold cinnabar pillows with more impact.





▲ OPEN KITCHEN

The architect's glass-fronted cabinets and shelving store tableware. Notice how the shelving crosses several windows over the sink, breaking harsh light that streams in. Dark gray lower cabinetry coordinates with the wall in the neighboring breakfast room.

◀ NEW-OLD HOUSE

The circa 1890 Lowcountry house is now double what it was when it was first constructed. The simplicity of the original design—a West Indies-inspired open plan with a wraparound porch, tall windows for circulating air, and shutters to protect against infamous Atlantic storms—remains intact.



CASUAL DINING

"I chose the ropelike back and seat because texture was important in this room," says Handegan.

"The upholstered armchairs are my design. I have used them in more traditional spaces, alongside 19th-century chairs, but here they read more contemporary." The bubble lighting complements the mural by Kristen Bunting.



NATURAL BEAUTY

A cool contrast of white slipcovers, striped cotton carpet, and a bold yellow lacquer table gets warmed up with natural pine-paneled walls and a modern fireplace surround. The art—an African drawing on bark and a portrait of a woman over the mantel by American artist Paula Rubino—creates a sophisticated, well-traveled effect.





BRIGHT TOUCH

The wishbone chairs in the breakfast room are a Hans J. Wegner for Carl Hansen & Son design. "To me, they have a look related to an ancient Chinese style," says Handegan. A marble-topped farm table reflects light streaming in through the wall of windows.

PRECIOUS METAL

Painted an all-over gray, the butler's pantry, whose ocher shelves stand out in the small space, is outfitted with stainless steel counters and a zinc sink.

CURB APPEAL

There are no rockers or chaise longues on the front porch—just a light green painted front door and ceiling that make an immediate connection to the environment. This is a space for welcoming and waving to neighbors, with most of the outdoor living going on out back, by the pool.





FLOATING ON AIR
Beds dressed with pumpkin and beige linens and ethnic quilts pop against simple wood walls and a white flokati rug.

A CHAT WITH AMELIA HANDEGAN



Your color choices are never obvious. Which shades do you gravitate toward?

I like acid greens, coral, amber, and orange. I don't really have a favorite, but I do have a few that I don't appreciate, like mauve and hunter green. That said,

I've learned in my 30+ years to never say never.

What inspires you?

Inspiration comes in all forms. It is often like peripheral vision—things are noted outside of the main focus and not always realized at first. More often than not, the house and its setting are inspiring. My husband, John, and I like to travel, and that has been the biggest source of inspiration.

The colors in different countries stay with me—the painted monasteries in Bhutan, the saris and misty sunrises in India, the pink in Agra, the landscape and boldly painted doors of the Georgian houses in Ireland, the faded reds and blues in Venice.

What lessons did you get from your mother?

My mother wasn't so much into decorating, but she loved "home." She was a great cook, and I certainly don't live up to that! I think my love of simplicity may have come from her... nothing over-decorated.

Do you avoid certain decorating methods or ideas?

I avoid contrived rooms, modern or traditional. Everything is so trend-oriented right now that I think creativity gets a little watered down. I really feel that it's important to have a classical sense in whatever you do, even in the most contemporary

setting. I had a teacher in design school who advised us to learn and practice the rules until we were comfortable with them. Then we could start breaking them.

What always pleases you when you see it in a room?

I prefer rooms with great proportion and great bones, enhanced by the interiors; windows dressed only if needed; color distributed in an even way; a bare, architecturally beautiful room furnished with a few great pieces but still a sofa to sink into; a room that contains personal collections of art and interesting accessories.

CURTAIN CALL

A bed hanging made by the women of Punjab in Northwest India and Pakistan anchors the master bedroom. The rest of the room is simple and traditional—a trumeau over an Italian chest, jute carpet, four-poster bed, and simple white linens. The bamboo shades and block-printed curtain fabric help mediate the transitions.

