

THE BOCA RATON obsession



THE ESSENTIAL LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

VISION IN WHITE

A SPRAWLING SUBURBAN
RESIDENCE BECOMES
A PRISTINE SHOWPLACE

OUT WITH THE OLD

A COUNTRY CLUB
RETREAT UNDERGOES
A SOPHISTICATED
RENOVATION

TILES FOR MILES

A HISTORIC HOME
PROVIDES A WINDOW
TO SPAIN'S PAST

TRADITIONAL WITH A TWIST

A MAGNIFICENT MANSION
GETS THE MIDAS TOUCH

COLORFUL CANVAS

A MEDITERRANEAN-STYLE
SPACE HOUSES A VAST
ART COLLECTION

THE
HOME &
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*IN ITS PUBLISHING CATEGORY

MEET HGTV'S
**Sabrina
SOTO**

THE HARDEST WORKING
INTERIOR DESIGNER IN THE BIZ



Visitors' introduction to the house is the elegant foyer, painted lavender blue, then covered with a white glaze and combed to subtly bring out the lavender. The painted rug on oak floors was copied from one of the designer's antique rugs. The bronze sculpture is by Miami sculptor Tom Corbin. The hand-blown red glass on the table is from Venice. The table is cherry with a marble top. The antique gilded mirror is from England; the glass hurricane lantern hanging from the ceiling is from Los Angeles. "The color palette of the foyer is important. It is the entry to all other rooms, the first chapter to a book," says Avanzato.



MODERN Classic

A Coral Gables Home By The Bay Gets A Glamorous Makeover

Designed by famed Palm Beach architect John Volk, this splendid waterfront Coral Gables house has an enviable location in the prestigious Gables Estates next to Biscayne Bay. Far from the downtown high-rises, the owners can relax in the striated shade of tall coconut palms on the sparkling white man-made beach or enjoy the bay views from the stunning living room, which comfortably seats 22 people.

The house, which has been in the same family for years, got a spectacular makeover inspired by the owner's recent marriage. And, of course, his gift to his bride—a Renoir painting—required a suitably sophisticated setting.

Miami designer Vincenzo Avanzato, known for his high-end residential projects and his interior designs for hotels in Egypt and Dubai and boutiques in Paris and Milan, was called in to give the 1960s-vintage house a renovation that blended classic and modern.

The spectacular makeover includes bold colors such as buttercup yellow and fuchsia. French antiques mixed with custom-made furniture, and a jaw-dropping Marc Chagall-inspired painting that covers the ceiling in the family room and chronicles the family's special events and international travels.

The family room's entire ceiling is painted in the style of Marc Chagall. "I thought why not create ceiling art like that in the Paris Opera House?" says Avanzato. The artwork, painted on several canvases attached to the ceiling, encompasses special events and family travels, with Paris in one corner, Barcelona in another corner and a portrait of the couple, which was used on their wedding invitations. The storyline of the painting was created by Avanzato and done by European Decor in Palm Beach. Gauze curtains trimmed with mustard-colored silk hang from hardware that runs around the room. The walls are a pale yellow straw color, with a fiery burst of color in the red bar, which came from Italy. "The client was scared of using the bold red, but he trusted me. Everything ties together," explains Avanzato. The bar stools, armchair and sofa are by Donghia. The sofa, daybed and armchair are in a soothing blue-striped linen-cotton. The large painting is by Claudio Bravo. The art on the far wall is a signed lithograph by Marc Chagall. The walls have a Marmorino finish, a rough Venetian plaster.

INTERIOR DESIGN BY
VINCENZO AVANZATO
TEXT BY
CHERYL BLACKBERRY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
TROY CAMPBELL



The library is an inviting room in which to relax with a book in one of the comfortable chairs in front of the fireplace (not shown here) and perhaps sip an after-dinner cognac. Chairs are reproductions of 1930s Lucien Rollin furniture, upholstered in orange suede. The room's original wood panels were refurbished and French-polished. The French antique desk with gilt ormolu legs dates from Daniels Antiques in Hollandale. The English antique chair in front of the desk is from Maple and Co., and the chair behind the desk is from Nagel Antiques. The dramatic silk-embroidered drapes have theatrical ties pulled from the top like theater curtains. The rug is an antique Turkish Oushak area carpet from Odoobashian Rugs in Dania.

