

UNITED INSPIRATION

THIS EXPANSIVE WATERFRONT ESTATE ON SOUTH BEACH EVOLVES INTO A LATIN CASITA WITH A RUSTIC BEACH FEEL AND A TOUCH OF ASIAN SERENITY



BJORN BJORNSSON

I keep a positive attitude when challenges arise and stay focused on completing a beautiful space for my client. I had recently returned from an install in South America that completely inspired this design.

If nothing else, this new, 12,000-square-foot home on Miami's South Beach proves that the world is very small — filled with input and influences from every corner. When interior designer Bjorn Bjornsson was asked to create the interiors for a developer's planned estate, it was to include an office, maid's quarters and a pool house — in the style of a rustic beach cottage with Latin influences. But the Iceland-born designer was dubious. "This is an elegant part of Miami, big stars from Matt Damon to Ricky Martin have homes here. I wondered how a casita would fit in," he says. The collaboration between designer, architect, developer and builder would begin there. With Bjornsson's input and design ideas, a rustic casita would morph into an expansive and sophisticated residence where the new owners would feel right at home.

LEFT: With confidence and balance, the drama of the living room rebounds from one detail to another. A sofa from Baker join Lexington Home's armchairs with gold nailheads, and Vanguard's delicate gold accent tables. On the shelving, exuberant 18th-century gold horses catch the eye.

INTERIOR DESIGN BY BJORN BJORNSSON, BJORN BJORNSSON INTERIOR DESIGN, MIAMI BEACH, FL, AND NEW YORK, NY
ARCHITECTURE BY RALPH CHOEFF, CHOEFF LEVY FISCHMAN, MIAMI, FL
DEVELOPER PETER FINE, ATLANTIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP, NEW YORK, NY
BUILDER ZACHARY CARPENTER, TO BETTER DAYS CONSTRUCTION, MIAMI BEACH, FL
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE BY ENEA GARDEN DESIGN, INC., MIAMI, FL
TEXT BY MARINA BROWN
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CHRISTOPHER GUY'S DELICATE JAVA WOOD AND IVORY-LACQUER, LOW-PROFILE BUFFET, AND MIRROR SPECIFICALLY CHOSEN IN A GOLD-AND-SILVER PATINA ADD TO THE DREAMY COLORSCAPE IN THE DINING ROOM. CHINESE SANDSTONE FLOORING IS INLAID WITH EUROPEAN OAK AND HAND-BRUSHED WITH WIRE FOR A SOFTER FINISH.

From the entry, the breathtaking view of Biscayne Bay is not wasted. The visual telescope is defined by a rectangular floating ceiling above the living room's expansive seating area. Bjornsson and architect Ralph Choeff wanted windows everywhere to take in the sumptuous views. But that meant walls of glass — something that structurally and climatically, would be a challenge. Their solution, aesthetically and practically brilliant, took the home's design in a slightly different direction.

“I WORK A LOT IN SOUTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS,” INTERIOR DESIGNER BJORN BJORNSSON SAYS. “THE COLORS, VIBRANT OR FADING, ARE WONDERFUL. THE NATURAL TEXTURES THERE ARE INSPIRATIONAL.”

“We used bronze mullions,” Bjornsson says. “The glass doors slide right into the walls and the hurricane glass is supported by a metal grid.” This series of mullioned panels also suggest the feel of an Asian Minka, a Japanese house with sliding doors and touches of wood that offer warmth and familiarity.

In the living room, irregular Italian brushed-walnut panels flank a megalithic marble slab above the fireplace. Positioned to take in a cold night’s fire, a plush sofa clad in sumptuous blue-gray velvet forms a hearthside seating arrangement with a pair of armchairs edged with gold nailheads and a chaise lounge wrapped in suede.

The living room was nearly finished thanks to Bjornsson’s Scandinavian sensibilities. The golden statuary and Buddhas on a sofa table resonate with the Asian-inspired window panels, while a pale palette of gray and beige suggests New York chic. But the designer also wanted to add in a vibrant Latin feel. So, he chose a massive painting titled *Herald* by artist Frank Owen that is alive with color.

