

KIAWAH ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA

Jutting out into the Atlantic just southwest of Charleston, South Carolina’s Kiawah Island is a gem of rolling dunes, pristine forests and beaches as far as the eye can see. The

ISLAND PEARL

coast’s unhurried rhythm was exactly what one family envisioned when looking to build their new vacation abode: the perfect gathering spot at the ocean’s edge.

“They have a large extended family, and they wanted this house to be almost like an exhale, a breath of fresh air,” explains designer Tammy Connor, who worked on the home’s interior after construction was completed in 2017 by the architects of Harrison Design. With its stately presence, the residence’s distilled classical style strikes the perfect balance between traditional form and a contemporary sensibility.

“It’s a more traditional exterior skin, that’s familiar but not recognizable as any particular style,” comments project architect Greg Palmer. “The clients wanted a home that will age gracefully; something different but not so far-out that it will easily date itself.”

To capture the best views from the main floor, the house, built on an undeveloped wooded lot, was elevated, with a garage ground level topped by two stories. Bracketed overhangs, low sloping roofs and symmetrical forms evoke what Palmer terms an Italianesque style – a “smoothed out” take on Italian Renaissance Revival, stripped of excess ornamentation. Inside, custom moldings and millwork trend towards the transitional, with a sleeker take on the classics. Coffered ceilings, Venetian plaster finishes and mahogany trim wrap up an eloquently simple feel.

While the family brought in few existing pieces, the clean-lined, mostly custom-built furnishings gain a sense of depth with the occasional antique and a notable art collection including works by Paula Rubino and Otto Neumann. Personal compositions such as a display of African tribal art in the vestibule, collected on travels, add meaningful detail.

TEXT **KATE MISSINE** PHOTOGRAPHY **SIMON UPTON**
INTERIOR DESIGN **TAMMY CONNOR** INTERIOR DESIGN
ARCHITECTURE **GREG PALMER OF HARRISON DESIGN**



EXTERIOR: Built at the ideal elevation for unobstructed ocean views, the home’s sloping roofline tops a traditional H-plan silhouette with projecting symmetrical wings. **ENTRYWAY:** A Paula Rubino print hangs over an understated Kerry Joyce settee in the entryway, and an antique globe chandelier echoes the custom bronze doors. On the opposite wall, a 19th-century French reeded mirror and art by Otto Neumann top a Porta Romana console.

HALLWAY: The owner’s collection of African tribal art is displayed in the vestibule, with an antique Parisian commode at the end of the hallway. Lanterns / Vaughan Designs. Art above commode / Otto Neumann.



*A GRACEFUL KIAWAH ISLAND
VACATION RESIDENCE DITCHES
COASTAL STEREOTYPES IN FAVOR
OF AN UNDERSTATED TAKE ON
THE CLASSICS*



LIBRARY: A bibliophile's dream, with plenty of reading alcoves, celebrates the family's immense love of books. Wall color / Pratt & Lambert, Lava. Coffee Tables / Hickory Chair. Prints / 19th-Century Swedish Framed Seals.



MASTER: A serene master suite leads out to a terrace and secluded outdoor shower. Bed / custom upholstered, Jim Thompson fabric. Bench / Stamford Modern. Light fixture / Avrett.

STUDY: A cozy study off the living area serves as a sitting room and one of the two home offices. Armchair and ottoman / Dessin Fournir, Jim Thompson fabric. Draperies / Sandra Jordan. Art / clients' own collection.





DINING ROOM: A Sputnik-style chandelier gives a playful modern note to a classically neutral dining room. Table / Dessin Fournir. Art / clients' own collection.

PROJECT INTELLIGENCE

Greg Palmer of Harrison Design explains that each part of the floor plan is purposefully laid out to lead the eye through the home's central axis and to the ocean beyond. A pair of custom bronze entrance doors leads into a sunken foyer, creating a line of sight through the windows, where the infinity edge pool and the ocean align in seamless union. Floor-to-ceiling glass continues the view in the living and dining rooms, with the kitchen opening to a den and a dining porch. At the opposite wing, another terrace and secluded outdoor shower sidle outside the master suite.

A garage complex below houses a beach bath, rec room and a wine cellar / tasting room, with a glass-encased stair hall connecting the three stories on the eastern side of the home. Outside, a boardwalk leads down to the beach, while the pool deck features a retractable tile section that moves to create more floor or pool space as needed.

"There is a lot of dark, almost feminized wood, glass and metal," notes Connor, "but it's not heavy. Our interest came from simple shapes, with some intensity through contrast and strong lines, and minimal pattern." The airy, open floor plan complements a palette pulled from the surroundings. "We wanted to enhance the setting, not compete with it," Connor adds. Misty blues and greys hint at the ocean's horizon line, and any coastal references stay subtle with accents of coral, shell, limestone and grass cloth.



KITCHEN: A cozy breakfast nook shares a spacious kitchen corner. Banquette / Bjork Studio. Fabric / Theo. Light fixture / Holly Hunt. Dining Table Base / Julian Chich. Tabletop / Custom made. Chairs / Harbinger. Fabric / Janus et Cie.



FAMILY ROOM: In the laid-back family room, floor-to-ceiling windows open up seamless vistas of the ocean beyond. Sofas / TCS Designs. Ottomans / Hollywood at Home. Draperies / C&C Milano.



TERRACE: A terrace with an infinity-edge pool features a unique retractable portion, which can be adjusted to function as extra entertainment deck space or pool space as needed.