"The design will start with an armchair, a sofa, a mirror and then we start putting the pieces together."

— Vincenzo Avanzato, Interior designer

"I thought the house was well designed. The ceiling heights of 10 feet were perfect and the room proportions were perfect," says Avanzato. "The rooms flowed like antechambers leading from one space to another."

A formal foyer, centered with a painted rug on a glossy oak floor, offers the choice of the family room to the right, dining room to the left, and beyond to the living room and a large covered terrace with captivating bay views.

The designer built a lot of wood moldings, chair rails and paneling to add a traditional backdrop to an otherwise modern interior. Avanzato describes his design as "a very comfortable, eclectic mix of tasteful, classic furniture in the right scale."

His house designs start with "reconnaissance tours"—he and the clients visit design centers and furniture shops to see what they like. "The design will start with a chair, a sofa, a mirror and then we start putting the



▲ The soft yellow walls and chair fabrics provide a flattering glow for visitors invited to a sumptuous evening meal. The two end chairs, slip-covered in buttercup yellow, are by John Saladino. The side chairs were designed and fabricated by Avanzato. The 19th-century French 8-foot-long mahogany table has gleaming brass ormolu. The walls in the dining room and throughout the house were painted with Old World trompe l'oeil techniques but with a modern, glamorous split. Green paint went on the walls, followed by large purple flowers and finally, a white glaze was spread over the paint and combed through so flowers appear very subtle. On the table are tall wine decanters from England, Baccarat crystal glasses and crystal Champagne flutes from England. The Wilshire chandelier is made with wood and gesso in 22-karat distressed gold. In an adjacent alcove with windows on three sides is a small table for intimate dining.



◀ The sleek buffet trimmed with gilt bronze ormolu, a reproduction made in France, does double duty as a practical serving space for wine and liquor or for desserts, and adds a touch of Old World elegance. The buffet is topped in marble with plum colors that you don't find anymore. An antique French mirror back panel offers glimpses of the dining room and reflects light. Antique English sterling-silver serving pieces, crystal glasses and majestic vases tall enough for long-stemmed flowers add character.



The centerpiece of the master bedroom is the Pierre-Auguste Renoir painting over the desk. Called "Tête de Femme," it was a gift from the homeowner to his wife. The walls were painted with stencils, pattern from old Indian wallpaper, then sanded down to make it fade. A final coat of glaze was applied to give an Old World ambience. The bed was custom-made by the designer. The velvet headboard is a pale yellow, the lining of the bedspread is pale green, and the top of the bedspread is silk brocade. The chair is a lightweight wool from Donghia. The desk was custom-made by the designer, and the desk chair is by John Saladino. The lamp is crafted of Venetian hand-blown glass from Donghia. The billowing drapes are silk.

pieces together. The synergy of a couple is very delicate, too. I always try to make it equal so both people are happy," he says.

The Italian-born, Great Britain-raised Avanzato speaks Italian, Spanish, French and English, and brings European sensibilities, English traditionalism and American modernism to his designs. He was more than a match for the home's illustrious history.

"Don't decorate around art. The paintings should come in at the last moment. Art is very personal."

—Vincenzo Avanzato

The house was designed by architect Volk, who went to Palm Beach in the 1920s and created some of the town's most renowned mansions for clients including the Vanderbilt, DuPont, Ford, Dodge and Pulitzer families. It was built in Gables Estates and developed in the early 1960s by industrialist and philanthropist Arthur Vining Davis, head of Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa).

