

# 30A *Style*

Eleanor Lynn Nesmith  
photography by Jean Allsopp



## FITTING IN GRAYTON BEACH

In contrast to some of the more rustic and weathered cottages of Grayton Beach, Suzanne and Tom Watson's new home has a decidedly contemporary air about it. But in spirit and stance, it surely is a very old soul.

As founder of the design studio INSIDE, Suzanne often teams up with classically influenced architects for clients. For her own home, she wanted a more modern feel without sacrificing the warmth that comes with familiar forms and natural materials. "Old Grayton cottage meets urban loft was my goal," explains Suzanne.

The Watsons turned to architect Lourdes Reynafarje of Kiara Designs, known for contemporary interpretations of seemingly opposing aesthetics. "Rather than focus on a single style, I embrace modern sensibilities and the ambivalence of architecture," says Lourdes.

Working together, Lourdes and Suzanne manipulated romantic notions of the Charleston sideyard house with the efficiency of a foursquare farmhouse. The front door opens into a screened porch that doubles as a congenial foyer. A hipped metal roof with deep overhangs crowns the structure.

Craftsmanship and tried-and-true vernacular conventions define the house. Inside, there's a kind of Southern prose in the simple, straightforward arrangements of the open kitchen, dining and living rooms. Wood-paneled ceilings and walls, vintage light fixtures and antique hardware add layers of texture and character.

Suzanne is equally ardent about unexpected groupings and artful embellishments. Admittedly a serious collector, Suzanne assembles all manner of art and accessories. In the foyer, a painting by Alabama folk artist Jimmy Lee Sudduth hangs below one by musician John Mellencamp, a thank-you to Suzanne after she designed his home in Indiana.

Throughout the home, tactile materials and carpenter details instill an awareness of the past, while the simple geometry responds to contemporary patterns of living.

Suzanne and Tom planned the house before their young son Wyatt was part of the equation. Finishes chosen for aesthetic reasons have practical side effects. The reclaimed oak floors offer a chic minimalist appearance, as well as a playground for Wyatt to spread out toys and puzzles.

It's a commonsense way of building that responds to the coastal climate and culture. But more importantly, the home's easy-going vibe and free-floating spaces are perfect for an active family at the beach.

A modest structure can be full of complexity and pleasing contradictions when the scale, proportions and detailing are precise. A house with too forceful a presence would spoil the quirky quality that is the essence of Grayton. The Watsons' family home feels just right for its time and place.





*In the kitchen, concrete and stainless steel countertops combine with vintage mercury lamps, wood-paneled ceilings and craftsman cabinets for the perfect mix of old and new.*



