



Island Home

*A Colorful
Turn-of-the-Century Cottage*



The setting of this island home is Sullivan's Island—a historic barrier island north of Charleston Harbor and a former haunt of Edgar Allan Poe's. Sullivan's has no hotels, only private homes and old stone forts. Many homeowners live here full time, drawn to the white sand beaches and the opportunity for relative seclusion in close proximity to the city.

This project illustrates the general principle that color sets the tone. Here, a family with two school-aged children asked me to create a relaxed and child-friendly environment, while infusing as many adult grace notes as possible. By the time I was invited to work on the interior, Charleston architect Beau Clowney had undertaken a revision of the classic 1890 Lowcountry house. He retained much of the original façade, including the wraparound porch and the tall shuttered windows, but the updating had doubled the structure in size. The renovation had a lot of charm, with sunny rooms and pine plank walls, ceilings, and floors. My goal was to keep the atmosphere cheerful without making it feel too much like a summer cottage since it was to serve as a principal residence.

Opposite: The front porch ceiling has remnants of the original light green paint.
Above: The 1890 house on Sullivan's Island, South Carolina, was doubled in size.

A common misconception holds that the best way to enliven any space is with a can of paint. That approach may represent the only practical or affordable solution in some circumstances but in this house my strategy was to work within a neutral color envelope that complimented the old pine walls and floors throughout the house. I then introduced color away from the walls. Later, doses of color were applied to the walls as a leitmotif, repeating and reemerging in layers from room to room in response to factors ranging from the light to the color of textiles and window treatments.

Fine art often provides the spark to ignite a palette. In this case, the encaustic triptych by Timothy McDowell installed in the entry hall turned out to be a gold mine. The paintings depict an imaginary landscape rendered in lush and dramatic hues. I was especially drawn to the broad spectrum of orange. It was those shades that helped to create a color story, with drama intensifying or ebbing throughout the house.

The soft coral of an Oushak carpet balances the triptych. The small sitting area near the entry is full-on orange with its tangerine sofa and matching 1940s slipper chairs. This narrative continues from room to room, from the bright carrot of Hans J. Wegner's

Following spread: The entry foyer sets the color tone for the home's palette.





Above: In the wood-paneled foyer, an Oushak rug picks up shades of red and coral that appear throughout the house.

Opposite: A sitting area's bold tangerine sofa finds visual balance when paired with cerulean cushions and a pair of skirted chairs in natural linen.





Wishbone chairs in the kitchen to the soft apricot of the languid figures in the dining room's mural, inspired by Matisse's 1952 cut-out masterpiece, *The Swimming Pool*.

While the overall ambiance is colorful and warm, the surprising fact is that most of the home's color

Above: A modern chandelier of glass and steel hangs over the dining room table, a custom piece with a hand-planed wood top over an iron base.

palette consists of neutrals. This is demonstrated in the living room's cream walls, its white duck slipcovered sofas, and the floor-to-ceiling gray of the kitchen and breakfast room. This pared-down scheme, in combination with the streamlined linen-covered furniture, provides the home with a relaxed contemporary feeling. Orange gives it energy.

Opposite: The mural in the dining room was inspired by Matisse's *The Swimming Pool*.





Above: The home's warm palette reappears in the breakfast room in the form of a set of orange Hans J. Wegner Wishbone chairs. The natural linen sheer café curtains also have orange trim.



Opposite: In a high-ceilinged living area, the pine-paneled walls are contrasted with a white-slipcovered sofa, a striped cotton carpet, and white curtains. A custom Parsons table in yellow lacquer provides a sunny pop of color.