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Spring Awakening

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Franck home

Massey home

Double Vision

What happens when an architect and a designer team up for an ambitious duplex renovation? A side-by-side study in thoughtfully blended period details and contemporary touches.

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WHEN MICHAEL FRANCK, a Washington, D.C.-based architect, first toured an abandoned duplex for sale on West Waldburg Street in 2014, he thought it would make an ideal investment property. He didn't expect to become smitten with the structure, which now serves as his primary residence.

"I didn't plan on moving in," Franck says. "As we got deeper into the project, I fell in love with the height of the ceilings and the openness of the space."

Divided into five apartments, plus two carriage houses, the two-story wooden building had been forsaken for 15 years and lacked central heat and air conditioning. A leaky roof allowed for significant water intrusion, causing black mold, decaying plaster and other significant problems.

Undaunted by the condition, Franck partnered with interior designer Jay Massey, a Savannah native who now owns Massey Martin Design in Washington, D.C., to form an LLC that would allow the two owners to renovate both halves of the duplex together.

"Throughout the renovation, many individuals offered input on how to cut corners and expedite the process," Massey recalls. "Such advice, while cost-effective, would have discredited the historic integrity of the renovation."

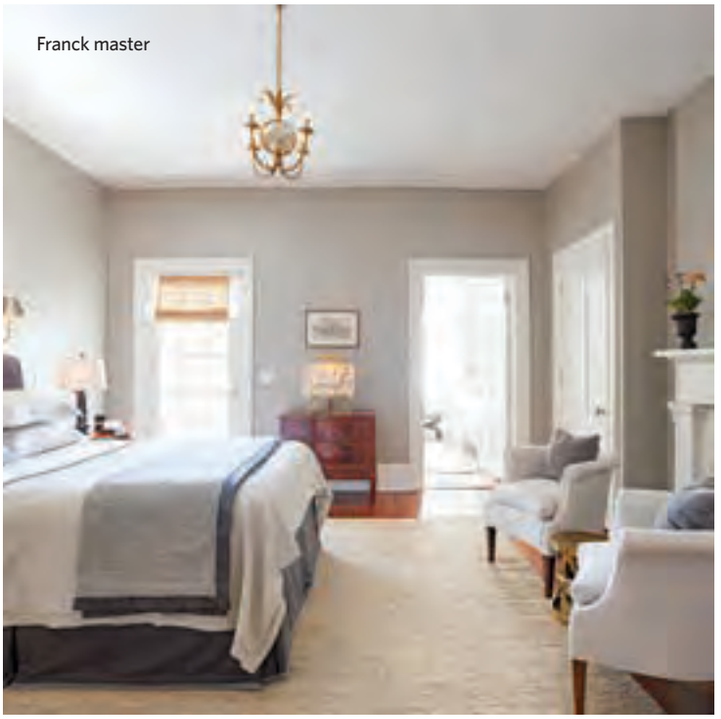
Franck purchased one half of the duplex, while Massey invested in the other half. In consultation with one another, they made strategic decisions that brought the building back to life, creating chic interiors that effortlessly blend contemporary appointments with period details.

"We wanted a melding of traditional and modern sensibilities," Franck explains. "It was important to preserve as much of the original plaster ceilings and walls as possible, but we upgraded all the electrical, plumbing and other systems. We did it together as a team."

Franck and Massey decided to create mirror-image residences, with identical restorations and appointments, down to the wall colors, finishes, countertops, cabinetry, lighting fixtures and window blinds. The homes even have the same soaking tubs in the master baths and twin closet systems in the master bedrooms.

Designing bright, livable spaces for entertaining and relaxing was a top priority for this creative duo.

"While honoring the historic envelope of the homes, we sought a look that was both timeless and livable," Massey says. "We were able to remove aspects of the homes ▶


Franck master

Massey master

that were modified in the later part of the 20th century and those which did not contribute to the original footprint of the home. Likewise, we were able to repurpose 19th-century spaces that were not practical for 21st-century living."

Today, Massey loves spending time on his home's restored porches—a few of the many perks of the well-designed outdoor living spaces.

"Whether watching the world go by on the front porch, catching a sunset on the upstairs porch or dining on the screened porch overlooking the courtyard," he says, "the porches became an integral part of the home." ▶

After restoring the building's original footprint, Michael Franck strategically rearranged a few interior walls to allow for as much natural light as possible and to create an airy, open feeling. The entire renovation took 14 months and required quite a bit of creativity. The architect designed custom closets on either side of the chimney breasts in the master bedrooms, converted the upstairs trunk rooms into laundry rooms and en-suite bathrooms, built powder rooms and hall closets under the staircases and added built-in bars in the dens. He added recessed lighting for a decidedly modern touch, brightening the newly restored dove-white walls. "I didn't want the interiors to be too fussy," Franck notes. "It was important to make the houses relatable and livable."

