

IN THE MIX

A SUNSET-INFUSED PALETTE AND TRANSITIONAL FURNISHINGS BLEND OLD WITH NEW, RESPECTING A HOME'S TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE WHILE LENDING A MODERN TWIST.

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It started as a simple decorate and paint job. The new owners of a Coral Gables house just steps from the water wanted to freshen things up, so they brought in interior designer Vincenzo F. Avanzato for a meeting. He walked through the Mediterranean-style residence, chatted with the couple in French and Italian, asked questions—and listened. Striking a chord with the homeowners, they were off and running with an extensive renovation instead.

Bringing light into the interiors topped the early to-do list. “The windows were covered in wrought iron, and no light penetrated the house,” explains Avanzato. “Our first objective was to get rid of it. That enabled us to see more clearly.” An antique Neapolitan door he discovered inspired both the home’s entry door and the plan for the redesigned balustrade, keeping an element of decorative ironwork to respect the traditional architecture but lightening up its effect to make it feel more modern.

INTERIOR DESIGN Vincenzo F. Avanzato, Avanzato Design LLC
HOME BUILDER Lawrence P. Cook, L. P. Cook Construction Co.
BEDROOMS 5 | BATHROOMS 8 | SQUARE FEET 10,000





In the living room, Vittorio Rossi's Murano glass heads from YM Antiques in New York flank Christine Pichette's painting. Before the artworks is a periwinkle sofa from Saladino Furniture in Summer Hill fabric from Jeffrey Michaels. The chair is by Minton-Spidell.



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Then there were the interiors themselves. Avanzato rethought some spaces, including the voluminous foyer. To bring it down to a human scale, he devised a cozy seating area in one corner. He opened the archway into the adjacent living room (extending the columns and straightening the curve) to enhance the flow between the spaces. The same creamy-hued plaster appears in both—on one living room wall and as wainscoting in the foyer—further cementing their connection.

For the furnishings, Avanzato says, “I took them on a tour to see what they liked, and it actually exposed what they didn’t like.” He discovered that a strictly contemporary look was out—but so too were spaces dominated by antiques. Instead, in keeping with the clients’ Continental heritage, the interiors reflect, he says, “European tendencies but done with a very young and vibrant taste.” In practice, it means clean-lined tables and case pieces that

An antique Persian carpet from Gables Rug Gallery anchors the living room. Interior designer Vincenzo F. Avanzato custom-designed the coffee table from Alexandra De Bedout Designs as well as the lounge chairs fabricated by Le Jeune Upholstery using a Rogers & Goffigon damask. Window Tech fashioned the draperies with Zimmer + Rohde fabric.



Above: A lamp from Alhambra Antiques sheds light on the foyer's cozy seating area, featuring a Hutton Home sofa from David Sutherland (wearing Bergamo velvet from Donghia) and Saladino Furniture chairs. The round occasional table is from Holly Hunt. Right: A Phoenix Day pendant illuminates the stair rail, an Avanzato design.

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mix comfortably with the softer profiles of upholstered chairs and sofas. Nothing is stuffy nor is it harsh.

Color, too, tempers the balance between contemporary and traditional. "They wanted the house to be happy, welcoming. It was not meant to be drab and certainly not meant to be dark," Avanzato says. "I selected Mediterranean colors like pinks and lavenders. They're not supposed to be strong and saturated." The hues, in the fabrics and in the painted touches, such as the soft blue on the library's cabinetry, liven things up rather than overpower and recall Florida sunsets.



The library's custom shelving was fabricated by 1050 Commercial Architectural Woodworking. Above runs a bronze rail for a custom door from Designer's Plumbing & Hardware that opens onto a bathroom with a floor mosaic from Innovative Surfaces. Lorca and Casamance chair fabrics offer two tones of blue, and a coffered ceiling adds architectural interest.



Graceful coconut palms shade a small seating space in the sunken garden. The sofa, table and *faux bois* chairs are from Janus et Cie. Next to them, a piece of architectural salvage has been transformed into a fountain.



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Avanzato, who worked with architect Adan Fons to execute permits and construction documents, brought in contractor Lawrence P. Cook to implement what were initially cosmetic changes. As the scope of the project grew, Cook's role expanded along with it. "One thing led to another," the builder explains. "It was a matter of seeing how the home would be used." For example, it became clear that extra guest space would be needed, so Cook and his team executed a second-floor addition under Avanzato's direction. Another unforeseen wrinkle was the master bathroom floor, which Cook had to shore up to support the weight of the freestanding stone tub.

Avanzato also turned his attention to the gardens—or, more accurately, what would become the gardens since, he says, "they were nonexistent," not to mention paved in concrete. With the help of landscape designer Enrique Gomez from Ego Growers, he kept things simple, conjuring up

At the rear of the house, a covered terrace overlooking the pool provides room for both a casual gathering space of furnishings from Janus et Cie and a dining area, which features a table and chairs by Manutti from Michael Taylor Designs. Another rare find, an antique crucible, perches on a pedestal.



A Phoenix Day pendant is suspended from a cove in the master bath, where Alexis Gorodine's painting from Amat Art Gallery hangs above a Porcelanosa tub. Keeping the original columns respected the home's traditional start, but a tone-on-tone palette with blue accents in the art, ceiling and mosaic inlay add modern twists.



Avanzato's custom bed and bedside tables lend elegance to the master suite. Drapery fabric from Zoffany provides a dash of pattern, as does the rug from Niba Home. A custom daybed from Donghia joins two chairs and a textured table. The Allan Knight and Associates lamps are from Michael Taylor Designs.



Illuminated by a table lamp from Saladino Furniture, a desk in the master bedroom is a place for quiet repose. The lithograph is a limited edition Picasso; the 19th-century marble sculpture of a mother and child comes from Alhambra Antiques.

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areas of interest throughout using plantings and hardscape, rather than making one vast open space. From the rear terrace, Avanzato designed a low-profile stair that now leads to a sunken garden with seating. There's a gazebo, and the couple's children have their own outdoor dining area, covered with pampas grass and dotted with shells.

For Avanzato, the Coral Gables house followed a similar trajectory as many of his other projects. "I don't have a preconceived idea when I walk in," he says. "It starts as a seed that is planted. As it's growing, you make changes accordingly. You prune the plant, and new buds grow. If you take the time to nurture it, then it blooms." **L**