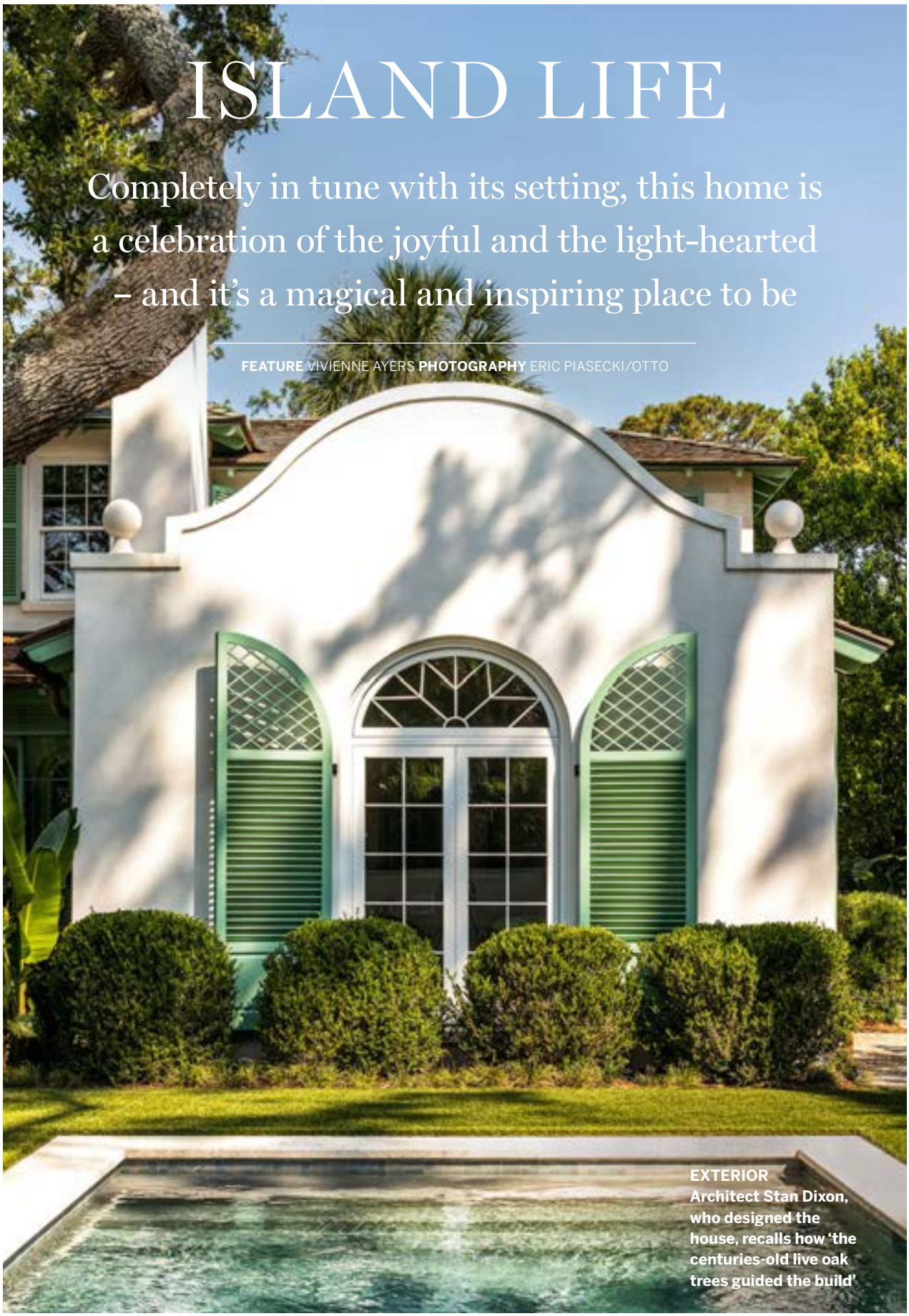
ISLAND LIFE

Completely in tune with its setting, this home is a celebration of the joyful and the light-hearted – and it's a magical and inspiring place to be

FEATURE VIVIENNE AYERS **PHOTOGRAPHY** ERIC PIASECKI/OTTO



EXTERIOR
Architect Stan Dixon, who designed the house, recalls how 'the centuries-old live oak trees guided the build'

ENTRANCE HALL
Taking its cue from Caribbean architecture, the ceiling is exposed to the rafters. The cement floor tiles were made in the Dominican Republic and are loosely based on Cuban designs.
Doors and **shutters**, Stewart Brannen Millworks. Palm **chandelier**, Paul Ferrante. Camilla fossilised clam **table**, Palecek. **Ceiling and woodwork in** Southfield Green, Benjamin Moore

KITCHEN
'The latticework is one of the most unique architectural elements of the house,' says designer Kristen Blood. Balboa **bar stools**, Serena & Lily. Gibson **pendants**, The Urban Electric Co. **Stovetop**, Wolf

DINING ROOM
The tropical mood is enhanced with a whimsical wallpaper and matching curtain fabric. Wallpaper, de Gournay. **Dining table**, Highland House. **Chairs**, Sika Design

SUNROOM
Stan designed the space to feel as if it had been an original porch converted into an enclosed space, complete with turned posts. Limestone and zellige **floor**, François & Co. **Table skirt and bolster cushions in** Dominica, Penny Morrison. **Lantern**, Jamb

BAR
Arches of latticework frame shelving and a window. 'It was a real structural challenge for the cabinetmakers,' says Kristen