The newly decorated house lives up to its esteemed heritage. ○

◀ Luckily for Avanzato, Mother Nature had already provided the landscaping of tall coconut palms and the homeowners had brought in white sand. All he had to do was set up comfortable furniture including platform beds, a hammock and teak outdoor pieces. He added punches of color, particularly fuchsia and yellow, with pillows, bedspreads and rugs. "I wanted to make it really look like Miami, and I do love color," he says. Gauzy curtains attached to simple teak pergolas allow for a breeze and lots of pillows made with weather-proof fabrics and colorful rugs add to a relaxing outdoor experience.



▶ The 30-foot-long living room has several seating areas that can accommodate 20 or so guests. The couple frequently entertains and requested a large but cozy space that would make guests feel comfortable. The large painting is an original Fernando Botero, called "Camera Degli Sposti" ("Chamber of Newbywads"). The sofas were designed by Avanzato for the room. The armchairs with blue seats are English antiques Avanzato bought in London. The chairs with lion heads on the arms are Swedish antiques. The end tables are reproductions made by Avanzato. The small painting is by Arshile Gorky. Although the paintings perfectly complement the room's scale and colors, Avanzato didn't see the art until after the room was done. "Don't decorate around art," he says. "The paintings should come in at the last moment. Art is very personal."



"The owners brought out all of these wonderful umbrellas they brought back from Indonesia. We waited until the magic hour—twilight," says Avanzato. "We wanted to make the courtyard romantic." The most important design aspect for a romantic space is the lighting. Overhead lights are best, he says, and only candles on the table. The lights shouldn't be bright and there should be no glare. The furniture has to be functional and moveable since you don't want it out all of the time. Use folding chairs and an outdoor table, then set the stage to make the setting romantic.

DERECHA: La biblioteca, único lugar que rompe con la suave luz y los colores claros del resto de la casa. Las cortinas y la madera cobran un rol protagónico en este cuarto. Sobre la chimenea, el *Nature Morte* de Leger. **ABAJO:** La habitación con la obra estrella *Tête de femme*, de Renoir, única decoración de este espacio. **PÁGINA OPUESTA:** Vista del comedor principal.



Otra obra de Bravo se asoma al fondo del vestíbulo principal, adornado también por exquisitas esculturas y una sobria orquídea; el sonido de nuestros pasos se amortigua por las alfombras orientales que visten la residencia, con excepción del vestíbulo, donde lo evidente se convierte en un juego de ilusiones: una alfombra es simulada, dibujada sobre el suelo. "Utilicé diferentes técnicas decorativas de pintura realizadas por técnicos y artistas franceses, a través de las cuales realicé la creación del efecto de un tapete pintado en el vestíbulo", explicó el diseñador.

Nada parece estar fuera de lugar. El salón principal se viste de flores y antigüedades que Avanzato consiguió a través de anticuarios de Estados Unidos, y que provienen principalmente de Los Ángeles, Nueva York, Londres y Miami. El uso sutil de la

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madera en la casa cobra importancia en la biblioteca, donde este material se extiende desde el suelo hacia las paredes, convirtiéndola en el lugar más oscuro de la casa, aunque no por ello exento de luz. Obras como el *Nature Morte*, de Fernand Leger, le añaden luminosidad a la estancia.

Las habitaciones privadas continúan con la elegante decoración, así como con las obras de arte; *Tête de femme*, de Auguste Renoir, reposa tranquila pero imponente entre las tonalidades amarillas de la recámara principal, convirtiéndose en la única decoración de este cuarto.

A pesar del juego de simetrías utilizado, la casa insiste en romper con la monotonía. Avanzato pudo dar rienda suelta a su imaginación para la decoración, así como para la elección de cada color y pieza de la residencia, los cuales contrastan con la suave luz que entra a través de las pesadas cortinas, que insisten en aislarnos del mundo pero también del tiempo: la casa de Coral Gables, con su eclecticismo, nos hace olvidar por momentos la época en que nos encontramos, la monotonía habitual de nuestro presente. No queda duda de que el verdadero protagonista es el arte. ■

