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A FEW HOURS SOUTH OF CHARLOTTE, A FAMILY'S VACATION HOME IN DEBORDIEU, SOUTH CAROLINA, EXUDES A CALIFORNIA-MODERN VIBE.

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A large white Verellen sectional invites guests to lounge during long summer days. Oversized palm trees in pots from Schwung Home add to the paradise vibe, and a round chandelier from RH speaks to the scale of the room. A coffee table from Lee Industries rests in the center of the space with a chair, also from Lee Industries, sidled up nearby. Underneath the coffee table sits a triangular ottoman by Hickory Chair.

The homeowner installed the white marble countertops from Taj Mahal Marble Centre. The textured zellige tile backsplash is from Ann Sacks, and the brass Waterworks hardware was sourced through Bird Decorative Hardware & Bath.





DEBORDIEU COLONY IS ONE OF the oldest beachside communities on the East Coast. With more than 800 acres of wildlife preserve cradling portions of South Carolina's most quiet and beautiful beaches, it's a gem of a vacation spot for many in the South and beyond. Adele Dillon grew up summering in DeBordieu and has continued the tradition with her husband and children, visiting the family home inherited from her parents. On one such trip, the Dillons discovered that a long-admired home nearby was on the market, and they jumped at the chance to purchase it and create their own home away from home.

"Beautifully located, the property overlooks the golf course and adjacent wildlife preserve, with proximity to the ocean as well as the family home Adele and her sisters inherited," explains designer Heather Smith of Circa Interiors & Antiques, who, alongside MK Boykin, was hired to update the newly purchased home. "The home's modern design and appealing open floor plan was perfectly suited for the homeowners' vision of larger-scaled furnishings and minimal decor." But the home had become a rental in 2006 and needed some significant updating. A longtime



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—HEATHER SMITH



client of Circa and feeling a bit overwhelmed at the prospect, Dillon decided that enlisting their help would be key to creating the California-modern vibe they envisioned.

“After reaching out to Circa and speaking to Heather, we were introduced to MK, and it felt like the perfect fit,” Dillon says. “We liked the way MK was not pushy, and it became a collaborative effort. Our style is very similar, so it felt like I was working with a good friend.”

“Adele was definitely capable of furnishing the home on her own, but it did need some updating, and she wanted our help coming up with a cohesive plan,” Smith adds. “Our aesthetics are so well aligned; it was a perfect fit for us to take this on and help her streamline the process.”

Wanting to steer clear of overly beachy aesthetics and traditional coastal decor, the group agreed that a casual, comfortable, and modern look was easily achievable in combination with a bright and airy foundation. So stained cypress ceilings, pine doors, oak floors, and dark poplar casings were swapped out for bleached wood and driftwood-hued natural materials. Peach walls were whitewashed, and windows were blown out and opened up.

“The house looked like it hadn’t been touched since the ’70s, and it almost had a *Miami Vice* vibe,” Boykin recalls. “However, there is a circular motif that was repeated throughout the home that we decided to keep and use to our advantage when designing. I try to retain as much charm and character to older homes as possible, and I’m glad we worked with the quirks instead of taking them out.”

LEFT: An antique painted Dutch chest from Circa Interiors & Antiques serves as a vanity in the powder room. Elegantly paired with an antique mirror and sconces by Arteriors, the result is understated yet dramatic.

RIGHT: The entry provides a stunning glimpse of the California-modern feel of this DeBordieu house, with a Visual Comfort cascading chandelier greeting guests and a vintage Turkish rug in neutral tones leading the way. A bleached wooden bench from Textures offers a homey feeling, while Sabine Maes artwork hangs just above.

OPPOSITE: The dining table, which was collectively designed by Smith, Boykin, and the homeowner, was built by the homeowner’s husband. Finch chairs by Bernhardt surround the table, and the Vertigo pendant is from Circa Lighting. Airy draperies made with Holly Hunt fabric complete the room.



The outdoor pieces were purchased through Circa Interiors & Antiques, and the pillows are from Verellen. A Lee Industries ottoman provides a perfect additional seat.

