The original dining room was combined with the kitchen to create a charming eat-in banquette area. ***Chandelier, wicker chairs,*** *Foxglove Antiques & Galleries;* ***table,*** *Carrocel Interiors;* ***brick flooring,*** *Creekside Tile Company.*

Grand Gestures

Design by **TOMMY SMYTHE** *and* **LINDSAY MENS CRAIG**
Text by **WENDY JACOB**
Photography by **PATRICK BILLER**

Tommy recently launched TOM, his namesake design firm, partnering with Lindsay Mens Craig and Kate Stuart.

DESIGNER **TOMMY SMYTHE** BRINGS NEW LIFE — AND A HOST OF MODERN COMFORTS — TO A 230-YEAR-OLD HOUSE IN CHARLESTON, S.C.

TOP LEFT: The mercury mirroring of the refrigerator's custom panel makes it look authentically antique, as does the vintage hardware. "The fridge pull is an antique door pull — probably from a bank — so it doesn't look appliance-y," says Tommy. ***Refrigerator pull,*** *The Door Store;* ***drawer latches,*** *Rejuvenation;* ***lantern,*** *The Antique and Artisan Gallery;* ***runner,*** *J&D Oriental Rugs Co.;* ***flush-mount light fixture*** *by Thomas O'Brien, Circa Lighting.*
TOP RIGHT: The original fireplace was painted off-black to match the ebonized island. ***Counter*** *(left), Caesarstone;* ***armchair, ottoman,*** *John Derian Dry Goods;* ***loop pulls*** *(on island), The Door Store.*

Produced by Stacy Begg

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The owners often work at the Gustavian dining table; the chairs are local finds that were bleached to update them. Antique ginger jars balance the scale of the chunky lantern. ***Dining table,*** *Alexandra Antiques;* ***dining chairs, ginger jars,*** *Seventeen South Antiques;* ***chair upholstery fabric,*** *Kravet Canada.* **OPPOSITE, TOP:** Black lanterns, a Tommy Smythe signature, are a counterpoint to the living room's pale putty palette. ***Sofas,*** *Acquisitions Interiors; sunburst* ***mirror, armchairs, white table lamp*** *(background, left), Foxglove Antiques & Galleries.*

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IT'S BEEN A BIG YEAR for Tommy Smythe. Not only did the designer turn 50 this past summer, he launched a design firm, TOM, along with fellow Sarah Richardson Design alums Lindsay Mens Craig and Kate Stuart. "I always wondered what it would be like to be out on my own," says Tommy, who spent 19 years working with Sarah on multiple TV shows and design projects. "I wanted to try a new concept, where I gathered a community of designers, project managers and technicians to execute their skills on a per project basis, assembling a perfect team for each client."

They tested that concept with a to-the-studs renovation of a circa-1790s home in Charleston, their farewell project for Sarah Richardson Design before launching TOM. The design brief? To make all the modern amenities disappear and highlight the home's historical character. That meant finding local contractors and craftspeople who could recreate antique foxed mirrors, carve a new wood mantel to replicate an original or hide air-conditioning ducts in a chimney breast.

LEFT: A stripped mahogany demilune sideboard serves as a surface area for keys and mail. ***Grasscloth,*** *Kravet Canada;* ***sideboard,*** *1stdibs;* ***runner,*** *J&D Oriental Rugs Co.;* ***lantern,*** *Jamb;* ***wainscotting colour,*** *School House White (291), Farrow & Ball.*

ABOVE: "Florals can be bossy," says Tommy of the sitting area in the principal bedroom. "You need strong architectural elements such as wainscotting and striped wallpaper to match the gutsiness." The closets are concealed behind jib doors flanking the fireplace. ***Lantern,*** *Foxglove Antiques & Galleries;* ***wallpaper,*** *Farrow & Ball;* ***bed frame,*** *Chairish; custom* ***duvet bedding fabric,*** *Kravet Canada;* ***coffee table,*** *Acquisitions Interiors;* ***vintage rug,*** *J&D Oriental Rugs Co.;* ***sisal rug,*** *Elte.*
LEFT: "They're like a little girl's party dress," says Tommy of the guest room's twin beds, which have been designed with children in mind. ***Wallpaper,*** *Schumacher;* ***bed frames,*** *RH;* ***bedding fabric*** *by Zimmer + Rohde, Bilbrough & Co.;* ***mirror,*** *The Antique and Artisan Gallery;* ***benches,*** *Foxglove Antiques & Galleries;* ***nightstand,*** *Christie Antique & Vintage Show.*

