



In the foyer (this page), a painting of a prize-winning royal thoroughbred circa 1805 hangs above a French Empire chest and a George III chair. The six-acre property (opposite) overlooks Creighton Farms' manicured golf course.

FRESH FRONTIER

British hotelier Simon Lowe creates a Virginia getaway steeped in chic, New World style

BY SHARON JAFFE DAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANGIE SECKINGER





With its green pastures, horse farms and picturesque towns, rural Virginia reminds many travelers of the English countryside. That was the impression British hotelier Simon Lowe and his wife Tanya had when they visited the area in search of a vacation property a few years ago. Intent on building a home where they could spend time near their two grown daughters who live in Bethesda and Brooklyn, the Lowes found the ideal setting in the gated community of Creighton Farms near Leesburg. “We didn’t want to live in suburbia or in the city, so we looked farther out,” Tanya explains. “This was the perfect combination of the country and being near enough to our children.”

They purchased a double lot (six-plus acres) overlooking Creighton’s Jack Nicklaus golf course. “The idea,” says Simon, “was that we’d be here for spring, fall and Christmas.” The couple splits the rest of the year between their residence in Surrey, England, and their villa on the Caribbean isle of Nevis.

Though he’s had no formal training, Lowe has been designing his own restaurants, hotels—and homes—for decades. The couple’s former residences, including a 14th-century estate in Sussex, have

DESIGN: SIMON LOWE, Surrey, England. BUILDER: PATRICK LATESSA, The Galileo Group, McLean, Virginia.



Tanya and Simon Lowe (opposite, on their front porch) spend quality time in the great room (left), which takes the place of a formal living room in their airy, light-filled new home. On one side, the great room opens to Simon’s office (below), where he works at a desk from Restoration Hardware.



been featured in British shelter magazines. Simon even helped close friend Susie Westmacott redecorate the principal guest suite in the British Embassy residence during the recent tenure of Sir Peter Westmacott as ambassador in Washington. So there was no question that Lowe would design the new Virginia abode.

Lowe’s country house, however, would not be a “Downton Abbey” throwback. “I didn’t want anything to do with homes in England,” he says. “I think houses have to fit in with their natural topography. Whereas some Americans want to have English Tudor houses or French chateaux, I thought ‘We’re in Virginia,’ so we looked around at Virginia farmhouses.”

Lowe drew up plans for a light and airy retreat that would take inspiration from its pastoral setting. Then he gave the drawings to his builder, Patrick Latessa of The Galileo Group, who hired a local architect to execute final drawings. During the ten months of construction that followed, marvels Tanya, “Simon visited only three times, and 95 percent of everything was perfect.”

No doubt, lessons learned from hotel and restaurant development came into play. “From the point of view of building smoothly, you have to decide what you want, stick to it and let them get on with it,” Lowe advises.

Though its stone, painted-brick and clapboard exterior resembles a typical farmhouse, visitors discover vaulted, open-plan interiors that embrace a 21st-century sensibility. “Because of the way we live here, we wanted it all open and casual,” explains Simon. The large entry foyer, flanked by Tanya’s study and the dining



The spacious kitchen caters to parties of all sizes. The pale-gray Wood-Mode cabinets and marble countertops and backsplash tile blend in with the home's serene color scheme. To the right, the sunroom beckons.



The sunroom (this page, clockwise from top, left) houses an antique apothecary chest used to store linens; a fan from Burma and golfer figurines; a breakfront from Vermont; and access to the covered terrace. A painting from Hanoi hangs on the floating fireplace wall (opposite) that separates the breakfast room and great room.

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—SIMON LOWE



Bespoke finishes—from the cherry blossom mural by Rosey Cameron Smith to the hammered-metal fireplace surround (these pages)—lend a distinctive style to the dining room. The chandelier and table are from UK-based companies Vaughan and Oka, respectively, while the chairs and drapes are from Restoration Hardware.

room, leads into a great room surrounded by Simon’s study, a terrace and the breakfast room and kitchen. Unfettered by curtains, French doors and windows overlook the rolling landscape.

The kitchen would be the envy of any home chef. Pale gray Wood-Mode cabinetry provides plenty of storage, while generous marble countertops offer space for food prep and serving. To keep dirty plates out of sight, Lowe installed two dishwashers. “It’s all about making it look nice but at the same time being utilitarian,” he says.

After much de-cluttering when they relinquished their estate in Sussex, the Lowes decided to decorate their Virginia getaway more sparingly. “We’re not minimalist,” Simon explains, “but at the same time we took a more modern approach to achieve light, space and yet a coziness.” He mixed antiques with new transitional pieces large enough in scale to stand up to the lofty interiors. Furnishings and artwork collected on their global travels—Turkish pottery, Peruvian silver and inlaid furniture from India—lend character and beauty.

A neutral palette of beiges and grays is enlivened with subtle purple and celadon accents. Though some precious antiques were left in their original finishes, Simon had others painted dark gray



The restful master suite features a sitting room (above) with a "Tree of Life" mural by Rosey Cameron Smith. A partition upholstered in John Lewis fabric separates the sitting and sleeping areas and also serves as a headboard (below). A painting by Robert Bissell entitled "The Guru" hangs above a chest of inlaid stone from India (right). The mirror was acquired in an antiques shop on King's Road in London.





Mementos the Lowes have collected abroad adorn the bedroom, from the Peruvian silver mirror that hangs above a dressing table (above) to the scroll of proverbs written in Hebrew that the couple acquired in Israel, displayed over a settee (below). In the master bath, custom fittings had to be created for the floating, glass-enclosed shower (right). The tub (opposite) enjoys a panoramic view of rolling scenery.



to complement the look. “Brown furniture is sort of out,” he admits. “You can’t sell these things for a tuppence. So I had them painted and they look great.”

Bespoke finishes add touches of shimmer and glam. A dining room mural by St. Kitts-based artist Rosey Cameron Smith pays homage to Washington’s cherry blossoms—and a happy memory. “When Tanya and I were first going out, she took me to see the cherry blossoms downtown,” recalls Simon. “That’s when I fell in love with her.” In the main-level master suite, an upholstered partition stylishly separates the sitting and sleeping areas and a cove ceiling is finished in metallic silver for a Deco effect.

With four guest bedrooms on the second floor and one on the lower level, the home is a hub for visiting family—including the Lowes’ two grandchildren. Another mural by Smith depicting the four seasons adorns the indoor pool, where Simon swims daily.

In addition to Grayshott, the spa hotel he owns in Surrey (noted for its 2015 book, *Gut Gastronomy*), Lowe is currently developing Aman Nevis. The high-end resort designed by architect Jean-Michel Gathy is scheduled to break ground later this year. Lowe has already designed the villa he and Tanya will share on the property.

Whether he’s creating a home or a five-star hotel, Lowe has worked out a formula for success. “The whole thing about a hotel, a home or any space is how comfortable you feel in it. It doesn’t need to be expensive or glamorous. It needs to have a sense of warmth,” he observes.

“Whereas I used to be more of a conformist,” he continues, “I’ve come to appreciate that in America, you can start with a clean palette and design, quite simply, the home of your dreams.” ❖

Photographer Angie Seckinger splits her time between Potomac, Maryland, and Spain.

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