The homeowner's office is anchored by a desk that he made and highlighted with a hair-on-hide chair from Lee Industries. Skylights spill light onto a window seat bench custom made with Verellen fabric and dotted with pillows from Circa Interiors & Antiques.



Over the next eighteen months, Smith and Boykin worked closely with Dillon to transform the home with texture, natural elements, and an abundance of light. “As designers, it is our job to push clients a little outside of their comfort zone and hopefully come together to create something that feels like home to them but also embodies a well-thought-out design,” Smith says. “Harmonious design starts with communication between designer and homeowner; it is the whole foundation to success.”

With Covid causing unprecedented delays in materials and labor, and his own office closed, Dillon's husband, Mark, “an artist, athlete, musician, woodworker, and true renaissance man,” according to Smith, had the unique opportunity to move into the house and work on all the renovations himself. Never having to wait or rely on outside trades, the house came together quickly, with Mark Dillon working on projects like painting,

refinishing floors, plumbing, lighting, ceiling treatments in several of the rooms, and a brand-new kitchen.

“Mark was incredible about taking measurements and sending photographs and sketches,” Boykin says. “But to achieve proper scale and proportions without being on-site was still tricky. It took a little bit of extra communication and a little more teamwork and trust. In the end, it turned out exactly as we envisioned, and everyone was thrilled.”

“We double and triple checked measurements and specifications throughout the process, but the whole effect never translates completely through drawings or photos,” Smith adds. “I was blown away by the overall scale of the space—she has palm trees in the family room that are at least fourteen feet tall—and loved the way the oversized custom pieces we designed filled it up.”

Lee Industries chairs create a cozy conversation den with a Palecek coffee table at the center. The chandelier is by RH, and the art above the fireplace is by Korey Gulbrandson. **OPPOSITE:** The owner's suite features custom draperies made with Holly Hunt fabric and bedside tables from Circa Interiors & Antiques. The chair is by Lee Industries, and the side table is from B.D. Jeffries.





The furniture drove the scale of the space, and a white Verellen sectional led the way. “We found an amazing white sectional at the Verellen after-market attic sale,” Smith explains. “The scale and style of that piece really set the tone for the rest of the interior, which is all open to that room.” While in High Point, they found an over-scaled piece of art for the foyer, along with the perfect bench. Huge palm pots were added for plants, and a few of Dillon’s favorite antiques from Circa rounded out the scheme: a bleached pine table for the entry and a painted Dutch chest for the powder room.

“After visiting Verellen with MK, we knew the direction we wanted to go in for the home,” Dillon says. “Since the rooms are so large, we needed very large pieces. Otherwise, things would get lost or look too busy. Each piece needed to make an impact.”

As the big pieces came together, accessories took their cues from laid-back but cohesive California-style homes with pared-down decor and minimal frills. “Everything has a function or purpose, is low-maintenance, and can easily be moved around throughout the home,” Smith says. “Pillows and throws are washable, ottomans and side tables are layered for functionality,

and sculptural pots can stand on their own or graciously hold a variety of cuttings from the tropical landscape.”

Dillon is particularly fond of her husband’s office. “We designed Mark’s desk ourselves, and then Mark built the desk and bench seat. It’s a cozy, quiet space to retreat to. The breakfast room is a close second, as Mark built the kitchen table, and the chandelier is a showstopper!”

Smith adds that her favorite is the dining room. “I love the simplicity and drama of the room. Each item is like a piece of sculpture: the fluted table base fabricated by Mark, the curvaceous chairs, the sinuous Parisian light fixture, the chiseled Belgian clay pot, and the hand-spun brass charger mounted over the fireplace. Mark painstakingly planked the cathedral ceiling for more texture and recessed light behind the crown molding, which enhances the dimension at night with a moody glow.”

The transformation is nothing short of stunning. The whole home is a study in seeing past what’s right in front of you and, with vision, a little sweat equity, and ingenuity, creating spaces that fit your lifestyle and allow for plenty of room to breathe. ♦