RIGHT: In the kitchen, vintage French barstools pull up close to a massive island topped with marble. Custom designed by Bjorn Bjornsson, it provides ample space for several cooks to prepare gourmet meals. Nearby, a breakfast table and cane chairs from Baker create a comfortable place for family to dine.



IN THE MASTER BATH FOR HER, BJORNSSON DIDN'T SHY AWAY FROM PATTERNS. THOUGH THE FURNISHINGS ARE SPARE, THE NATURAL REFERENCES ARE MANY. "THE WALL COVERING REMINDS ME OF UNDERWATER RIPPLES," THE DESIGNER SAYS.



In the master bedroom, the jags of herringbone walnut flooring from Italy, stria in a simple ivory area rug, and the X-shaped frame of a Vanguard bench bring the serenity of balance and repetition to the space. A plush blue-velvet headboard and blue accent pillows from Kravet echo the vivid sky blue ceiling treatment.

Seemingly wrapped by a bamboo garden, the dining room, like the living room, features a dropped ceiling brushed with metallics. Layered with silver and gold, the panel glows above Y-Lighting's sparkling chandelier. A table of rare java wood from Christopher Guy is supported by a base of silvered forms, and surrounded by linen and faux-bone chairs from Bernhardt.

Sleek white cabinetry in the kitchen gives way to a sophisticated breakfast area that offers contrast with its dark wood table and six cane side chairs. When walking through a new house, Bjornsson sometimes

notices things that need to be changed. "Between the coffers, the gray-toned ceiling in the kitchen just wasn't right," the designer says. So, he had the panels repainted in a shade of blue that reflects the colors of the pool and the Bay.

The relative simplicity of the lady's bath has a French feel. Striated Italian walnut surrounds the vanity, but the vintage-style Gallic tub is a showstopper lined in porcelain and seated on sparkling stainless steel feet. Taking in Miami's skyline from the master bedroom might keep one happily in bed all day. With Bjornsson's

“WHETHER I’M DESIGNING A HOTEL OR A PRIVATE RESIDENCE, I TRY TO WALK THROUGH THE SPACE, IMAGINING WHAT WOULD APPEAL TO THE MOST PEOPLE ... THE COLORS AND ELEMENTS THAT RESONATE WITH MOST EVERYONE,” BJORNSSON SAYS.

signature metallic overhead ceiling panel in sky blue, the cached lighting chooses not to compete with the horizon. A blue-velvet upholstered headboard adds to the outdoor feel on a distressed and washed wood bed from Vanguard. Along with a charming chenille loveseat, it gives the room an Old World patina.

Outdoors, the home appears to expand even more. On the downstairs lanai, pillars are wrapped in travertine and brushed Caribbean coral flooring flows generously. The teak English trestle table is meant for lingering meals prepared on the Spanish grill. The pool area offers an invitation to relax near a freestanding pool house accented with a sultry faded blue wall.

Thanks to the vision of the designer, the Latin casita shifts its personality, becoming at once an Asian-touched estate dotted with Italian woods and brimming with American bravura. It is a small world ... but one where everything is united.

RIGHT: Outdoors on the lanai, the owners can easily entertain family and friends with a convenient under-the-counter wine cabinet and a custom Spanish outdoor grill. An infinity edge pool settles alongside a rustic chic table and chairs ensemble.



SOURCES

LIVING ROOM

Sofa - Baker Furniture, New York, NY
 Chairs and cocktail table - Lexington Home, New York, NY
 Chaise - Baker Furniture, New York, NY
 Gold accent table - Vanguard, High Point, NC

Sofa table and Buddha on fireplace - Bjorn Bjornsson Interior Design, Miami Beach, FL, and New York, NY
 Shelving unit, fireplace and floral arrangements - Custom designed by Bjorn Bjornsson Interior Design, Miami Beach, FL, and New York, NY
 Fabricated by To Better Days Construction, Miami, FL

Horse statue and Buddha - Oriental Decor of South Florida, Inc., Miami, FL
 Fireplace - EcoSmart Fire, Culver City, CA
 Fireplace surround - Keys Granite, Miami, FL
 Lamp - Metropolitan Lighting, New York, NY
 Artwork - Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York, NY

