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Southern Beauty

A Charleston Single House earns a fresh start with a renovation that blows the dust off its prized original architecture while eliminating design transgressions.

WRITTEN BY JAN SOULTS WALKER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LEO JOHNSON
PRODUCED BY SANDRA L. MOHLMANN

Andrew and Anke Berlin refurbished the stately cypress doors at the entrance to their late-1880s Charleston, home. Threads of apricot, golden yellow, and pink woven into the entry's decorative dressings reflect the wood's warm tones.



THIS PHOTO: A gilded plaster-frame mirror that has hung in the house since the 1930s anchors the living room.
OPPOSITE: The Berlins' Single House fits neatly on a narrow lot in Charleston, South Carolina's historic district. It's design allows for natural air-conditioning via breezes that flow in through the porches.



With square footage to spare over three levels and breezy porches, this late-1880s Charleston Single House—so called because it is one room wide—was once awkwardly divided into three residences. But Andrew and Anke Berlin envisioned the historical beauty as a single-family residence awaiting a comeback.

Residential designer Jeremy Tate and interior designer Pamela Cook Plowden reunified the structure, erasing two apartments at the back of the house and converting the spaces into guest suites complete with small kitchenettes. “We also eliminated closets that had been added to each side of the many fireplaces and restored the original proportions that make the rooms so beautiful,” Tate says.

Using a light hand to fix layout transgressions was imperative because the home still boasted much of its original woodwork. Molding, paneling, and fireplace surrounds required only minor repairs and fresh finishes to shine again. Likewise, antique glass in the windows was salvaged by simply refurbishing the frames. Restained original heart pine floors also glow again.

To soften the abundance of stained wood and foster a strong relationship to the porches, Plowden employed touches of green in the entertaining spaces. A shimmering wallcovering embellished with a fern frond motif works with sage-green silk draperies to brighten the dining room. Golden silk draperies and gilded mirror and picture frames do their part in the living room. Throughout, new rugs with muted tones exude an antique quality that helps a mix of contemporary and period furnishings feel at home with the architectural detailing. “My goal was to introduce furnishings in a style that could have always been with the home,” Plowden says, “but to interject contemporary touches that reflect the owners’ artistic spirit.”

The home’s main level features a spacious kitchen for entertaining—staged for dramatic appeal with black cabinetry—complemented by a support kitchen. A curved banquette anchored to the island in the main kitchen provides a comfy vantage point for guests to relax during meal prep, which is fitting for a house that’s been designed inside and out to say welcome.

Painted and stained molding, trim, and paneling details create refined backdrops for traditional furnishings.



TOP: White-painted molding frames the entrance to the support kitchen from the main kitchen. ABOVE: A plaster arch was skillfully painted to match the dining room's original heart pine bookshelves. LEFT: Colonial Revival details, such as the hand-carved fireplace surround in the living room, were introduced during the mid-1930s. OPPOSITE: A double-hung window in the dining room stretches to the floor to allow access to a porch.





Three sets of French doors access the upper-level porch from the master bedroom. The bed was selected to fit neatly between two sets of doors. A palette of quiet coral and aqua partners with white lace bedding to relax the mood.

Floor plan

TOTAL SQ. FT: 7,011

BEDROOMS: 4

BATHROOMS: 4 full, 1 half

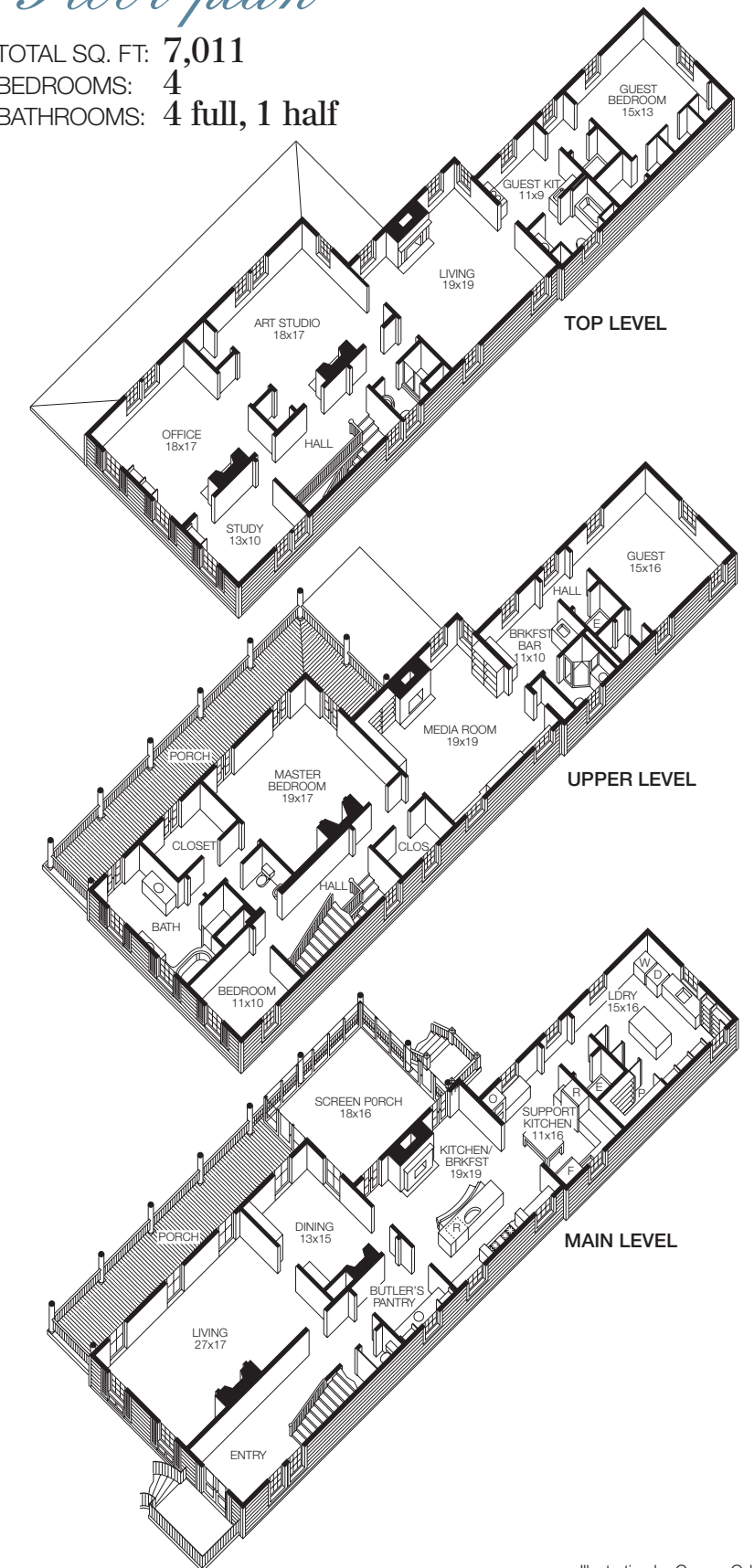


Illustration by Carson Ode