

# Casual Elegance

Glamour meets comfort in an inviting residence that beautifully captures the spirit of its surroundings.

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Architecture: Nelo Freijomel, Spina O'Rourke + Partners Interior Design: Paloma Contreras, Paloma Contreras Design  
Home Builder: Kenny Lewis, Conkling & Lewis Construction, Inc. Landscape Architecture: Mario Nievera, Nievera Williams Design



A custom settee upholstered in Kravet's Versailles velvet and a pair of Century Furniture accent tables lend a welcoming feel to the foyer. Galerie des Lampes' Ladybird sconces from Culp Associates are affixed to a wall painted Benjamin Moore's Chantilly Lace.

For designer Paloma Contreras, visiting South Florida is like entering a glamorous fantasy. “It has such a well-defined and iconic point of view,” she describes. “It’s exciting to work in a place that has a rich, stylistic history.”

Her first clients in Palm Beach felt the same way, and while they were all for leaning into the famed aesthetic—tropical, colorful, whimsical and elegant—their top priorities were coziness, comfort and warmth. As frequent entertainers who often host their blended family of adult children, the couple wanted their vacation home to be a place where they can unwind, gather with loved ones and enjoy the outdoors.

Still, when it comes to Palm Beach style, “I didn’t want to do anything too cliched or literal,” the designer explains, noting the resulting mostly white walls. “We weren’t heavy-handed with the way we used pattern and color. That restraint makes it feel fresh.”

The project began with a few mindful tweaks to make the floor plan more conducive to the clients’ lifestyle. Among them, architect Nelo Freijomel and general contractor Kenny Lewis relocated the primary suite downstairs and removed the foyer’s built-in fountain; in its place went a rich blue-velvet settee. “I imagined being at a crowded party and sneaking away to have a private conversation with someone in this spot,” Contreras muses. “It’s a great space for a little gossip and a martini.” There, she also proposed the Chinese star motif for the staircase fretwork, a departure from the typical horizontal pattern. “I was looking through an architecture book and found this Chippendale design on a railing in an old English manor house,” the designer recalls. “It made the staircase feel daintier and more appropriate.”

Freijomel, meanwhile, developed the subtle palm-frond casing lining the alcove between the foyer and the combined living and dining room, a favorite detail of his in the home. “It becomes one of those surprise moments that takes on a life of its own and invites you to interact with it,” he says. The architect also came up with the idea to replace four windows in the latter space with three French doors to the front yard, mirroring the existing ones on the opposite end of the room that access the back terrace. “To be able to open

up the doors and walk outside created a true flow from one area to the next,” Lewis adds.

A rare white marble was the impetus for the kitchen’s transformation, which included clean-lined cabinetry, handmade Moroccan tiles and a simple plaster hood. “But the wife’s main wish was to feel like she was in the garden while in the kitchen,” Contreras says. Generous windows and a lack of upper cabinetry allow for views of the grounds by landscape architect Mario Nievera. “We really wanted to give it the feel of an Old Florida home,” he notes, pointing to the coquina walkways, citrus garden and plantings such as date palms.

Comfortable seating areas throughout the residence create a seamless connection from outdoor to indoor, including into the living-dining room—a primary, central thoroughfare that bridges other areas of the home. “You wouldn’t think a formal space would be a walk-through,” Contreras acknowledges, “but that established the mood and vibe for entertaining.” Adding grandeur, she papered the walls in a metallic, hand-painted mural that depicts a tropical scene, framed by dramatic green draperies. “Because it is a very large space, it needed something to envelop it, give it a sense of arrival and make it feel really exceptional,” the designer explains. “This is our way of having a little fun and creating a special moment that sets the stage for the rest of house.” To offset the opulence, she introduced a chalky-white chandelier, linen-slipcovered sofas and a jute rug. “Throughout the home, there are beautiful, traditional elements mixed with more humble materials to add tension,” Contreras observes. “We wanted there to be a balance.”

The strategy continues in spaces such as the pantry, lined with a hand-blocked raffia wallcovering for casual charm. The primary suite houses a bed with a burnished-silver finish made to look like bamboo, while a guest space features grass-cloth walls, a raffia bed and an abaca rug. “It was about bringing together things that are disparate in a way that feels cohesive, layered, personal and timeless,” the designer notes. Most importantly, while honoring the spirit of Palm Beach, the residence embodies its occupants. “The wife sees her style and her dreams for this house reflected in the interiors,” Contreras says. “She can be herself here. It feels like home.” ■



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—PALOMA CONTRERAS

In the family area, Serena & Lily's Yarmouth chairs can swivel to face the exterior spaces. Highland House's Menil cocktail ottoman centers the floor covering by King's House Oriental Rugs near a custom sectional. Christopher Spitzmiller's Sophie lamp tops a Mecox side table.



**Right:** Countertops of Calacatta Gold Borghini Diamond marble from Aria Stone Gallery and a wall of Ait Manos' Idris tile enrich the kitchen. The cabinetry is embellished with hardware from Fixtures & Fittings.

**Opposite:** De Gournay's Amazonia wallpaper swathes the dining area, grounded by Patterson Flynn's Keno rug. A Paul Lange photograph hangs behind Bunny Williams Home's Rochester table, surrounded by custom chairs.





**Above:** A backsplash of Country Floors tile makes a statement in the bar, featuring lighting by The Urban Electric Co. McGuire stools from Meredith O'Donnell Fine Furniture line the waterfall island of Calacatta Gold Borghini Diamond marble from Aria Stone Gallery.

**Left:** The breakfast area, home to a McGuire table, is made cozy by pillows in Raoul Textiles and Casa Branca linens on a cushion of Schumacher's Everett twill. Close by are a chandelier by The Urban Electric Co. and a Sub-Zero wine fridge.



**Above:** A Kohler tub and Safavieh stool conjure tranquility in the primary bathroom, decorated with Ann Sacks wall and floor tiles. Vaughan and The Urban Electric Co. lighting illuminate the Calacatta Caldia Extra marble countertop from Aria Stone Gallery.

**Opposite:** David's Drapery Workroom Inc. constructed the primary bedroom's draperies using Schumacher linen. Above a Carlo de Carli for Sormani dresser is an Alexis Walter artwork. The Paul Ferrante bed stands on a Patterson Flynn Martin rug.

