

Custom Builder®

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INSPIRING BUSINESS AND DESIGN EXCELLENCE

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redefine one-of-a-kind

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The Winner's Circle

There's always an element of subjectivity in judging a design competition such as the Best in American Living Awards. We try to minimize it by assembling a jury that is diverse in expertise, experience and geographic location. But when it's time to hand out the awards, some people are surprised to see who gets a trophy and who goes home empty-handed.

This year, we chose to include BALA finalists as well as winners in the custom-home categories (see page 18). In our view, there's almost always a clear winner in every category — though sometimes there's no winner at all, only finalists. So what makes a project a winner versus a finalist?

BALA finalists stand out from the crowd because of their workmanship, attention to detail, strong elevations and smart use of space inside and out. In many cases they've solved a problem in a creative way. Some are so unusual yet executed so well that the judges insist they be recognized. But the winners bring something extra to the table: ideas that you can apply to your own projects.

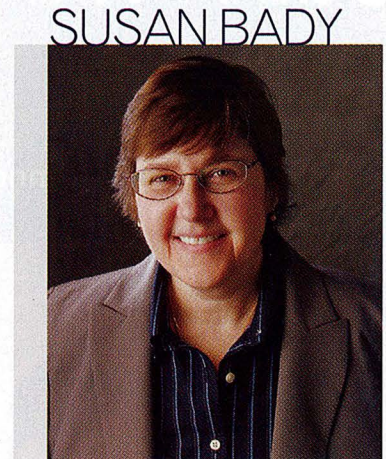
Take, for example, the Sea Strand/LeCates poolhouse. At first glance, this guest house/poolhouse might seem too unique and specialized to offer any take-aways. But notice how skillfully this oasis is planned to maintain privacy while at the same time offering bay and island views.

The judges were also impressed with the way the style of the poolhouse matches the main house, incorporating colorful details and accents that are indigenous to the region. It's a lesson in keeping the goodwill of past clients. You want to be their first phone call if they decide to build an addition.

The Chanin residence in Boulder, Colo., is a lesson in overcoming limitations. The architects had to fit a large amount of living space onto a compact, sloping lot; maximize views and natural light; and still comply with the city's height regulations. They accomplished it all with a three-level plan, lots of glass and a flat roof. This understated beauty of a home is a good case study for custom builders who work in established neighborhoods where they must cope with a multitude of restrictions.

Finally, there's the Home of the Year (or as I've come to think of it, the anti-Tara). An over-the-top Southern plantation house wouldn't have passed muster with community architectural guidelines, nor would it have suited the clients' personal tastes.

Instead, architect Wayne Windham came up with a three-part design that reposes quietly amid the trees. As one BALA judge commented, it's a collage or compound-like approach to single-family design — not one big box but a collection of pieces. And the home is brilliant in its simplicity, with one big room for relaxing and entertaining, mul-



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BALA WINNERS
BRING SOME-
THING EXTRA TO
THE TABLE: IDEAS
THAT YOU CAN
APPLY TO YOUR
OWN PROJECTS.

multiple outdoor living spaces and plenty of space for overnight guests. Yet there are also places for solitary reflection, such as the master bedroom's private deck.

Take some time to ponder the award-winning custom homes featured in this issue, and take away a couple of ideas to refresh your imagination. ■

Best in American Living Award Winner

BEST IN SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION,
BEST ONE-OF-A-KIND CUSTOM HOME 4,001 TO 6,500 SQUARE FEET &
HOME OF THE YEAR



PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LEO JOHNSON, ATLANTIC ARCHIVES

Project Name: Palmetto Bluff Retreat
Location: Bluffton, S.C.
Designer/Architect: Wayne Windham
Architect, Johns Island, S.C.
Builder: J.T. Turner Construction,
Savannah, Ga.

Language of the Lowcountry

Tara it's not, but that was intentional. The owners of this South Carolina home wanted it to have strong indoor-outdoor relationships and an architectural style that would blend with their minimalistic furnishings. In the Palmetto Bluff community, home exteriors must be designed with what architect Wayne Windham calls "a relaxed Southern vernacular architecture." Lowcountry style fit the bill. With their spacious verandas, open floor plans and abundant windows, Lowcountry houses are appropriate for a region with low-lying, watery tracts, coastal breezes and mild weather.

Windham minimized the home's impact on the site by break-

ing it up into three smaller buildings: main house, garage and guest house. The garage is connected to the main house by a covered walkway, while the guest house is a freestanding structure surrounded by pine trees. The three buildings are arranged around a private courtyard. Large, bracketed overhangs protect the house from rain and reduce summertime heat gain in the glass-enclosed great room, which faces west.

The great room is the home's focal point, with its dark stained wood ceiling trusses, white walls and stone fireplace. Forming its own wing, the room is flooded with natural light and has a screened porch at one end.