

SOUTH FLORIDA

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■ TROPICAL TREAT ■

WRITTEN BY LISA SELIN DAVIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIM SARGENT

THE CONDO WAS ALMOST PERFECT. THE PENTHOUSE IN THE BREAKERS BOASTED MAGNIFICENT VIEWS OF THE OCEAN AND THE CITY OF PALM BEACH AND WAS LARGE ENOUGH TO ACCOMMODATE VISITING FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS. There was only one real problem, says the owner. "I loved the space, but I hated everything else about it." Slathered in marble with low, dropped ceilings and a maze-like configuration of rooms, the apartment needed, at minimum, a tweak. "I said to my husband, 'Let's get rid of the dining room wall and the marble, and we'll be fine.'"

INTERIOR DESIGN Bruce Bierman, Bruce Bierman Design, Inc.

HOME BUILDER Jim Woodrums, Woodrums, Inc.

BEDROOMS | BATHROOMS | SQUARE FEET 4,100



SHUT IN

The study's floor-to-ceiling shutters, crafted by Architectural Woodworks & Cabinetry in Riviera Beach, completely close, creating a refuge for deep thoughts or in-day nooses on the custom case showcased in Krawt fabric. The Primavera Enrera Desk from Repertoire is flanked by an Aaron chair from WB Wood, and the trio of lattice-carved tropical-wood tables was found at Tucker Robbins, all in New York.

STYLE SELECTION

Designed at tropical hardwood and crafted with the help of Cameroonian carvers, these tables, inspired by the intricately woven lines of a spiderweb, are available in ebony or white. Lattice Coffee Table/Side Table, starting at \$2,700; tuckerrobbs.com



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They consulted with New York-based interior designer Bruce Bierman, principal of Bruce Bierman Design, who noticed one other major flaw: "Many of the views of the ocean were obstructed by the architecture," he says. It needed more than just one lost wall and new floors, so Bierman told the couple, "Let me show you what I think this could be." Within 24 hours, he'd shown us sketches of something completely different," says the owner, who gave Bierman's drawings an enthusiastic thumbs-up. So began a gut renovation.

"We took it all the way back to the blocks, and then we began the remodel," says Hunter Johnson, project manager for West Palm Beach-based builder Woolems—headed by owner Jim Woolems—who supervised construction. Bierman's vision was to transform the space from what Johnson calls "a very 1980s kind of layout—ma's bedroom, pa's bedroom and the kitchen, all compartmentalized," into an open, flowing and ingeniously versatile floor plan that showcases the views.

SLEEP TIGHT

The goal for the library is comfort and recreation. A custom L-shaped sofa from JM Upholstery, topped with colorful pillows covered in fabrics from Ann Coleccion, Holly Hunt and Bergamini, converts into a bed to accommodate overnight guests. The solid walnut Mantelino game table was found at Holly Hunt, the custom walnut paneling was created by Architectural Woodworks & Cabinetry, and the mother-of-pearl chandelier is from MSR Illuminations in New York.





STAND ALONE

The showpiece of the wife's master bathroom is a free-standing tub from Stark, found at Duraw, it's paired with a marble-platinum bath filler from Dornbracht. An antique rickshaw table from Objects in the Lot in West Palm Beach faces a Louis XV-style armchair by Philippe Starck, found at Lee's Studio in New York; they rest upon a dhurrie rug from H. Grooms in Southampton, New York. The cabinetry and shelves were fabricated by Architectural Woodworks & Cabinetry.

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The kitchen, dining and living areas are now one open space. Beyond them lie the master bedroom, study and library, and, yet, those feel open as well, thanks to pocket doors that slide out of sight. "The doors become the walls, and the walls can disappear," says Johnson. The non-bedrooms are furnished with sleeper sofas so that, when the couple's two children come to visit, these spaces can become private bedrooms as the doors reappear and slide shut.

The clients, who live most of the year in New York, wanted their Palm Beach pied-à-terre to feel like a Caribbean beach house: tropical, lighthearted and comfortable. "So many of my friends have such serious apartments, but they could be in any city," says the owner. "I'm in Florida. I want it to look like I'm in Florida."



GREEN ROOM

The master bedroom integrates three distinct areas: sleep, with a bed accented by bamboo side rails found at Paul Hember in West Palm Beach and a Harvey Probber upholstered bench from Dotzels in New York, all, with a pair of patterned velvet club chairs, again from Paul Hember, and work, with an antique desk from Ralph Pucci International in New York and a Jean-Michel Frank armchair. The room, carpeted with an Elizabeth Adams rug, has magnificent views of Palm Beach, framed by Bart Halpern Allure Crepe drapes in oyster, purchased at Douglas.

RED HOT

The tropical feel in the living room is promoted by Bielecky Brothers teak-stained rattan chairs, Cambodian throw pillows and a variety of reds infused across a Venetian plaster wall. The custom sofa and chaise from JM Upholstery are positioned for gazing at the sea, with the custom beveled mirror from J. Packer & Son set to reflect the view into the kitchen. The window treatment netting fabric is by Kelly Hoppen.

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Inspired by a Nassau, Bahamas, hotel room the couple loved, Bierman boldly added entire walls of walnut paneling in the library and floor-to-ceiling bamboo shutters elsewhere. He incorporated furniture made of tropical materials—rattan and bamboo—but modern in look and feel, with oversized armchairs stained dark brown and contemporary, square-shaped lamps from Paris.

Almost all of the furniture is neutral in tone—beige, cream and brown—so that it harmonizes with the owner's other direction for Bierman: "Give me color. I love it." Thus, the owner's closet is a vibrant cornflower blue; there's bright, leafy green in the master bedroom; and, in the living room, a wall is painted a dramatic Venetian red, with matching silk pillows on the ivory couch. "Down the road, if I get tired of the color, I can change the pillows and paint the wall another color," says the owner, "without having to change the furniture." Bierman thinks of these neutral-toned pieces as the little black dress found in many women's closets. "Once you accessorize it," he says, "it really comes to life."

Perhaps Bierman's biggest achievement was showcasing the views that had been restricted by the previous layout. In the living area, he angled a mirror over the couch so that the owners could see the ocean's reflection from the kitchen. The sofa's placement takes optimal advantage of the waterside vistas, and even the master bath shower stall is surrounded by clear glass to maintain the views.

With the open plan, sliding doors, grand rooms and heightened ceilings, the place now feels deceptively more like a house than an apartment. That led to one other unforeseen problem: "It was supposed to be our weekend hideaway," says the owner. "But now we want to be here all the time." ■



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BRUCE BIERMAN DESIGN, INC.

29 West 15th Street
New York, NY 10011
PHONE 212.243.1935

WWW.BIERMANDESIGN.COM

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