

THE FALL STYLE ISSUE

Southern Living®

**Octavia
Spencer**

“My faith is
the guiding
force in
my life.”

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Homeowners
Thomas
Berolzheimer
and Julia Engel

Gal Goes South

A style blogger and a historic preservationist join forces to create a dream home that's as fresh and accessible as it is classic Charleston

BY PETRA GUGLIEMMETTI
PHOTOGRAPHS BY HECTOR MANUEL SANCHEZ



TIMELESS BEAUTY

"It looks like a family came to Charleston by way of the Caribbean," designer Olivia Brock says. The crisp white paint and buzzy blue shutters (Benjamin Moore's Simply White and Blue Porcelain) complete the photogenic cottage style.

Equal parts quintessential Southern and modern-day millennial, this

home (complete with a white picket fence) is one property that perfectly reflects its owner. Julia Engel may have 1.2 million Instagram followers (@juliaengel) and counting, but she considers herself more traditional than trendy. In fact, her lifestyle blog and budding fashion empire, Gal Meets Glam, is built upon her knack for reinventing classics with a contemporary spin—whether that’s a floral-print dress topped with a cardigan or the laid-back sophistication of her Lowcountry cottage in the city’s Old Village District.

The custom-renovated home is one way that she and her husband, Thomas Berolzheimer, really are living the modern dream. Running their own company afforded them the flexibility to pick up and move to South Carolina from San Francisco practically on a whim. Northern California natives who met in college, they fell hard for Charleston on a vacation in 2016. The fact that it’s so photogenic didn’t hurt; Berolzheimer, a photographer, had been helping Engel with the blog since she launched it in 2011, during her junior year. After graduation, the two grew Gal Meets Glam full-time out of their San Francisco apartment.

The travel-obsessed couple had been mulling which cities could offer them a balanced lifestyle, a big backyard, and a beautiful backdrop for their growing company (which expanded into a fashion brand in 2018). Charleston instantly felt like the place. “We loved the historic homes of downtown, and when we came over to the Old Village, there was just this sense of calm,” she says. “It immediately felt like a natural spot for us,” he agrees. So much so that they booked a return trip a month later, touring 14 houses in two days and putting down an offer on a property they almost hadn’t bothered seeing because of its unimpressive listing. With a pink exterior, a green roof, and a perplexing floor plan, it had just been sitting on the market—probably because young families thought the layout made no sense, Engel says, noting how the upstairs was about 80% master suite. Still, they decided to swing by. “It’s in a magical spot with a water view from the front porch and on a wonderful street,” she adds. The house also had great bones, charming shiplap walls, and ample windows to welcome the ethereal coastal light—more a necessity than a mere perk when your home doubles as a lifestyle-blog setting. *(Continues on page 89.)*



LOCAL COLOR

A graphic wood floor, hand painted by artist Suzanne Allen, establishes a vibrant welcome. The coral lantern from The Urban Electric Co. and paintings by Karin Olah and Kate Long Stevenson—all based in Charleston—make the space double as a gallery filled with Lowcountry talent.



CENTRAL LOCATION

The house is situated around a courtyard, the feature the couple loves most. This was also the main reason they repainted the exterior in a neutral—the previous pink was visible from nearly every room and would have limited their decorating options. “Going white meant we could introduce colors like pink inside the home instead,” Engel says.

STYLING: LIZZIE GULLEN COX

COOL & COLLECTED

A favorite pink velvet sofa the couple brought from San Francisco—a piece frequently seen on the Gal Meets Glam blog—was re-covered in a camel shade for a more neutral, sophisticated feel. Like the rest of the house, this room features antiques alongside affordable finds, such as the Wisteria étagères beside the sofa. “I like mixing it up: something custom, something catalog, something antique, and something vintage or found,” says Brock. “Not only is it fun, but it’s also more accessible.”





**EXOTIC
STYLE**

This formal dining room does not feel uptight, thanks to a mix of design periods and price points.

Moving cross-country, the couple brought only pieces they truly loved, like this vintage Milo Baughman burlwood Parsons table. Helping its minimalist shape adapt to this traditional setting are affordable French-style chairs from Ballard Designs, re-covered in a Cole & Son fabric.

“I eliminate as many upper cabinets as possible to allow bigger windows and more art. It makes a kitchen feel less fitted and a little more old-school.” —*Architect Beau Clowney*

**RISE
& DINE**

The breakfast nook is so cozy that the couple uses it throughout the day, often as a home office. It's nestled next to a clever reinvention of the classic butler's pantry—enclosed in glass—to contain conveniences without visually closing off the space. People often inquire about the oval pedestal table—Brock dreamed up the design to fit the space and had Charleston's Perrin Woodworking build it.



ISLAND TIME

The vaulted kitchen favors generous windows, amplifying its bright, breezy feel. The focal point is a La Cornue range with a tall patterned backsplash of Tabarka Studio tile that matches the pale blue cabinets (Farrow & Ball's Parma Gray No. 27). Woven rattan pendants and stools bring in a little bit of the beach.



PARADISE FOUND

The loft guest room, known as the tree house, practically begged for a canopy bed to play up its vaulted ceiling; panels made from a sheer embroidered fabric (Colefax and Fowler's Melina) add a dreamy air. "You feel like you're up in a cloud. We have this huge magnolia tree in the backyard that you can see from the windows on three walls," Engel says. Bird prints, found at an antiques mall and reframed, are configured into a gallery wall that outlines the bed's shape.

UNFUSSY FEMININE

Enveloped in lavender-and-green Bowood chintz from Colefax and Fowler, the master bedroom indulges Engel's love of all things botanical and floral. Curtains in a smaller, geometric motif (Quadrille's Volpi) and funky lamps on the faux-bamboo nightstands keep it all from seeming too precious or overdone.



ROSY RETREAT

The home had to have at least one room done in pink, Engel's signature color. "She looks so good in it that I thought: Why not make it the space where she gets ready every morning?" says Brock. The hue glows via modern cement floor tiles and Roman shades but is balanced by the clean white of the walls, tub, and French doors.

That said, they wanted to make major changes to the floor plan and redecorate to reflect their aesthetic—traditional with lots of travel-inspired color plus pops of the lush florals that Engel celebrates throughout her brand. Coming from apartment living, the couple felt overwhelmed by the project's scale, so they reached out to local designer and historic preservationist Olivia Brock of Torrance Mitchell Designs—a fellow young entrepreneur with a rapidly growing following. "A mutual friend mentioned her," Engel says. "I took one look at her website and was like 'yes!' Once we met with her, it wasn't even a question." The next step was talking with architect Beau Clowney, who has collaborated with Brock on many projects. The footprint of the house, built in 2005, would remain mostly the same, but the layout was rearranged. "We centralized the kitchen and put it on axis with the courtyard," says Clowney. That major layout change helped amplify the home's indoor-outdoor connection. The upstairs updates were more about constructing a family-friendly floor plan. They moved walls to create an en suite guest room and two bedrooms with a Jack-and-Jill bath in between.

Then there was the challenge of shoring up the newish structure with plenty of authentic Charleston personality. Brock typically focuses on historic homes, so working with a younger house was a departure for her. But like Engel, she's proven adept at intermingling past with present. "Despite the fact that it's effectively a brand-new house, we pulled in so many timeless, handmade, and artisanal things that create character and give it that old-world feel," says Brock. The result is a totally fresh take on Southern charm. Or as one would more succinctly say in Instagram land, #decorgoals. [SL](#)