



WELCOME HOME A charming double porch greets guests at the home Louisa Pierce dreamed up for her family; Pierce in her living room.

THE STARTER HOUSE

A fortuitous dinner party at Louisa Pierce's new Nashville home helped launch her career as one of the country's most in-demand designers *by* TOM FOSTER

LOUISA PIERCE AND AUSTIN SCAGGS were consummate downtown New York nightlife types—both in their twenties, he working for *Rolling Stone* and she tending bar. Then they had a baby, and within months she felt the tug of her Southern roots. “I always knew that when I had kids I’d end up in Nashville,” says the Birmingham, Alabama, native, who had spent a couple of years in Music City after she “flew the coop” at age eighteen. “I also knew that if I moved to Nashville, I’d become an interior designer.”

Skip ahead five years, and Pierce is, sure enough, one-half of one of the country's hottest design duos, Pierce & Ward, along

with her best friend, Emily Ward. Together they've decorated homes for some of the biggest names in Nashville and Hollywood: Kings of Leon frontman Caleb Followill and his supermodel wife, Lily Aldridge; the singer and *Vogue* favorite Karen Elson; and the Academy Award-winning actress Brie Larson. They recently finished Leonardo DiCaprio's Malibu beach house.

It all began with the home Pierce designed for her own growing family in South Nashville's Oak Hill neighborhood—which is where I find her on a sunny day, perched at the kitchen island while Scaggs cooks lunch. A white two-story affair tucked into the woods down a long gravel drive, the



IN THE MIX Above: In the kitchen, a range hood covered in subway tile, restored gas station lights, and walnut countertops. Below, from left: A lacquered Karl Springer console in the entry was a gift from Austin Scaggs's father, Boz Scaggs; a fireplace Pierce covered in two types of tile; toile and damask wallpaper collide beautifully in a hallway.



house feels like it's been there generations but is only four years old. After scouting Nashville for new builds (too sterile) and older homes (too much work), Pierce, who'd long had a penchant for design, decided to put her dreams into action by putting pen to paper. "I'm going to draw a house, baby!" she told Scaggs.

Officially, Scaggs says he decided to just trust her, but Pierce suggests that at first it was a little more like bemused indulgence. Either way, it worked. She sat down at the dining table in their rental and drew the plans freehand. "I don't know how I knew how to do it—I just did it," she says. When she found a builder and an architect willing to work with her, they ended up having to make only minimal changes.

Once construction began, Pierce hitched her then ten-month-old son, Levon, to her hip and threw herself into the process. "I walked into homes all over town," she says, "to feel the space and learn what I liked and didn't like, and I visited our house every single day." She bought windows and doors for a song from a local company's "boneyard," where cast-off pieces go when clients change their minds. Then she dug into the details, scouring eBay and the local vintage shops for unique hard-



GOOD LINES Left: Black and white stripes and a pottery collection that belonged to Scaggs's mother accent the dining room's built-ins. Below: An antique brass sink brings an old touch to the new bar.

ware, accents, and light fixtures, such as the restored gas station pendants that hang in the kitchen. Pierce layered in finer decor elements when she painted the dining room built-ins with bold black and white vertical stripes, and covered the range hood with a slope of subway tiles to match the wall behind it—establishing one of the hallmarks of Pierce & Ward's style: creative use of tile.

Ward had also moved to Nashville from New York, with her then husband, Black Keys drummer Patrick Carney, and when the couple came over one night to celebrate the new house, they decided on the spot to hire Pierce to decorate their own new home, designed by the famed Southern architect Bobby McAlpine. Followill and Aldridge were at supper that night, too, and Aldridge asked Pierce to decorate their pied-à-terre. "After I saw her house," Aldridge recalls, "it blew me away. A year later we needed more space, and I hired her again."

In the years since, as Pierce and Ward for-





ART AND CRAFT Clockwise from top left: The master bath, where Pierce made privacy shutters from a Moroccan screen; a photograph by Pierce's brother Edward Badham hangs in the master bedroom; an Indian brass tray that belonged to Pierce's grandmother anchors a collection above the headboard; an abstract portrait behind the nightstand.



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stuff.” Which is remarkably similar to how she describes her own style: “I like things to look a little weird, not too pretty, because then it’s just more interesting.”

One of the home’s most striking corners appears where two walls meet in the stairway, one covered with bold yellow toile wallpaper and the other equally bold gray damask—both eBay finds that came in limited quantity. “I didn’t have enough of the damask, so I just found something else,” Pierce says. “Maybe it looks intentional, but it wasn’t.” The provenance of a piece matters less to her than its effect. Both kinds of fireplace tile came from a big-box home improvement store, she says. Across from the fireplace sits a sumptuous sofa in pale salmon velvet, a roll of which she found at a run-of-the-mill fabric emporium.

Aside from the mix of vintage and new, high and low, the smart use of space is what makes the house feel like a real home. The sunken living room, two steps below the kitchen level, creates both amphitheater-style seating for watching a big game and a stage for Levon’s little sister, Poet, to put on ballet performances for the family. Upstairs, the split staircase leads on one side to the master suite and on the other to the kids’ playroom and bedrooms—“so they’re on the same level but private,” Pierce says. “The house is so open,” Ward adds, “and yet there are pockets you can escape to.”

Ward has moved to Los Angeles, and Pierce and Scaggs sometimes think about decamping to California, too. (Scaggs, whose father is the singer Boz Scaggs, grew up in San Francisco.) But their leafy lifestyle in the South has taken root. Pierce’s parents relocated to Nashville to live closer to their grandkids, who like to take baths in a big backyard tub, not far from the old barn Pierce turned into a studio. The summer humidity does get to the couple at times. But “there’s no perfect place to live,” Scaggs says as he pads over to flip a record on the turntable tucked into a triangular alcove Pierce carved out for it under the stairs. It goes without saying that, for them, this is about as close as it gets. ●



mally teamed up, the house that started it all has evolved, serving as a laboratory for ideas. Just as serendipity helped launch Pierce’s career, her ability to pair one-off finds creates happy-accident vignettes throughout the



house. It’s something she picked up, at least in part, from her mother. Pierce describes her childhood home as “Southern mixed with a little more bohemian feel. My mom had really nice pieces of furniture mixed in with weird