



THE
WELCOMING
HOUSE

The Art of Living Graciously

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RIZZOLI
NEW YORK



CAPTIVATED BY LIGHT

THESE CLIENTS AND THEIR DAUGHTERS have long called Greenwich, Connecticut, home base. In recent years, though, they've been escaping to this lush Florida property for breaks from the worst of the northeastern winters. While they loved the house that was original to this site—a design by John Volk, one of the founding fathers of the Palm Beach vernacular—they realized after several years of living in it that it didn't suit their intentions for the long term. They and Thomas M. Kirchhoff, their Jupiter, Florida-based architect, considered every possible way to renovate the existing structure. Finally, they opted to start over.

The result? This magnificent, recently completed, light-washed Mediterranean-style residence in North Palm Beach. Among its many charms, it has striking views of the Atlantic Ocean, expansive and gracious rooms, a charming guesthouse, and an unusual trio of loggias.

 *The architect Thomas Kirchhoff specializes in contextually apt, beautifully detailed residences designed for today's lifestyles and distinguished by appropriate ornament inspired by Palm Beach's legendary architects: Addison Mizner, John Volk, Marion Symms Wyeth, and Maurice Fatio. The property unfolds harmoniously behind an intricately detailed front gate.*



Creating a new house is an exciting, challenging, stimulating, and sometimes daunting collaborative process. The better you understand your preferences and the more clearly you can explain them, the happier you will ultimately be.

The experience of living in the original Volk-designed house, which had a spectacular loggia, taught our clients several important lessons about the Florida lifestyle. The first and foremost was, as they put it, “You want to live outside as much as possible.” That said, they asked Tom to incorporate three loggias seamlessly into the overall design.

As the house continued to evolve in plan, the clients emphasized that they wanted it to function well, flow effortlessly, look lovely, and, most of all, maximize light and openness—all of which are inherent principles of Tom’s architectural philosophy. They also opted to take advantage of the full extent of the lot, which, at 100 feet by 400 feet, presented some unusual constraints. The decision to sink the driveway below grade along the property line and place the guesthouse and the main house like parentheses at either end of the lot opened up the core of the property beautifully. Lush landscaping and a pool by landscape architect Mario Nievera now bridge the distance, and there’s a wonderfully gracious procession of arrival from the front gate of the property through its full length to the gated front door of the main house.

On first entering the house, you feel the generosity of its volume; the pleasure of its natural materials palette of plaster, cast stone, limestone, pecky cypress, and other wood species; the graciousness of its architecture; and the specificity of its ornament from column capitals and ceiling beams to pilasters. Tom has quietly choreographed a strong sense of axuality, so it is possible to see from the entry hallway through to the living room and the ocean beyond.

 *Atop the foyer bureau, a blown-restoration-glass mirror reflects the front door, and a driftwood planter holds tropical foliage from the garden plus a few branches of quince.*






A skirted central table in the foyer repeats the ceiling detail with dimensional exactitude. An eighteenth-century Italian gilt-on-wood lantern descends directly on point. In the entry hall (opposite), succulents nestle into old shells. Italian ring-cut crystal lamps flank an early nineteenth-century English mirror hanging above a marble-topped console.



When a house opens itself to such captivating surroundings as these, why compete? The color palette reflects the environment of sand, sea, sky, and garden, with gentle neutrals, soft blues, and warm accents.

 In the light-filled, double-height living room, a serene blue-and-white palette reigns with a few azure splashes and melon accents. Hanging overhead is an antique Italian chandelier. On the walls flanking the entry archway are massive, early nineteenth-century mirrors originally from a chateau in Belgium, Tuscan-style painted buffets, and sconces, which add another level of light.









In the living room, an inlaid bone coffee table, a basket table, antique Italian end tables with inlaid marble tops, and Italian ring-cut azure crystal lamps add texture. The backgammon table suits the game-loving family.

Because of the scale of the architecture, we wanted to create an atmosphere of comfort and welcome throughout the house while keeping the rooms as open, light, and airy as possible.

When the family is here, they spend as much time as possible outside. For that reason, they had Tom create a loggia off the kitchen and family room. The dining room, glazed an entrancing shade of cantaloupe, is stylish enough to accommodate more formal evenings and friendly enough for breakfast on cool or raining mornings.

Their ground-floor master bedroom is an especially serene space. It features a white-painted four-poster bed, an array of comfortable seating, light-filtering sheers, and curtains detailed with crewel stitching and a linen band. The palest blue glaze covers the wall.

The living room is stunning, with stenciled 25-foot ceilings and leaded-glass clerestory windows. Two seating groups make for comfortable conversation and easy TV viewing.

Paneled in pecky cypress, his office/library can double as a guest bedroom if necessary. At the window overlooking the ocean, we placed his custom, Ultrasuede-covered desk. A mirror on the far wall reflects the ocean view to the room's occupants.