SITTING ROOM
A more pared-back and serene neutral scheme was chosen to showcase the clients' artwork.
Capitola **chairs**; Seychelles **chandelier**, all Palecek. Dunshay **fireplace**, Jamb. **Artwork**, Jackson Fine Art: above sofa, Brian Wilson by Annie Leibovitz and *Frame 16*, from the Explosure Series, by Tierney Gearon; above fireplace, *Untitled #1, Phoenix* by Vee Speers

'The trees are the most magical thing about the house,' says architect Stan Dixon, referring to the centuries-old live oak trees that dominate the grounds of this period-style home near the beach on Sea Island, Georgia. The trees guided the house build. 'They're incredibly lyrical and elegant in the way that they grow,' says Stan. 'We really had to dance among them to build this house. Although it's only a few years old, it has an instant sense of scale – it looks like the trees grew around the house but it's quite the opposite.'

When the clients, who had owned a previous home on the plot, decided to move there full time and replace the house with a larger one, they reached out to Stan, whose signature designs are timeless and classical. The inspiration behind the design was the work of British artist and stage designer Oliver Messel, who created homes in the Caribbean in the 1960s and 1970s. The clients love his work with its louvred shutters, arches and latticework. 'Because of its unique location, I wanted the home to have an entry that feels like an island house on the coast,' says Stan. 'You enter a covered loggia through gates and see a magnificent oak tree in the interior courtyard – I laid out the house in an L-shape. It's very much about a sequence of spaces and experiences as the house evolves and unfolds itself.'

The house has an easy flow, most notably in the statement sunroom, which was designed to give the impression that it had once been an open porch. 'There's a blurred threshold between the house and garden when you're in that room,' explains Stan.

The interior design, undertaken by the clients' daughter Kristen Blood, was influenced by the indoor outdoor feel, as well as the architecture. 'Stan and I worked together to make the interior and exterior cohesive. Our objective was to create a beach house that felt welcoming and accessible while exhibiting elegance as a primary residence,' she explains.

The starting point for the interior, notwithstanding the iconic Messel green accents that punctuate the property, is the vibrant Penny Morrison Dominica print on the table skirt in the sunroom and carried through to the sitting room, with colours teased from the fabric throughout the decor. 'The house has beautiful flow and sightlines between the rooms, so I developed a colour story that connected each space while allowing each room to stand on its own,' notes Kristen.

A statement hand-painted de Gournay wallpaper and matching curtain fabric impart a tropical feel in the dining room. 'The hand-painted tropical scene, which features toucans, monkeys and flowers, is joyful and exuberant, setting a light-hearted tone for the house,' says Kristen. 'It's where my mom hosts occasions and I wanted it to feel like a special place for entertaining.'

The indoor-outdoor feel is enhanced with wicker and woven furniture, a beaded coral-like chandelier in the sitting room and a statement table with a clamshell top in the entry foyer. Upstairs, classic florals prevail with an oversized semi-tropical design on the main bedroom curtains that is continued on the bathroom wallpaper.

In a nod to Messel island style, latticework features on doors between the dining room and kitchen and on cabinetry in the kitchen and bar area. 'The kitchen has a high ceiling and I like the airiness and openness of the latticework,' says Kristen. For Stan, the latticework enhances the connection with the outdoors and sense of light and air. 'You still feel the ocean breezes in this house – the ocean is just a few steps away.'

■ dsdixonarchitect.com; kristenblood.com

"THIS HOUSE HAD TO RIPPLE ITS WAY BETWEEN THE TREES AND THAT WAS A CHALLENGE, BUT IT WAS ALSO ONE OF THE BEST THINGS ABOUT THE PROJECT AND BUILD"

MAIN BEDROOM
'The chandelier came from my mom's Atlanta house. This felt like the best place for it as it's a bit more sophisticated,' says Kristen
Chandelier, Vaughan.
Curtains in Berri Pink, Sarah Vanrenen. Vlad **side table**, Arteriors

BUNK ROOM
Located above the carriage house, this space features shiplap walls and a day bed. 'It has its own personality,' says Kristen.
Quilt and **cushions**, Les Indiennes

EN SUITE
The oversized blooms from the bedroom curtain fabric feature in the wallpaper. 'This is a very pretty space to be in. It has the beautiful transom door windows,' says Kristen.
Berri Pink **wallpaper**, Sarah Vanrenen

MEET THE DESIGNER

Kristen Blood shares her style inspiration

BIGGEST SUCCESS The entry loggia. To be enveloped by green, architecturally and through nature, is a powerful first experience and the patterned tile is stunning.

GREATEST INDULGENCE
The Amazonia wallpaper and curtains by de Gournay in the dining room.

SMALL CHANGE, BIG IMPACT We went back and forth on painting the ceiling in the sunroom green or blue and ultimately decided to go with Benjamin Moore's Clear Skies, a light aqua that reminds me of the water in the Caribbean.

GO-TO COLOUR
Benjamin Moore's Southfield Green.

FAVOURITE DESIGN DETAIL I like to source interesting lighting and make sure bulbs are a soft, warm temperature that creates a relaxed space.

INSPIRATION Oliver Messel, Billy Baldwin, Albert Hadley, Marella Agnelli.

SECRET ADDRESS
Penny Morrison or Tulu Textiles.

GARDEN
The sand-toned stucco facade is broken up by scalloped lattice awnings, louvred shutters and turned wooden posts in a vibrant Messel green. Dining table and **chairs**, vintage Salterini