Gold vase - Baccarat, Baccarat, France
 Box - Kravet, Inc., Miami, FL
 Area rug - Sanford-Hall Corporation Carpet, New York, NY

DINING ROOM

Table, buffet and mirror - Christopher Guy, New York, NY

Chairs - Bernhardt, High Point, NC

Sconces - Foundry Lighting, New York, NY

Artwork and pedestal - Oriental Decor of South Florida, Inc., Miami, FL

Chandelier - YLighting, Miami, FL

KITCHEN AND BREAKFAST AREA

Cabinetry and island - Custom designed by Bjorn Bjornsson Interior Design, Miami Beach, FL, and New York, NY
 Fabricated by To Better Days Construction, Miami, FL

Island countertop - Ed'it, Wynwood, FL

Barstools - Bjorn Bjornsson Interior Design, Miami Beach, FL, and New York, NY

Hood - Wolf, Pittsburgh, PA

Cabinetry countertops - Keys Granite, Miami, FL

Table and chairs - Baker Furniture, Miami, FL

MASTER BATH

Tub - Waterworks, Miami, FL

Vanity - Custom designed by Bjorn Bjornsson Interior Design, Miami Beach, FL, and New York, NY

Fabricated by To Better Days Construction, Miami, FL

Mirror - Christopher Guy, New York, NY

Sconces - Foundry Lighting, New York, NY

Wall covering - Tri-kes, New York, NY

Accent table - Bjorn Bjornsson Interior Design, Miami Beach, FL, and New York, NY

Flooring - Artistic Tile, New York, NY

Master Bedroom

Bed, headboard, loveseat and bench - Vanguard, High Point, NC

Bedding - Casa Del Bianco, New York, NY

Accent pillows and throw - Kravet, Inc., Miami, FL

Floor lamp - Metropolitan Lighting, New York, NY

Table lamp - Foundry Lighting, New York, NY

Area rug - Sanford-Hall, New York, NY

LANAI

Dining table - Christopher Guy, New York, NY

Dining chairs - Bernhardt, Lenoir, NC

Striped accent pillow fabrics - Kravet, Inc., Miami, FL

Wine cabinet - Sub-Zero, Madison, WI

Grill built - To Better Days Construction, Miami, FL

Blue tile wall - Artistic Tile, New York, NY

THROUGHOUT

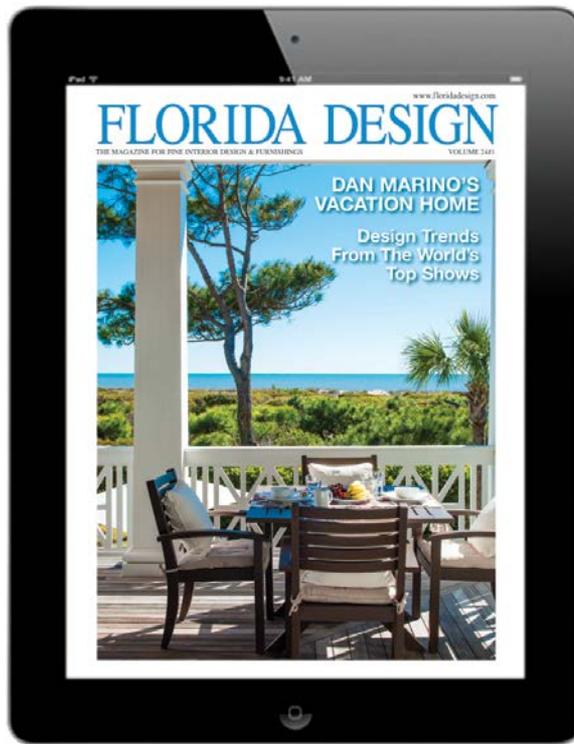
Ceiling treatments - Custom designed by Bjorn Bjornsson Interior Design, Miami Beach, FL, and New York, NY

Fabricated by To Better Days Construction, Miami, FL

Woodwork - Corrado Schepis, Cortech, LLC, Miami, FL

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