Upstairs is for the younger generation. The daughters' bedrooms capture spectacular views of the ocean. Adjoining is a lounge area for reading, watching TV, and gathering with friends; a convertible daybed provides additional sleeping capacity.

With an active family lifestyle, the basement exercise room gets a good workout. Also in the basement are a wine cellar and a home theater, which everyone uses far more than they first imagined.

 *In the gallery, lanterns and a stone floor with pebble inlays emphasize the rhythm of the groin vaults.*





The cantaloupe-painted dining room has many moods. For a beautiful breakfast or lunch, quartz votives and hibiscus from the garden make for an easily arranged centerpiece; the painting is by Mary Heilmann. A scalloped marble planter filled with orchids and cantaloupe-colored votives (opposite) suit a dressier occasion. An iron and silver leaf chandelier glimmers overhead; unlined wool sheers filter the light beautifully.






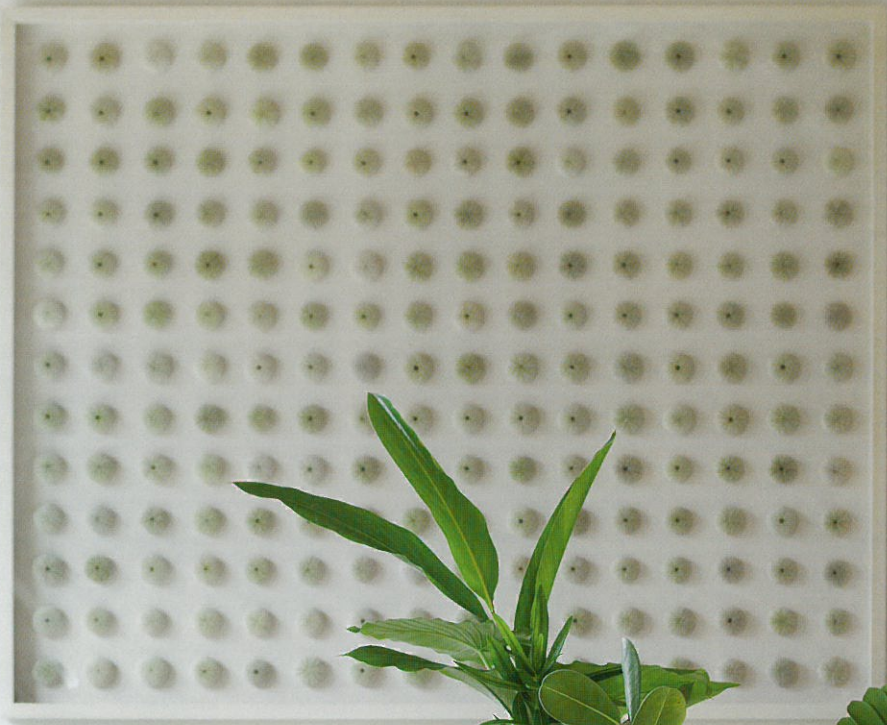
🐦 The kitchen encompasses a casual seating area (above). Faux leather-covered bar stools pull up to the island counter under the beamed ceiling. Charlotte-based kitchen and millwork specialist Emily Bourgeois consulted with us on the kitchen; her wonderful design includes the custom copper hood and recessed cabinets set into a tile wall.



We believe that function and comfort are closely related. In the lounge area between the daughters' bedrooms, the sectional seating arrangement is cozy and inviting. It also converts to extra sleeping quarters when the need arises.

 *Upstairs are two bedrooms for the couple's daughters and an adjoining lounge area where the girls and their friends can gather and watch TV. The comfy sectional sofa can do double duty as an extra bed or two when there's overflow; washable linen upholstery makes for easy maintenance.*





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IN THE SHADE OF THE VINES

*Design is not just a matter of aesthetics.
Our goal is to create homes that are
comfortable, functional, and inviting, and that
automatically put people at ease.*

COMFORT COMES FIRST

COMFORT MEANS DIFFERENT THINGS to different people. For us, comfort is a practical matter. Like every other aspect of design, it involves careful analysis and planning.

EVERY ROOM HAS DIFFERENT REQUIREMENTS for comfort. Once you know the purpose(s) of a room, you can decide what pieces of furniture you need and how best to arrange them. In a room where your children are going to watch TV, for instance, you'll need a maximum amount of seating. That's the room where you might want to put an oversize sofa. The children can flop on it, and you can join them. If your room is a family room for adults, on the other hand, you'll need sofas and enough chairs so that you can gather your friends together to watch a movie or a sports event. You'll also want convenient places—that is, side and coffee tables—to set drinks and lamps.

EACH OF US HAS OUR OWN COMFORT ZONE depending on our physical needs and preferences. We ask our clients what type of seating they like. Do they need a deep sofa? Or would they prefer a shallow seat? Do they like firm or soft cushions? Those questions and their answers are how we communicate about comfort.

