

# Living LARGE

A clever curator combines color and texture in an airy Emerald Pointe abode.

*Ariel Felton* comes across a real gem.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LEO JOHNSON

AFTER LEARNING THEY WOULD SOON WELCOME a new baby into the family, Brooke and Tony Thomas made the decision to leave their Kensington Park home after only six months in favor of a bigger space. Drawn in by views of saltwater marshes and the shade of live oak trees, the couple decided on a 4,000-square-foot home in Emerald Pointe—almost twice the size of their former home.

Brooke, who co-owns Clutter, a furniture consignment store in Midtown, admits she felt intimidated when it came time to decorate the spacious home.

“I was used to decorating smaller, ranch-style houses,” Brooke confides. “I knew

## THOMAS STATS

**Year built:** 2012

**Year purchased:** 2015

**Square footage:** 4,000

**Accommodations:** 5 bedrooms, 4.5 baths

**Time to complete remodel:** 4 months and counting

**FIND YOUR FOCUS.** An eye-catching painting of a cow on a bright orange background that hangs in the living room once gave Brooke decorating pause. “I kept trying to match things around this cow,” Brooke says. “There was orange everywhere and it just wasn’t working out.” That’s when Brooke decided to curate the perfect blend of complementary colors, using the orange in the painting as a color splash instead of the main focus.







**COMPARE AND CONTRAST.** The Thomases' traditional Lowcountry vernacular exterior belies the blend of mod and vintage appointments inside the home. In the dining room, Brooke showcases a midcentury buffet beneath an electric painting created at the 2016 A-Town Get Down Arts and Music Festival by a band of local artists. The sleek, contemporary chrome table (*opposite*) works well with classic bamboo and cane chairs. White feathered juju hats from Cameroon, Africa, pop like sand dollars against a deep blue sea of navy grasscloth.

what to do with 6- or 7-foot ceilings, but was lost when it came to 9- and 10-foot ceilings."

Almost a year later that statement is hard to believe as I survey the décor in the formal dining room, which features navy blue grasscloth wallcoverings set off by white trim and a large, multicolored pop art painting. Brooke says the key to the home's success is flexibility with design choices, breaking a few rules and filling it with pieces that spoke to both her and Tony.

"I wanted a house that was beautiful without being too curated or matchy-matchy," Brooke explains. "I wanted to be excited to come home. I learned that if you start by buying the things you love, eventually it will come together."

**BREAKING AWAY**

The décor throughout the Thomas home is a marriage of different styles, mixing more formal pieces with surprising modern touches.

In the living room, the classic onion tassel trim on the drapes plays nicely with a bright orange painting of a cow, while a set of steer horns crowns the top of a wooden cabinet. In the foyer, three white plaster horseheads hang in line, facing a long vertical mirror with silver trim and two larger-than-life abstracts infused with shades of green.





“I found myself in a decorating loop—painted, natural and shiny,” Brooke says. “There’s nothing wrong with that, but I had to break out of that routine and find a way to add texture in more interesting ways.”

That’s where Lynn Rahn, Brooke’s mother and co-owner of Clutter, stepped in to help. As a housewarming gift, Lynn transformed the home’s fireplace into a shimmering centerpiece, covering the pillars and trim with found seashells. The result is an eye-catching mosaic, which Brooke loved so much that she repeated it on the dresser in the master bedroom and the piano in the front den.

“As a decorator, I find people always want my opinion on how their house should be,” Brooke says. “But the only

thing a house should be is a reflection of the people who live there.”

#### ARTFUL LIVING

“I don’t know how it happened,” Brooke says, laughing. “But one day, Tony and I looked up, and we were art collectors.”

**STAND BY YOUR MAN.** A gallery wall in the back den of the home features a wall dedicated to Tony’s seven-plus years in the military, including the framed American flag that once protected Tony’s forward operating base. It is flanked by a mounted deer, lending the room a more masculine vibe. “The kids call this ‘daddy’s den,’” Brooke laughs.





Indeed, works in an array of media fill their rooms—from the framed Changshan in the master bedroom to “The Patriot’s Wife,” an impressive portrait of a fully clothed chicken in a ruffled colonial-style jacket and top hat that adorns the kitchen. Even the three Thomas children—Ray, Violet and Ford—were treated to design decisions that reflected their personalities, including framed book pages and playful flamingo art. Brooke plans to recreate a gallery of her children’s artwork, just like they had in their previous home.

*“It’s less about the individual pieces of décor and more about the feeling a room gives you.”*

On the deep ledge located halfway up the home’s staircase, Brooke arranged coffee table books with a large sculpture of a camel. “It’s such a big space that I knew it couldn’t stay empty,” she says. “A mirror would’ve been too obvious—this was another place where I tried to break out of my comfort zone and do something different.”

Brooke, however, isn’t one to create a vignette and let it sit still for too long. “Like most homes, I think mine will constantly change—furniture and art pieces will move; paint colors will change,” she says. “But, it’s less about the individual pieces of décor and more about the feeling a room gives you.”



**SAY IT WITH FLOWERS.** Hidden behind an unassuming entry hall door is a delightful surprise. Fine artist Katherine Sandoz covered the walls of the petite downstairs powder room with her unmistakable floral designs. Although conventional wisdom dictates small forms in tight spaces, Brooke and Katherine opted for bold strokes of color that brighten and enliven what would otherwise prove a utilitarian under-the-stairs alcove with floor-to-ceiling art.



#### THOMAS REFERRALS

**Interior designer:** Brooke Thomas  
**Contractor/builder:** Home, Walter Strong; garage suite, Ed Cook, Structures Unlimited  
**Tile/flooring:** Ed Cook, Structures Unlimited  
**Paint/wallpaper:** Anthony Hewitt/Dan Grovenstein  
**Bath design:** Garage suite addition, Brooke Thomas  
**Appliances:** Livingood’s Appliances and Bedding  
**Carpenter:** Ed Cook, Structures Unlimited  
**Plumber:** Consolidated Mechanical  
**HVAC:** Arctic Air  
**Furniture:** Allison Seeger, custom slipcovers and pillows; Clutter Furnishings and Interiors; One Fish Two Fish; Restoration Hardware and Pottery Barn  
**Accessories:** Clutter Furnishings and Interiors; Sherry’s Honey Pot Fabric  
**Art:** ShopSCAD, Clutter Furnishings and Interiors, Katherine Sandoz, Tracy Rose, Laney Contemporary and owners’ personal collection ■

