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SOUTHEAST

HIGHER GROUND

With its clean lines, open-air lifestyle and sophisticated flourishes, an elevated Kiawah Island getaway offers a refreshing take on coastal living.

WRITTEN BY CHRISTINE DEORIO | PHOTOGRAPHY BY EMILY FOLLOWILL | STYLING BY ELEANOR ROPER

Architecture: Ken Pursley and Craig Dixon, Pursley Dixon Architecture **Interior Design:** Louise Leeke, Kingswood Homes and Layton Campbell, J Layton Interiors
Home Builders: Rob Hutzler and Paul Newman, Kingswood Homes **Landscape Architecture:** Paul Freeman, Freeman Landscape Architecture

Designer Louise Leeke selected Sherwin-Williams' Shoji White to accent the poplar paneling in the airy first-floor vestibule of this Kiawah Island, South Carolina, vacation home by architects Ken Pursley and Craig Dixon. A custom teak-and-brass bench by Charlotte craftsman Josh Utsey provides a perch for those coming in from the beach; the concrete Peacock Pavers beneath are ideal for sandy feet. The Sedona sconce is by Tech Lighting.

Walk inland from Kiawah Island's 10-mile-long beach, beyond the windswept dunes, past the quiet ponds and toward the lush fairways of Osprey Point Golf Course, and you'll enter a landscape of swaying palmettos and sprawling live oaks. Tucked amid that coastal South Carolina canopy is a house whose covered wraparound porches catch breezes while shading its elevated interiors like the brim of a hat.

For Greg Olsen—a Charlotte-based Fox Sports broadcaster and former NFL tight end—his wife, Kara, and their three children, the home has proved an ideal out-of-town refuge. Found just far enough from the beach, the secluded location was a boon for the project, which produced resort-like vibes with numerous fresh twists. "It's not your typical beach house," Kara notes. "I didn't want our home to be a misfit on the island, but I *did* envision something more modern and out of the box."

Taking stock of local construction codes requiring an elevated structure of 9 feet or more, architects Ken Pursley and Craig Dixon drew inspiration from 18th-century French Creole building traditions. "These developed because of the hot, wet climates in Mississippi and Louisiana, necessitating architecture that was raised above the flood plain," Pursley explains. Borrowing the style's elevated living quarters and hipped roof extending over wide porches, the architects likewise sought new ways to solve the challenges of a Lowcountry build. And that's precisely where the regional expertise of general contractors Rob Hutzler and Paul Newman proved invaluable. "Raising your main floor is dramatic because you gain more ceiling volume and dynamic sight lines," Pursley furthers. "So often with beach houses, you access the second level via a dank understory." In this case, forethought structural solutions yielded a comparatively brighter result. Adds Dixon: "As the family enters a vestibule at the center of the ground floor, ascending to the main living space, they're walking toward the light and the view."

A prominent staircase essentially bisects the multistory dwelling, whose retracting glass doors extend the generous living areas outward to the porches, then onward to the pool terrace. The light-harnessing feature is reminiscent of the indoor-outdoor living strategies employed by early modernist architects, and the clean lines used throughout the residence reinforce those nods—albeit in classic beach-house materials. Selections include bleached French oak floors and white wood-paneled walls and ceilings—plus a few surprising alternatives, like the faceted metal box concealing the living room's fireplace vent, shimmering tiles above the kitchen range and casement windows to invite salted breezes.

Each finish was fine-tuned by designer Louise Leeke, whose decade-long professional relationship with the Olsens allowed her to effortlessly translate their sophisticated style to a fresh environment. "This was our third project together, and we didn't want to repeat anything we had done before," reveals the designer, adding: "Nor was this going to be a typical sand-and-shells beach house."

