

ARCHITECTURE

A STORIED 1920s
ESTATE IN ATLANTA
RETURNS WITH
GATSBY-LIKE GUSTO



MICHAEL S. SMITH
CREATES AN ART-
FILLED EDEN IN L.A.



PHILIP VERGEYLEN
REINSTATES
GRACIOUS EASE IN
THE DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC



A GREEK REVIVAL'S
BREATHTAKING
DANCE WITH NATURE
IN THE LOW COUNTRY



A PALM SPRINGS
VILLA WITH HOT,
HIGH-OCTANE HUES



A cobalt velvet tête-à-tête makes for a sociable centerpiece in the living room of Atlanta's Villa Juanita. Fabric, Lee Jofa. Fringe trim, Samuel & Sons. Design, Huff-Dewberry, Inc.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
EMILY FOLLOWILL

STYLING BY
JIMMIE HENSLEE

& DECORATION

A former loggia was enclosed and flooded with light to create an orangery-style dining room. Italianate mural, Bob Christian. Chandeliers, Paul Ferrante. **OPPOSITE:** A newly added open-air pavilion overlooks the pool and a soft carpet of Zoysia grass.



VILLA



Bon Vivant

Atlanta's legendary wild child, a 1920s **Mediterranean-inspired estate roars back to life** with a thoughtful renovation to restore her come one, come all spirit.



The breakfast room's hand-painted floor tiles were inspired by a restaurant on the Amalfi coast. **OPPOSITE, FROM TOP:** Statuario marble clads kitchen walls in earthen opulence. ♦ Original ceiling plasterwork and wood paneling pair with an ocean blue cowhide rug (Moattar) and drip-glaze lamps by Paul Schneider Ceramics in the study.



FAME COMES IN MANY FLAVORS, from veneration to scandal, and can accrue to houses as much as to people. Atlanta's Villa Juanita has long been the kind of It girl house locals are intensely curious about. "If you live in Atlanta, you've always wanted to look behind those walls," says designer Heather Dewberry of Huff-Dewberry, Inc., referring to the 10-foot stone enclosure surrounding the seven-acre property.

The house was built in the 1920s for a pair of socialites while they were honeymooning in Europe. As it neared completion, they added further Mediterranean accents likely inspired by their travels. On their return they entertained wildly for a few years, then separated. The so-called Great Gatsby House fell into a spell of dignified repose from which it only recently stirred.

In 2016 an Atlanta couple acquired the property and set about revitalizing it—no small undertaking, as it turned out. "This was certainly one of the most complicated projects I've worked on in many years," says architect Charles Heydt of Pak Heydt & Associates. Villa Juanita had basically been built of pottery, its load-bearing walls constructed of interlocking terra-cotta tiles covered in plaster and stucco, materials almost impossible to secure new construction to. Its roof had been built right on top of another roof when the owners changed their minds about the design. While some of the basement was finished, the crawl space lacked the mud slab and was originally exposed Georgia clay.

On the first day of construction, designer Will Huff arrived expecting a run-of-the-mill demolition site crawling with bulldozers; what he found appeared more like an archeological dig:





FROM TOP: A Georgian chinoiserie highboy welcomes guests in a grand plaster and carved stone foyer. Appliqué chair detailing, Samuel & Sons. ♦ A spirited bargello-motif wallcovering (Holland & Sherry) is tempered by an antique Italian cabinet in the music room. Chandelier, Fisher Weisman

Villa Juanita had basically been ***built of pottery***, its load-bearing walls constructed of interlocking ***terra-cotta tiles***.

“It was a few guys on the roof taking off tiles one by one and carefully stacking them on the lawn,” he says.

“Another owner would have torn the house down,” says Heydt. But the clients remained steadfast throughout the process, including restoring the original structure and almost doubling its square footage, then infusing it with light and life. “They wanted something transporting that would feel like a Mediterranean villa,” says Dewberry. It helped, too, that entertaining was in the house’s DNA and the new owners, eminent philanthropists, love to host. “You can see their desire for community and family in the details,” says Heydt.

Take, for example, the entry hall, where a new black-and-white geometric floor of hand-cut slab stone becomes a stage for a Georgian chinoiserie highboy and vintage chairs, all set against handmade plaster and carved stone. “A tremendous effort went



into creating this space that will receive guests for only a moment as they pass through,” says Heydt.

The living room was likewise made for cocktail parties, its open space anchored by a central “salon sofa” where guests can perch. The dining hall evolved from an outdoor loggia to an enclosed space inspired by European orangeries (better for hosting large dinner parties), featuring a peacock blue mural and tented sky-light. In the study, with original oak paneling and plaster ceiling, Heydt designed a full-size bar in the alcove, then the designers

FROM TOP: Flanking a new front door are Solomonic Corinthian columns modeled after original barley-twist pillars in the library; a flagstone walk leading to the front terrace was designed to be easily traversed by guests in high heels, recalls garden designer Kaitlyn Peake. ♦ In the family room, a painting by Liz Barber appears to float atop a mirrored wall; a constellation of plates is comprised of commissioned illustrations on porcelain by Molly Hatch.



finished the space with Art Deco-inspired furnishings and an “indestructible dyed-cowhide rug that’s perfect for high-traffic events,” says Dewberry.

To the original house, with its array of public rooms, Heydt added two family-oriented wings, including a primary suite and sitting room at one end and a family room, kitchen, and breakfast room at the other. The latter features hand-painted floor tiles inspired by the bar at Le Sirenuse in Positano, Italy, and a raised fireplace constructed of stonework “harvested” from the original house.

Furnishing styles vary from room to room, a freedom that’s inherent to the original, anything-goes interiors. What unites them are simple, sculptural furnishings and a consistent palette. “The clients wanted ‘peacock colors’—blues, yellows, and greens,” says Huff. Variations in intensity, from pale, chalky blue and apple green in the primary bedroom to lapis tiles and butter yellow upholstery on the pool terrace, give each room its own personality.

As befits its Mediterranean soul, Villa Juanita is set amid lavish gardens, with terraces, porches, and balconies serving as

RIGHT AND BELOW: The primary suite is awash in serene hues, from the bedroom's chalk blue bed canopy and window fabric (draperies, Pindler) to the bath's soft gray walls (Pelican Gray, Benjamin Moore) and glossy barrel ceiling. **BELOW RIGHT:** A formal parterre features the owners' family crest.



transitional spaces from nearly every room. Garden designer Kaitlyn Peake of Carson McElheney Landscape Architecture & Design oversaw the green spaces, including a formal parterre centered on a hedge in the shape of the family's crest, surrounded by perennial beds that spill over onto the gravel pathways. "The grounds are formal and Italianate, but with soft touches that make them very livable," she says. She cleaned up the woodlands encircling the property and refurbished a vegetable garden, cutting garden, and greenhouse. "The clients are very engaged with the land," she says. "They do everything from planting tomatoes and dahlias to harvesting muscadine grapes," often serving food picked from their gardens.

◆
"The grounds are formal and *Italianate*, but with *soft touches* that make them very livable."

—GARDEN DESIGNER KAITLYN PEAKE



Indeed, while Villa Juanita was built more or less as a stage set for a couple of young carousers, it has now been embraced by thoughtful stewards who saw past the house's eye-popping glamour to appreciate it for what it is: a party girl, sure, but one with a fine soul and—at long last—a bright, secure future. ◆