WHEN IT COMES TO BALANCING sitting comfort and maintenance, each of us has distinct priorities. Some people don't want to fluff and plump cushions, and other

people are happy to do it. If your clients have several children or grandchildren who are going to be all over the furniture and they don't want to fix back cushions all the time, we recommend a tight back so the sofa stays neat.

A CUSHION IS AN INVITATION TO SIT, STAY, AND ENJOY. We often use fully upholstered chairs around the dining room table for that reason. We like upholstered club chairs that swivel and chairs that are on casters so they're easy to move. One of our favorite styles is an extra-wide upholstered bar stool on casters, a two-seater that can pull up to the kitchen counter or the kitchen island. Ottomans, benches, and low, upholstered stools can provide extra seating and/or a place to prop your feet. Little chairs are fun: children love them, and adults enjoy them too. As for the style of upholstery or slipcovers, sometimes you need skirts and sometimes you need legs. It's all about balance and harmony and making a pleasing composition that works in practical and aesthetic terms.

FABRICS ARE CLEARLY A MAJOR COMPONENT of comfort because they're what we all touch every day. In most rooms, we like to mix textures so that there's something soft, something sleek, something with a distinctive weave, and maybe just a little bit of leather. As with everything else comfort-related, function factors into how we make our fabric selections.





In the master bedroom, a French Louis XIV walnut bureau with fantastic ormolu mounts adds depth and patina. The painted four-poster bed with its bed hangings (opposite) is perfectly proportioned for the room, with its high, beautifully detailed ceiling.







The guesthouse is a charming getaway and, when guests desire, a private retreat. Its high ceilings, elegant detailing, inviting loggia, outdoor bed, and blue-and-white bedroom echo elements of the main house.

The guesthouse takes its light-blue-and-white color palette from the ocean just a few steps away. The room is set up for comfort and practicality, with two full-size four-poster beds resting under the airy cypress ceiling, lounge seating, benches at the foot of the beds, and a writing desk. Sheers at the windows filter the bright daylight and provide privacy.



So much of design is in the details. We pay a lot of attention to the small things, and we prefer subtle, careful embellishments that may not be apparent at first glance.

DETAILS, DETAILS, DETAILS

EVERYONE HAS HIS OR HER OWN OPINION

about the decorative details and custom elements that enhance a room. We certainly do. We pay a lot of attention to the little things, because we believe that the care we take with those little things translates into a room that is inviting and welcoming, and really pretty too. As much as we love having the opportunity to create something special and unique, if it involves an element of a room that someone will be living with for a while—for instance, curtains or a sofa—we take an understated approach to embellishment. Our style would be to add a hand-stitched scallop on a hem in matching thread or a lovely shell detail as a curtain trim.

CURTAINS ARE ONE PLACE WHERE

DESIGNERS, us included, love to express themselves. We usually frame the windows of our projects in panels of solid, quiet-colored fabrics. We like simple treatments, but they're never quite as simple as they first appear. We always think carefully about the lead edge, the hem, and what sort of pleating we use at the top. Careful details and quiet embellishments can transform that simple curtain into something much more special.

BECAUSE WE WANT THE WINDOWS to look inviting, not distracting, from the street, we line our curtains in a beautiful colored fabric that suits the location. In Charlotte, for instance, we usually use a neutral, putty-

colored lining, which looks elegant from the street. In Florida, we might use a pale, pale aqua, sea green, or blue-green—a tone that speaks to the exterior environment.

WE ALWAYS MAKE SURE THAT OUR CURTAINS

are fabricated with a lining and a flannel interlining, because that gives them a great fold and an elegant drape, a heft with wonderful presence; it can also help insulate. Interlining comes in different thicknesses; we use the one appropriate for the particular location.

NAILHEAD TRIM ON UPHOLSTERY is a favorite detailing device. It offers endless variety in pattern and makes for a terrific geometric motif, egg and dart, a swirl, and so on. The touch of hardware adds just a little reflectivity into a room. And particularly with leather and suede, nailhead trim is just a natural.


BEAUTIFUL LINENS AT THE TABLE may be everyday luxuries, but they're necessities too—and also considerate details that tell your guests you think they're special, welcome, and appreciated. There are certainly times when we all use paper, but it's nice to use your linens. If the fabric includes a bit of poly, you won't have to iron them. Ultrasuede napkins, for instance, are easy care: just smooth and fold when you take them out of the dryer. And the texture is a delightful surprise.



In the guesthouse loggia, a stone-top table is inviting and practical under a bronze chandelier (opposite). An outdoor bed for reading and lounging is built into the far end of the space. The sofa and lounge chairs have Moroccan-style fretwork details.



For a casual lunch or cocktails alfresco on the loggia overlooking the ocean just steps away, a table set in many shades of blue and aqua seems a natural, delightful fit.

 The loggia off the living room looks straight out to the Atlantic Ocean. The area is large enough for a dining table that seats up to ten plus a conversation area with lounge chairs, a sofa, a chaise, and coffee and side tables.