An Italian metal olive branch sconce is paired with a Gustavian cabinet in the principal bedroom for an eclectic mix. ***Wallpaper,*** *Farrow & Ball;* ***cabinet,*** *The Antique and Artisan Gallery;* ***sconce,*** *The Door Store;* ***chair,*** *Greenwich Living Antiques & Design Centré.*

Among the crew on site, Lindsay Mens Craig confides that Tommy was fondly referred to as "Maestro." She says, "Tommy and I have such a special working relationship, and Charleston is Southern charm on steroids. I fell in love with the architecture, the people and their dedication to craftsmanship; it was perfection."

By Tommy's estimation, the 3,500-square-foot house had been renovated in the 1930s, and then again in the '80s. But the clients wanted to reconnect the house with its true heritage, so Tommy and Lindsay went back to the city's roots, touring local museums for inspiration that was authentically Charleston. They suggested a fresh combination of aquamarine, marble grey and soft lilac hues to reflect the city's seaport heritage and location.

The house was furnished with pieces that looked as if they had been collected over 50 years instead of months. The clients didn't want to feel like they were living in a time capsule, though, so they instituted a "no brown furniture or crystal chandeliers" policy. "They wanted a lighter, brighter vibe," says Tommy. "The furniture is either painted or fabricated in a light wood to suit the reality of casual living."

The home's original footprint was retained, but some spaces were opened up. The cramped kitchen was enlarged by combining it with the original dining room. "In the 1790s, the kitchen might not have even been inside the house because of fire concerns," says Tommy. "So we didn't conjure up a kitchen of the 1790s, but one that looks like it might have been created at the turn of the last century, using materials that were prevalent at that time, like beadboard and brick flooring."

When sourcing antique furniture, there's no such thing as a one-stop shop. "We got as much as we could from local consignment shops in Charleston," says Tommy. "Some of these dealers are the best in the U.S." He also hit up shops in Savannah, Atlanta and a cluster of antique dealers who landed in Stamford, Conn., when NYC rents went up.

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LEFT: Ikat accent pillows and block print–style bed linens are a bold look in this guest room. ***Bed frame,*** *Serena & Lily;* ***bedding fabric,*** *Lee Jofa; sunburst* ***mirror,*** *Decorum Decorative Finds;* ***table lamp,*** *Foxglove Antiques & Galleries;* ***nightstand,*** *William-Wayne & Co.*
BOTTOM: "Every room needs a mirror," says Tommy of the gold leaf–framed mirror in the guest bathroom. "It reflects light, adds glamour and gives a sense of occasion." ***Sconces*** *by Studio VC, Circa Lighting;* ***vanity,*** *Wynsum Antiques & Interiors;* ***sink, tile,*** *Waterworks.*
OPPOSITE: In a hot city like Charleston, marble is a cool counterpoint in the principal ensuite. Traditional handheld sprays look historical, as does antique furniture. ***Tub*** *by Ferguson Bath, Kitchen & Lighting Gallery;* ***drum table,*** *The Antique and Artisan Gallery;* ***mirror, vanity table,*** *Peachtree Battle Antiques & Interiors;* ***floor tile,*** *Creekside Tile Company;* ***wall colour,*** *Pale Powder (204), Farrow & Ball.*

One of the toughest challenges when renovating a historical home is reconciling all the technology and amenities that today's homeowners need (looking at you, Wi-Fi). "I love old houses that function like new houses, but it's an advanced manoeuvre for any builder," says Tommy. "We had to bring walls forward, move ceilings up or down and utilize floor cavities and attic space for a great deal of equipment, then make sure the conduits were hidden."

Wood-burning fireplaces were roughed in for gas, and heating and ventilation units typically built into bulkheads were hidden or camouflaged by chimney breasts. Three jib doors were added in the principal bedroom to conceal closets, and china was stashed behind two more in the living–dining room.

"Our goal was to make this house livable for the next 200 years," says Tommy, who has high praise for the tradespeople and builders whose age-old techniques had to dovetail with the tech and comforts of modern living. Well played, Maestro. H&H

The fresh combination of aquamarine, marble grey and soft lilac hues reflects Charleston's seaport heritage and location

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