Franck

Massey

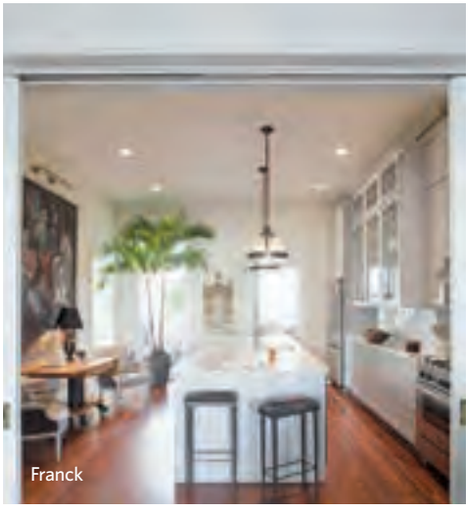
When one half of the duplex was missing an architectural detail—like a plaster medallion, a pilaster base or a newel post—the other half often provided direction to help fill in the gaps. Franck expanded the kitchens in both houses, relocating the functional spaces to the center of each structure. Today, sleek white cabinetry accentuates original plaster molding, marble countertops, state-of-the-art appliances and chic lighting. "Having the kitchen, with its expansive marble top island, located at the heart of the home, invites guests to gather," Jay Massey says. "The home is ideal for both large audience entertaining, as well as smaller living."

Franck carriage house

Franck prefers the first-floor den, with its cozy, intimate interiors, as well as the courtyard, with its lush palms, bubbling fountain, lounge-inspired furniture and herringbone-brick hardscapes.

In 2016, Franck and Massey earned a Historic Savannah Foundation Preservation Award for their ambitious restoration of this Victorian-era duplex. More meaningful than any award, however, is the knowledge that they respected the integrity of the structure throughout the renovation process while giving it a fresh, luxurious update.

"It's important to create something timeless that feels right," Franck explains. "Taking the structure back to its original has extended its life. We've restored it to something authentic. In the end, it exceeded our expectations." ▶



Franck

Massey

Franck

Today, the large living rooms are packed with architectural details, from decorative moldings to vintage soapstone mantle surrounds. Floor-to-ceiling double-hung windows provide plenty of ambient light and scenic streetscape views.

Massey

Franck/ Massey Duplex

Owners:
Side #1: Michael Franck
Side #2: Jay Massey

Year built: 1871

Year purchased: 2014

Square footage: 2,400 per side

Accommodations: 3 bedrooms, 3.5 baths in main buildings; 1 bedroom, 1 bath in each carriage house

Time to complete renovation: 14 months

Massey

REFERRALS

Architects/planners: Michael Franck, Franck and Lohsen Architects; Jay Massey, Massey Martin Design

Interior designer:
Side #1: Michael Franck, Franck and Lohsen Architects
Side #2: Jay Massey and James Martin, Massey Martin Design

Contractor/builder: Getty Construction, Richmond Hill

Tile/flooring: John Ryals

Paint/wallpaper: Chapman Painting Contractors Inc.

Windows/doors: Savannah Millworks, Guerry Lumber

Lighting design: Jay Massey and Michael Franck, with fixtures by Circa Lighting, Restoration Hardware and Pottery Barn

Landscape design: Jay Massey and Michael Franck

Fountains: Campania

Sail shades: Tenshon

Window boxes: Walpole Woodworkers

Carpenter: Zachary Snoddy

Exterior shutters: Savannah Millworks

Hardware: Guerry Lumber

Plumbing: Jenkins Plumbing

Fixtures: Ferguson

Flooring: Original antique heart pine floors restored by Larry Cowart Flooring Surfaces

Landscaping: Low Country Landscapes

HVAC: Beasley's Conditioned Air, Ellabell

Furniture: Owners' collections of European antiques blended with locally purchased contemporary furnishings from 24e, One Fish Two Fish, Lulu and Coco, and Number Four Eleven

Custom-designed headboards: Massey Martin Design

Bedding and linens: Pine Cone Hill

Appliances: Viking refrigerator and freezer, microwave and wine cooler; Bosch dishwasher; Bertazzoni range oven, all from AJ Madison, New York

Accessories: Antique Venetian photochrome prints in original Italian frames; architectural engravings from Florence, Italy; Lowcountry oil painting by Michael Karas; 18th-century French mirror in original blue paint; writing desk painted by Bob Christian; Flemish portrait by Luc de Decker ■

Franck also restored six boarded-up fireplaces in each residence, refinished original heart pine floors, replicated period moldings and repaired the parlor-level pocket doors. Behind the main structure, he designed and constructed a pair of two-story carriage houses, creating intimate, tropical-themed courtyards that provide ample space for outdoor entertaining.

Franck

Massey

Franck