HAPPLY EVER AFTER

FORT LAUDERDALE BECOMES HOME AGAIN FOR A COUPLE RETURNING TO THEIR ROOTS.

WITTEN BY NAZI FRIED.
PHOTOGRAPBy BRANTLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

I was a homecoming of sorts when a couple moved from Stuart to Fort Lauderdale to be closer to family and friends. Twenty years earlier they had left the city to expand their marine business and raise their family on the Treasure Coast, but now, with their children grown and starting families of their own in Fort Lauderdale, it was time to return. "Once the first granddaughter came, that's when it totally came together," she says, "so we moved back in March last year." The wife, now a grandmother of two grandchildren, "We wanted to get back to our family and friends—to get back to the future, as we like to say."

The couple looked at many potential options, settling on the former house of a landscape designer who had lived on the site for 16 years and was unhappy with the design. They wanted something that was "more modern and streamlined," she says. The wife also had a specific vision for the layout of the house. She decided to build a custom home on the property with architect Bethany Mammano and architect Michael Pechan to execute their plan. They spent two years designing and building the house, which has become their "happy place."
wanted all of our living spaces, including the master suite, on one floor with the guest quarters upstairs,” the wife explains. “By the time I met with Mitch, I’d already went (Bob my photo booth), and they all just got it.”

Inspiration for the house came from a trip to St. Barts, where the couple had taken the Charles Gwathmey house—one of the late architect’s last projects. “They wanted a simple contemporary home and lived a modern life but wanted to stay away from a pure flat roof,” says Kunk, who worked closely with project architect Huyn Nguyen on the design. “The whole premise of the house was to open it up on the outdoors—the full width of the space, with the roof and trees carrying it right outside.” Kunk kept all of this in mind while also incorporating the existing landscape. For example, he designed the drive around a massive pomegranate at the front left of the property, positioning the garage and its second-floor guest rooms to the right and the main living of the house behind it. The monolithic “lodge,” something Kunk describes as “a limousine concept,” sets a backdrop for the greenery and creates a sense of privacy from the street, while the rear facade opens to an expansive patio and play area that leads down to the dock. To further enhance the grounds, the couple hired landscape designer Michael Myers of Michael Myers & Associates, Ltd., their neighbor in the Bahamas, to relandscape the garden with as much of the existing material as possible. Locally, they hired Dés Brophy Garden Services to implement Myers’ design, which also included carefully placing several trees in storage until they could be relocated.

In addition to incorporating the site’s existing landscape, the design team was challenged to find a flooring material that would ground the structure and provide a seamless transition from the interiors to the exterior. The wife
“IT’S A VERY CASUAL, OPEN HOUSE, YET THE OWNERS WANTED A SOPHISTICATED ISLAND STYLE WITH A FEW NAUTICAL ELEMENTS.”

- ROBERTO MAYER