Consider the kitchen, where Leeke specified a scrupulous 10-layer finish for the white oak cabinets. "I know we got it right because you just want to reach out and touch them," she says. At the bar, she honored Kara's request for glamorous black accents, choosing a patterned concrete tile and smoked-crystal light fixtures. Ethereal in contrast, the bathrooms are "very clean, very modern," continues Leeke, but the farmhouse-style sinks, sliding barn doors and rattan pendants bring the look back to the beach.

Following Leeke's lead with finishing touches was Layton Campbell, a designer whose own interpretation of coastal style materialized in considerate selections of contemporary furnishings and textiles. "Kara loves neutrals and tactile textures," he explains. "Thankfully, on Kiawah, the environment provided so much organic material to work with."

Campbell's primary challenge was echoing the outdoor connection while evoking a different emotion in each space. In the living room, his composition of rattan-wrapped leather chairs and a U-shaped sectional conveys "a super cozy feel," he says. But on the adjacent covered porch—for which he designed a 14-foot-long dining table with twin tree-trunk bases—screened seating nooks "feel quite open to the pool and landscape beyond."

The designer also oriented the primary bedroom's upholstered bed and leather chaise toward the lush grounds tamed by landscape architect Paul Freeman. "With the sheers pulled back, the couple can feel at one with their surroundings," Campbell notes, summing up the home's entire raison d'être. For the Olsens, that equates to "not just observing this beautiful place, but truly living in it."

Right: A dropped ceiling and built-in banquette, both by Envision Millwork in Salisbury, North Carolina, give the breakfast nook a cozy, casual feel—an effect designer Layton Campbell emphasized with a custom white oak table by Utsey boasting rustic spool bases. Hickory Chair's Tate armchairs and Fredrick Ramond's Harmony brass light add glamour.

Opposite: To accommodate homeowner Greg Olsen's 6-foot-5-inch frame, Campbell chose this made-to-measure sectional by Ambella Home Collection upholstered in a Great Plains performance fabric. Palecek's rattan-wrapped Duvall lounge chair complements a custom wood-and-metal coffee table made by Kauffman and Co. in Charlotte.

Above: This built-in seating nook, surrounded by automated Screenmobile screens, features a custom Envision Millwork banquette Campbell upholstered in Pindler fabric. A Kirkby Design broken stripe on the pillows adds interest as Palecek's rope-wrapped Recaro outdoor lounge chairs contrast a concrete Sunburst cocktail table by Stone Yard, Inc.

Opposite: Leeke experimented with various stains, paints and textures before arriving at the 10-layer finish that graces the kitchen cabinetry by Cabinet Creations. Countertops of Snow Drift quartzite from Walker Zanger meet Palecek rattan counter stools above oiled French oak floors by Sawyer Mason. A painting by Chattanooga artist Vesela Baker, through Anne Neilson Fine Art in Charlotte, adorns the nickel-gapped paneling.

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–LAYTON CAMPBELL

The dining porch’s 14-foot-long table with a live-edge Monkey Pod hardwood top and twin poplar tree-trunk bases—custom built by Utsey—is Campbell’s love letter to Kiawah’s lush flora. “My design philosophy is about the harmony among environment, architecture and client,” he says. Beneath a pine-plank ceiling, basket-style Augustine chandeliers echo the woven finish of Somerset chairs, both by Palecek.

Above: Drawn by Pursley and Dixon, this guest bathroom vanity showcases nickel-gapped poplar paneling placed at random widths. Apron-front Kraus sinks enhance the room's laid-back feel as Brizo fixtures in a Brilliance Luxe Gold finish provide the foil for woven Palecek pendants. Campbell designed the brass-framed mirrors, fabricated by Volodko in Indian Trail, North Carolina.

Left: Andersen Windows & Doors windows proffer unobscured views to the pool from this guest bedroom. To compose its soothing palette, Campbell sourced a Hickory Chair Chamber channeled bed upholstered in caramel-colored Great Plains velvet, Romo sheers and a Lillian August for Hickory White bench—all atop a plush Rosecore carpet from A. Hoke Ltd in Charlotte.