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177 DESIGN VISIONARIES

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FLORIDA MANSES PENTHOUSES & COTTAGES

MADE IN THE SHADE HOMEGROWN MANUFACTURERS

TAKING THE RUNWAY HOME FASHION MEETS DECOR

IN THE DETAILS DESIGNER FURNISHINGS AND ACCESSORIES

WHAT'S IN THE STARS FOR MARTHA STEWART? HOROSCOPE PAGE 199



650 IDEAS HOME & DESIGN

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SMALL WONDER

A Fort Lauderdale guesthouse channels the European countryside with a careful balance of rustic and elegant charm



When Miami designer Vincenzo Avanzato took on a 600-square-foot Fort Lauderdale guesthouse on the water, he opted for neither rustic charm nor pompous elegance, but rather a comfortable compromise between the two. "There's this misconception that you can't be creative within a limited space," says Avanzato, "but I don't find that to be true. You just have to be resourceful."

To court success, Avanzato wisely opted to stay honest to the structure's architecture. "It's a Mediterranean structure heavily influenced by Italy and the south of France," he says. "I wanted an overall traditional look, but one that was light and airy because of the exterior environment, and I wanted to keep the sophistication of traditional elements without any fussiness." Easier said than done. Setting the tone for it all is the color palette. A glazed marmorino on the walls of the living room complements its simple, but carefully thought through, inventory of furniture and one-of-a-kind pieces. Dictated by the aforementioned octagonal shape of the quarters, Avanzato opted for a sectional sofa (covered in Schumacher fabric) by Vincent Frank that hugs the space. An Italian trellis table by the window serves as a desk. A non-matching Niemann Weeks chair further proffers the room's chéic chic esthetic. Embossed terracotta tiles give the living room its worn-in, casual appeal, especially when it's flooded with natural light. "The floor has a Corinthian leaf design," explains Avanzato. "Like the kind you would find in an Italian villa."

Upstairs, charm makes room for romance in the bedroom. French in inspiration, the suite juxtaposes classic and rustic elements. Chateau blue gives the room some pop. But don't let the color scheme fool you. "It might not seem like it," says Avanzato, "but this is a true Southern French palette." Avanzato's firm custom designed and manufactured the nightstands and bed to ensure authenticity. Dark oak flooring warms the space. Framed pastoral oils depicting the French countryside were used to perk up the walls. "The bedroom was challenging," says Avanzato. "Sometimes you look at a room and you know exactly where everything is going to go, but that was not the case here. I must have moved the bed a hundred times." The end result was worth it. The room is properly balanced with just the right amount of pieces.

"My ultimate objective was to create a little piece of Europe within the canals of Fort Lauderdale," says Avanzato. "And I think it all works together." □

DESIGN BY VINCENZO AVANZATO
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This page, from top: Designer Vincenzo Avanzato; An octagonal floor plan made the living room in this Fort Lauderdale guesthouse a challenge. Rather than work against it, Avanzato opted for furniture, such as the sofa sectional and octagonal coffee table, that hugged the room; Rustic makes way for romance in the upstairs bedroom, where a "Southern French" palette perks up the walls and custom-crafted furniture, including the bed and nightstands. Opposite: The design agenda in this guest cottage is casual chic with European flair. Natural light floods the space and reveals details everywhere, including the Corinthian leaf design on the embossed Italian terracotta.