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Rooted in *Georgia*

A couple who make their living as homebuilders built a second residence for themselves that melds contemporary living with classic architecture

INTERIOR DESIGN BY *Pam Sessions* PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Chris Little* WRITTEN BY *Jean Nayar*

Opening page: When Pam Sessions and Don Donnelly built a weekend home in North Georgia, they had the exterior reference the careful proportions and same hue of London's 10 Downing Street. Left: A quartet of Buffa wing chairs from Coup d'Etat anchors a seating area in the living room. The chairs are upholstered in a Holland & Sherry wool bouclé; they contrast with a console from Morgan Clayhall, a table from 1stdibs, a painting by Michael Dines, a chandelier by Jonathan Browning Studios, and draperies by Kelly Wearstler for Groundworks.

WESANDERSON

Opposite: The vaulted ceiling in the kitchen is covered in cypress and stained with a black gel that allows the grain to show through. Handmade English Winchester tiles, supplied by Zumpano, cover the walls, one of which holds a painting by Michael Dines. The Gubi Beetle chairs are from Minima. The custom hurricane rod-style lighting was designed by Peyton Avrett of the Charleston-based studio bearing his name, Avrett. Above: The custom islands double as dining surfaces. The custom cabinets by Keystone Millworks are painted in Rosemary by Sherwin-Williams. The range hood and hardware were designed by Sessions. A decorative backsplash is made of concrete tiles from Zumpano.

The living space in the estate's double cottage is fitted out with a Tibetan carpet, Millefleur, from Madeline Weinrib and a Swedish mid-century Hemmakväll sofa designed by Carl Malmsten and covered in pink Sunbrella fabric from Bjork Studio. The photographs are by Vee Speers, the marble coffee table is from Kreoo by the Davani Group, and the paint color on the walls is Iron Ore by Sherwin-Williams.

TEXTILES

For the cozy bedroom in the stone cottage on the property, a pair of twin beds with custom Gothic-inspired headboards were designed by Sessions and are covered in Cloudband fabric from Zak + Fox. The custom bedding is made of Obi, Yamato, and Mazan fabrics from Zak + Fox. The room's lamps, side table, and rectangular accent pillow are vintage.

NESTLED AMID PASTURES and wooded grounds peppered with century-old oaks near the Appalachian foothills in North Georgia, the weekend home of Pam Sessions and her husband, Don Donnelly, possesses much of the charm of the nearby historic houses. But inside the dwelling, every room is laid out and finished to accommodate a thoroughly contemporary lifestyle.

"We wanted the interiors to reflect who we are and how we live today," says Sessions. "At the same time, we wanted to pay homage to the elaborate nineteenth-century mansions around us." As the founders of Hedgewood Homes, a company that designs and builds custom homes and plans entire neighborhoods, both husband and wife have mastered the art of creating houses that reflect both the personalities and pragmatic needs of their owners. So when they opted to build a second home for themselves, they had all the tools and resources they needed to make their own idyllic weekend retreat, including the influence of their longtime collaborator architect, Lew Oliver.

As it turned out, Oliver also has a home in the vicinity, a rural township known as Sautee Nacoochee. "We had a little wish list of what we'd like to have on the property, and this particular site just had it all," says Sessions, whose primary home/studio is in Atlanta. "This makes for a wonderful commute," says Sessions, "but because it's so convenient, the downside is you can work all the time. We wanted a place where we could just escape for the weekend. We sit off a quiet gravel road with a mountain in the back and a former cattle pond in the pasture, so it fits the bill," she adds.

Inspired by the idea of a classic farmstead with a main house accompanied by a cluster of ancillary structures, the couple worked with Oliver to design a two-story structure surrounded by smaller cottages to form an inviting family compound that appears to have evolved over years. "We wanted it to be a place where we could easily have family and friends," says Sessions. As such, in addition to the more formal main house, three freestanding cottages—one made of stone, another clad in board-and-batten, and a third finished with white clapboard siding—all contain a private bedroom, making them ideal sanctuaries for their two grown children and other visiting family members or friends. Another clapboard structure that adjoins the main house serves as a communal gathering space and contains a massive kitchen, wine cellar, scullery, and dining area big enough to host seated Thanksgiving dinners for twenty-five.

Once the couple finished designing the structures with Oliver, they turned to other trusted sources to help them finish out the interior spaces. "We have spent our careers working with so many artisans and craftspeople, and those relationships are very important to us, so one of the things that makes this house special for me and my husband is that it reflects those people and those relationships," says Sessions. An example of such connections include the wide-plank wood floors used throughout, all created with timber reclaimed from barns in Kentucky by a family-owned company with which the couple has worked for years. The oak panels and frieze in the living room were crafted by a favorite mill shop, and the custom hardware in the kitchen was made by the couple's talented metalsmith; thick slabs of pearl gray Georgia marble used as door stoops came from a local quarry. "I wanted to have architectural elements that pay tribute to that period when there was more detail and more time spent on milled finishes, but still maintain a comfortable feel with reused materials that make the house feel like it's been there for years."

Many of the furnishings and accents reflect associations with family members or industry friends, too. The big barn table in the dining area, for example, was purchased at a gallery in Los Angeles, where the couple's daughter lives and works in the film industry. "It makes us feel there's a part her here, too," says Sessions. A favorite painting by Atlanta artist Michael Dines hangs in the dining room, where a wall was sized to accommodate the artwork. And some antiques and vintage pieces, including the Napoleon chairs in the largest cottage, were purchased from a furniture dealer in Atlanta with whom Sessions enjoys a decades-long friendship. Even the landscape, which was developed by Sessions' husband, includes classic Southern plants like magnolia, native azalea and mature American boxwood acquired from the couple's preferred local nurseries. "With so many ingredients that we love, our home not only feels like it's been here forever, it really feels like us," says Sessions. "It feels like where we belong." ■

Homeowner Pam Sessions worked with Peyton Avrett to create the light fixtures on the covered porch.

"It's important to just combine the things that you love."

—Pam Sessions