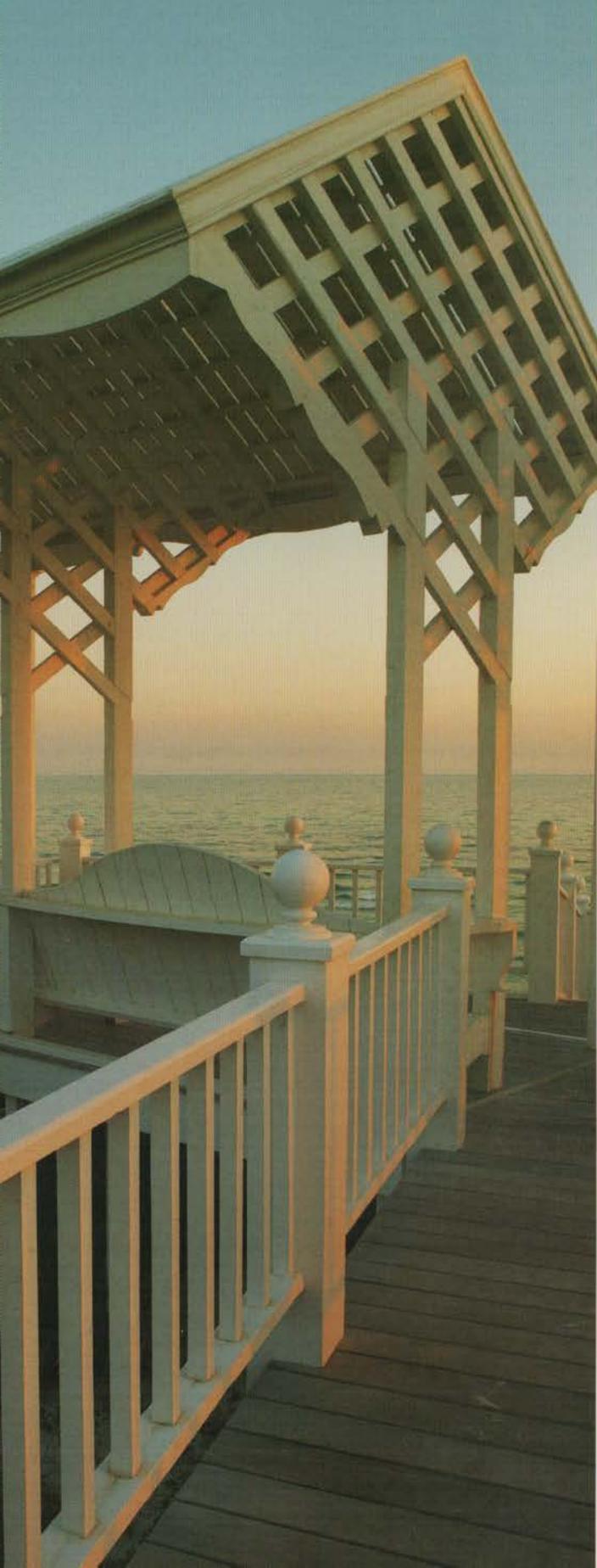


*Right: Treasured paintings by Mellencamp and Sudduth create an artful vignette that welcomes visitors who enter through either the front porch or the side door. Opposite: The living room with its antique English bamboo chair paired with Eames stools reflects Suzanne's creative juxtapositions of old and new. The two large prints are vintage botanical diagrams.*



*Above: The porch functions as the entry foyer and true outdoor living room. The louvered door and operable Bermuda shutter afford privacy from the street as well as ventilation. Right: A trellis covered with confederate jasmine marks the front door. A second-floor sleeping porch is located off the master bedroom.*





# RESOURCE GUIDE

## INTERIOR DESIGNERS

Suzanne Rester Watson  
INSIDE Design  
Grayton Beach  
[www.inside-inc.com](http://www.inside-inc.com)

Paige Sumblin Schnell  
Tracery Interiors  
Rosemary Beach and Birmingham  
[www.traceryinteriors.com](http://www.traceryinteriors.com)

Erica Gibson Pierce  
Pizitz Home and Cottage  
Seaside  
[www.theseasidestyle.com](http://www.theseasidestyle.com)

Laura and Michael Granberry  
Simple Design  
Seaside  
[www.artofsimpleseaside.com](http://www.artofsimpleseaside.com)

Gary L. Brewer  
Robert A. M. Stern Architects  
New York City  
[www.ramsa.com](http://www.ramsa.com)

Susan Ferrier  
McAlpine Booth and Ferrier Interiors  
Atlanta  
[www.McalpineBoothFerrier.com](http://www.McalpineBoothFerrier.com)

Susan Massey  
Bohlert Massey Interiors  
Seacrest Beach  
[www.BohlertMassey.com](http://www.BohlertMassey.com)

Dale Trice  
Design on the Gulf  
Seagrove  
[www.designservicesfl.com](http://www.designservicesfl.com)

Rhea Crenshaw  
Rhea Crenshaw Interiors  
Memphis  
[www.rheacrenshaw.com](http://www.rheacrenshaw.com)

Carol Murphy Rauschkolb  
Carol Murphy Design  
Rosemary Beach  
[www.carolmurphydesign.com](http://www.carolmurphydesign.com)

Georgia Carlee  
GCI Design  
Santa Rosa Beach  
[www.gcarlee.com](http://www.gcarlee.com)

Erika McPherson Powell  
Urban Grace  
Santa Rosa Beach  
[www.UrbanGraceInteriors.com](http://www.UrbanGraceInteriors.com)

## ARCHITECTS

Lourdes Reynafarje  
Kiara Designs  
Seacrest Beach  
[www.KiaraDesigns.com](http://www.KiaraDesigns.com)

Aldo Rossi  
Studio di Architettura  
Milan