

luxe.

interiors + design®

PALM BEACH | BROWARD





INTERIOR DESIGN / STEPHANIE MERRYMAN, BOMAR BUILDERS, INC.
ARCHITECTURE / MITCH KUNIK AND HUY NGUYEN, AFFINITY ARCHITECTS
HOME BUILDER / ROBERT G. MAYER, BOMAR BUILDERS, INC.



HAPPILY EVER AFTER

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

WRITTEN BY MAILE PINGEL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRANTLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

It 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 grandchild came, I had to be nearby," says the wife, now a grandmother of two. "We wanted to get back to our family and friends—to get back to our future, as we like to say."

The couple looked at many waterfront options, settling on the former house of a landscape designer who had filled the site with an abundance of specimen trees—now mature plantings—that helped shape the home's design. The wife also had a specific vision for the layout of the residence, and she turned to building contractor Robert G. Mayer, interior designer Stephanie Merryman and architect Mitch Kunik to execute her plan. "We've built before with our vacation home in the Bahamas, so this wasn't new to us, but for this time around, I just had this idea that we

A painting that the owners found on a trip to Havana, Cuba, dominates the hallway that leads from the master suite.

LUXESOURCE.COM / 297

LUXESOURCE.COM / 295



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 sent Bob my photo board, and they all just got it."

Inspiration for the house arose from a trip to St. Barts, where the couple had seen the Charles Gwathmey house—one of the late architect's last projects. "They wanted a tropical contemporary home and liked a modern feel but wanted to stay away from a pure flat roof," says Kunik, who worked closely with project architect Huy Nguyen on the design. "The whole premise of this house was to open it up to the outdoors—the full width of the space, with the roof and floors carrying right outside," Kunik kept all of this in mind while also incorporating the existing landscaping. For example, he designed the driveway around a massive sea grape at the front left of the property, positioning the garage and its second-floor

guest rooms to the right and the main massing of the house behind it. The monolithic façade, something Kunik describes as "a timeless concept," sets a backdrop for the greenery and creates a sense of privacy from the street, while the rear façade opens to an expansive pool 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 redesign the garden with as much of the existing material as possible. Locally, they hired Dias Brothers Garden Services to implement Myers' design, which also included carefully placing several trees in storage until they could be replanted.

In addition to incorporating the site's landscaping, 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 exteriors. The wife

The entrance to a Fort Lauderdale home by building contractor Robert G. Mayer and architect Mitch Kunik features a custom saddle door from Smith & DeShields with louvered shutters on the windows for light control and privacy; the stainless-steel handles by Key Tiger complement the height of the space. Mahogany marble flooring, chosen for its wood-like appearance, starts at the entry and flows through the entire house and rear loggia.



A painting that the owners found on a trip to Havana, Cuba, dominates a wall in the hallway that leads from the great room to the master suite. They also purchased the Chinese-style chair years ago on South Dixie Highway's Antique Row.

Interior designer Stephanie Merryman created a sapele-paneled wall in the living area for added warmth as well as for more practical reasons: The paneling hides a television that's revealed when an Eclipse vertical art lift from Media Décor raises the Deborah Bigeleisen painting. Merryman then chose white-leather Henredon lounge chairs for a contemporary look and added a chrome-chain side table from Windsor Smith Home for a nautical touch. The Fibreworks jute rug is from Flor Source.



Above: Fleetwood Windows & Doors sliding glass doors open the entire length of the great room to the loggia. Sofas from Kreiss in Los Angeles are slipcovered with an indoor-outdoor fabric from Kravet and feature pillows covered in Aviva Stanoff fabric. The steel-and-coral-stone coffee table is also from Kreiss.

