

Emerald Coast Homes Have Savoie Flare

By Susan Vallee
Photography by Tommy Crow & Michael Belk

Matthew Savoie grew up steeped in the riches of old Southern architecture. As a young boy he would attend weddings and functions on the grounds of grandiose antebellum homes in his native South Louisiana with his family and earn extra credit for school by touring the preserved mansions.

It was an early education that served him well when he changed his major from mechanical engineering to architecture.

He began his practice at 29 and after eight years of steady growth and expansion, he says his office has become as big as he wants it to be.

"I've been very fortunate, very blessed," Savoie said. "We can tell people this is the style of architecture that we design."

Four full time employees, one part time intern and his business partner, Andrea Plunk, work out of the Savoie Architects office, located off of County Road 30-A in Dune Allen Beach.

It's a location that has served his clients well, since the bulk of his projects are located in WaterColor, WaterSound, The Retreat and along 30-A. And while a large percentage of his work are high-end single family homes, Savoie has also designed St. Rita's Catholic Church in Santa Rosa Beach, the Destin Surgery Center and the concepts for the new Our Lady of Victory church in Crestview.

He calls his style modified Creole and describes it as more usable and livable than most traditional homes.

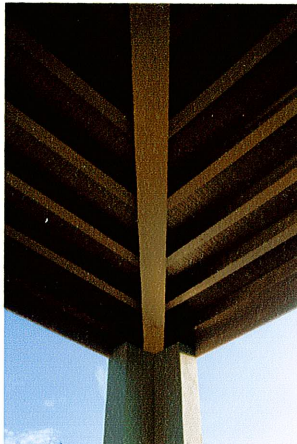
"It's a style that is similar to West Indies, a mix of French and Spanish. The area that I grew up in still had old, abandoned slave quarters. They were small charming buildings, so people began picking them up and moving them to renovate and live in. That architecture had integrity."

Many of his homes reflect the strength and character used in this age-old architecture.

A new Gulf-front development in Blue Mountain Beach that Savoie designed, Lupine, is a cluster of fine homes steeped in this rich history, reflecting a look that mixes West Indies flare with modern-day comfort.

Exposed beams inside the homes lend a laid-back opulence that is not normally found along the casual Gulf of Mexico. The homes have the soul of the old-world, and the character that only clean, solid design can produce.

The history of Savoie's childhood is also echoed in the design and interiors of his Dune



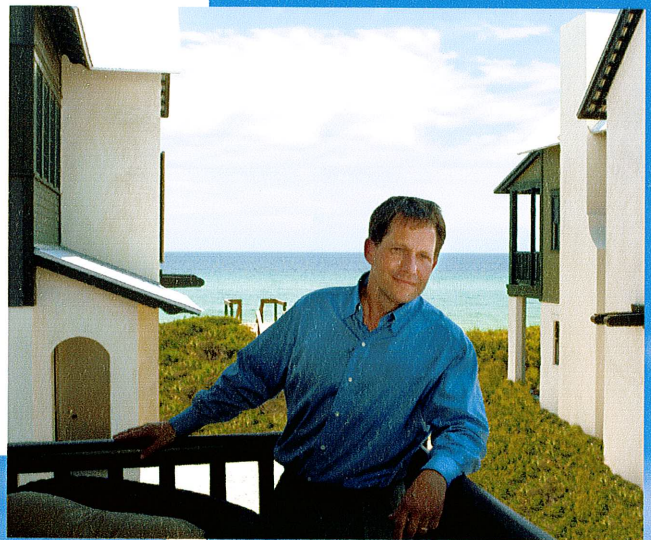
Allen Beach office.

A door salvaged from an old New Orleans home was cut down from its original height of nine feet to seven feet and converted into a conference table. Reclaimed hardware and fixtures can also be found throughout the office, which is decorated in soothing earth tones.

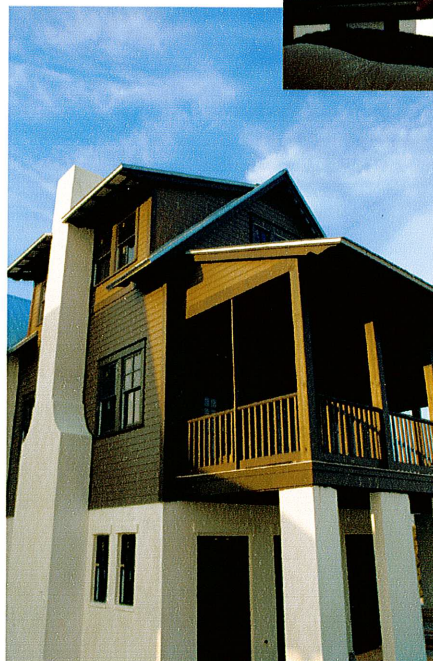
The office is a reflection of his personal style and respect for the natural environment in which it is

built. It is also a showcase for the quality designs that he and his staff produces. It is casual enough for clients to feel at ease.

"I think architects get a reputation of dictating to the client what to do," Savoie said. "It's a team effort here. I want to know the client's wishes and ideas. It is our job to incorporate these into a design that is uniquely theirs. That is the talent and service that they come to us for." ■



Architect Matthew Savoie





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