

A full-page photograph of a brown horse grazing in a lush green field. The horse is positioned on the left side of the frame, facing right, with its head lowered to the grass. The background is a soft-focus green field under bright, natural light.

David Kleinberg and
Madison Cox fulfill
an equestrian's dream.

• 1 • indoors and out
riding
high

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Bryan Baldwin, a devoted horsewoman, in the entry hallway of her Florida home. A painting by Walton Ford hangs above a pair of Syrian urns. The star chandelier is from Cobweb Antiques. See Resources.



“Bryan’s like a wild tomboy who’s
as determined as Cruella de Vil”



When Bryan Baldwin first showed landscape architect Madison Cox a neglected, half-dead citrus grove in Florida and told him she envisioned it as rolling pastures and elaborate paddocks for her horses, he said to himself, “Lady, you’re bananas to build a horse farm here!” The tenacious Baldwin, an amateur competitive rider on the “A” Circuit with the fresh looks of Ali MacGraw, nonetheless prevailed. “She’s like a wild tomboy,” says Cox, “or a fairy godmother who’s as determined as Cruella de Vil.”

Interior designer David Kleinberg was enlisted for the new home’s decor, making this the pair’s third collaborative effort with Baldwin. “We’re always of one mind about what’s going on, so we’re trusted to make decisions,” says Kleinberg. “The challenge was that this was entirely her vision, and we had to create completely from scratch.”

The first step was to clean the slate. Only five trees on the 40-acre property—four oaks, one magnolia, no oranges—were saved. Cox then began to sculpt the sunbaked earth, siting roads, the house, a pool house, stables, paddocks, a bridle trail, jump fields, and new plantings. The logistics of coordinating with Kleinberg and the architects (Neil Turner



This page, clockwise from top left: Bronze candlesticks on an 18th-century English refectory table. A view of the stables. A Sally Gall photograph hangs above a demilune table; the late-19th-century oak side chairs are English. Facing page: The limestone fireplace surround in the great room was made by Elizabeth Street Gallery. See Resources.



This page: A late-19th-century French oak mirror in the master bedroom. David Kleinberg designed the linen-upholstered headboard. Facing page, clockwise from top: A Kohler tub is set into an alcove in the master bath. In the guest room, a 19th-century West Indian mahogany four-poster. The chairs in the kitchen are 18th-century English. See Resources.



for the house, John Blackburn for the stables) was managed by blueprints and sketches faxed and FedExed between Florida, Georgia, Washington, D.C., and New York, and by endless conference calls. A year in the design phase, the house took another two years to build.

The overall look was inspired by Baldwin's visits to the Caribbean and pictures she'd seen of houses in Spain and the South of France. "I wanted to blend architectural influences," she says, "so I specified the barrel-tile roof that uses three different shades of terra-cotta, as well as mahogany doors, arched doorways, creamy stucco walls, and coral stone."

Pairs of French doors open to a colonnaded breezeway that sweeps around the perimeter of the light-flooded house, which benefits from a natural continuity between limestone pavers inside and exterior coral-stone porches. Steps and a lawn lead to a 25-by-75-foot pool, the pool house, and a fire pit where Baldwin's children, aged seven and ten, indulge in the fine art of roasting hot dogs. Where skeletal orange trees once stood, tulip poplars, magnolias, hollies, jacarandas, sweet gums, junipers, and oleanders now flourish. The bridle trail, lined with 4,000 young oak trees, meanders along the property; out in the paddocks, a stable of hunters is training for competition.





The atmospherics indoors are just as impressive. The great room, which boasts a cedar-beamed cathedral ceiling and a soaring chimney breast one could almost walk into, is full of the unexpected: an 18th-century English walnut refectory table flanked by low rectangular benches, rather than dining chairs; back-to-back upholstered sofas for entertaining; offbeat late-17th-century black Chinese console tables; and comfortable armchairs upholstered in woven damask. A practical combination of neutral colors (creamy whites, taupes, browns), user-friendly fabrics (woven cottons, linens, raffia), and furniture that's durable without being mean creates a feel of casual simplicity throughout the house, despite their tasteful sophistication. Even a collection of sporting-art paintings by Sir Alfred Munnings and J. F. Herring takes on a relaxed air here.

The design team met Baldwin's more unique requests with aplomb. A Jacuzzi was sunk into a walled-in garden off the master bathroom, and the planted courtyard, notable for its pierced quatrefoil walls and a peaked Gothic door that leads to another garden, can be seen through a glass wall behind the interior bathtub. Baldwin also wanted to be able to sunbathe at the swimming pool while submerged in a few inches of water; Cox responded by extending a narrow shelf just below the water line and running it the length of the pool. "It was a last-minute modification," he says, "a push-the-envelope kind of challenge that produces unique results." No doubt, the envelope contains another challenge or two. ★