Opposite: The great room centers on the dining area, which features a live-edge table by E.M. Soberon and chairs, also by E.M. Soberon, upholstered with a Pindler fabric. Merryman chose a darker finish for the table to balance the living area's paneling and the driftwood stain on the kitchen cabinetry. The painting, *Water Dance*, is by Tatyana Klevenskiy.



front of the windows to create storage without
and the Calacatta marble countertops
owners' grandchildren.

ub-Zero
counter
y Kichler.

highly treated wood, but the climate precluded it. Instead, Meyer and Merryman found a mahogany that could be cut into planks, giving it a strikingly natural appearance—so much so that it often fools people. The flooring extends out to the loggia, which features a summer kitchen and hurricane screens that look like shutters. "It's a very casual house with that island feel," Merryman says. "But it's not a nautical theme. It's a sophisticated island style with a few nautical touches." Merryman worked closely with the wife to select the custom driftwood-look finish on the furniture. "We brought only a few pieces with them from the States and they brought a number of colorful artworks from the island. They wanted a tone-on-tone look, so we carefully placed these pairings for pops

of color," Merryman explains. For a sentimental touch, as well as to reference the owners' love of the ocean, the interior designer incorporated shell pieces by the wife's friend Stephanie Ferguson: a mirror in the powder room and a chandelier in the master bathroom. "They really give the home that island feel," Merryman says. "The new openness to this house also gave us license to do things that weren't necessarily the norm, like the floating shelves and mirrors in front of the windows in the kitchen and the master bath." Perhaps the most creative custom element is the living room's sapele paneling that conceals a television hidden behind a painting mounted on a remote-controlled lift. Overall, the homeowners wanted this house to be fun. "Sunday afternoons it's bocce ball and cannonballs in the pool," the wife says. "We love it here, and there's not a thing we would change." And that's exactly how it should be for a family returning to their roots. ■

Above: Fleetwood Windows & Doors sliding glass doors open the entire length of the great room to the loggia. Sofas from Kreiss in Los Angeles are slipcovered with an indoor-outdoor fabric from Kravet and feature pillows covered in Aviva Stanoff fabric. The steel-and-coralstone coffee table is also from Kreiss.

Opposite: The great room centers on the dining area, which features a live-edge table by E.M. Soberon and chairs, also by E.M. Soberon, upholstered with a Pindler fabric. Merryman chose a darker finish for the table to balance the living area's paneling and the driftwood stain on the kitchen cabinetry. The painting, *Water Dance*, is by Tatyana Klevenkiy.



"IT'S A VERY CASUAL, OPEN HOUSE, YET THE OWNERS WANTED A SOPHISTICATED ISLAND STYLE WITH A FEW NAUTICAL ELEMENTS."

-ROBERT G. MAYER



Opposite: In the kitchen, Merryman designed floating shelves in front of the windows to create storage without blocking the view. The Wolf range and Thermador hood are from Ferguson, and the Calacatta marble countertops are from Opustone. The room at the end of the kitchen is an art studio for the homeowners' grandchildren.

Below: Custom cabinets by Mutual Woodworking with hardware from Siro Designs disguise appliances such as a Sub-Zero refrigerator in the kitchen; the Blanco sink is paired with an Ekay faucet. The designer chose Design Master swivel counter stools, upholstered in Duralee faux leather, from Designer Resource Center, and the pendant lights overhead are by Kichler.

Merryman designed the master bedroom on an intimate scale with a custom DuraLee faux-leather headboard flanked by sapele faux shutters and nightstands, built by CSI Interiors. The mounted lamps are from Ralph Lauren Home, and the cashmere-and-silk bedding is from ABC Carpet & Home.



Above: A wish for symmetry and natural light guided the master bathroom's design. Calacatta marble, installed by Euro Floors, lines the counters, floor and shower. The cabinetry features Richeieu hardware and a toe-kick sensor for nighttime lighting. The Kohler sinks have Newport Brass faucets. A custom shell chandelier by Stephanie Ferguson hangs over the Victoria & Albert tub.



Left: The sitting area in the master bedroom looks out toward the pool. The tub chairs and ottoman are Barbara Barry, and the side table is from Judith Norman. The painting, *Linear Depths* by Martin Mastkey, was commissioned specifically for the space.





Above: Oolite, a South Florida coral stone, forms steps that lead to the dock, where the nautical theme continues with a suite of woven furniture from Kettal that was designed to resemble mooring ropes.

Left: The pool, designed by Parkwood Pools, was kept clean and simple, with shell-stone coping for a tropical feel; the loungers are from Cane Patio. Landscape designer Michael Myers conceived the landscaping plan, which was carried out by Dias Brothers Garden Services.