

Sand CASTLE

SEA, SKY AND SHORELINE VIEWS
INSPIRE A LIKE-MINDED PALETTE
INSIDE A MODERN OCEANFRONT
CONDOMINIUM IN MIAMI BEACH.

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With just a three-month window to furnish a voluminous two-story beachfront condo, the process could have turned into a mercurial design marathon. But the client, a successful entrepreneur and devoted art collector, let his likes and dislikes be known from the start, freeing interior designer Michael Wolk to do what he does best despite a rigorous schedule—curate spaces based on a refined aesthetic.

Before Wolk could tackle furnishings, though, architect Paul Fischman had an equally grueling timeline to transform the condo into a light-filled, view-centric modern home. The space was virtually gutted, and Fischman and his firm got right to work meticulously selecting plumbing fixtures, materials and finishes, as well as designing millwork throughout (including the kitchen and master bathroom) and a specialty wine display, tapping Carol Deane and Janine Geller for their help as in-house designers. The one remaining architectural bookmark is the glass-stepped floating staircase that climbs the 22-foot-high living room. The staircase, like everything else, went serene—in this case from silver to an ethereal white.

And though the team took on the compressed deadline with focus, passion and purpose, the inevitable surprises that came along made for some interesting post-construction stories. Builder Robert T. Arkin shared that his construction team had 3,500 square feet of tile to remove from various rooms in the home with a window of four-hour segments each day for chipping it away. “Then, a week into the project, the building shut down our access to the lobby because it too was being renovated,” recalls Arkin, whose in-house millwork shop executed all of the custom millwork, which appears in nearly every room. “We had to transfer materials by moving from the ground-floor elevator to the third-floor garage, then switch to a second elevator to get back to the lobby.”

Rooms were reconfigured and walls taken down, all to bring in take-your-breath-away, unobstructed water views to all areas. “The owner wanted to open up the space both upstairs and downstairs and customize it to fit his lifestyle,” says Fischman, who collaborated with Ralph Choeff on the overall design program. The kitchen, master bedroom,

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baths and even closets were adjusted accordingly, and all walls were given a black recessed base so that they look as though they are floating. In the master bedroom, for example, two bathrooms were combined to create one large master bath with views to the beach. “One thing the owner wanted to do was have a shower that looks out to the ocean,” Fischman says. “We had to reconfigure the room’s layout, which was a little tricky because we had to re-engineer the drainage without affecting other units in the building.” And rather than fashioning the expected dressing room and walk-in closet, an open wardrobe area with a glass wall was created, allowing for a 180-degree view of the sea. In the public spaces, a wall came down in the redesigned kitchen, seamlessly merging it with the living and dining rooms. High-gloss white-lacquer cabinetry, a glistening backsplash and double islands covered in waterfall-edged Carrara marble present a sleek and tranquil environment. The new glass-framed wine display installed adjacent to the kitchen lends color and texture.

Once construction was underway, Wolk, with the help of Darlene Boitel-Johnson, went on the hunt for furnishings, lighting and accessories, creating a beachy color palette of water, sand and sky that would make for a relaxed setting. “All the furnishings are a highly considered mix of contemporary, classic and iconic designers and are light in color and feel,” he says. They are also sculptural and allow sunlight to pass easily through them. Originally, the client told Wolk not to show him anything he couldn’t immediately get into the condo. But soon after the designer reviewed concepts and showed him samples, the homeowner agreed that waiting 18 to 20 weeks for special pieces coming from Europe would be worth the wait. “Once he was comfortable, he gave us a tremendous amount of leeway,” says Wolk, who also incorporated outdoor pieces from his collection for Pavilion Furniture.

Wolk worked closely with the architects and builder to bring his custom designs to fruition, as he conceived several built-ins that dovetail with the clean, modern theme. For example, Wolk designed barely-there bookshelves for the study and a low, unobtrusive bed—anchored in rich dark walnut wood—that keeps the view at front of mind. The arctic white dining room buffet and the custom cabinetry that acts as a room divider between the living and dining areas are each big in function yet light as clouds. A television rises up from the partition cabinetry and can turn 180 degrees, so anyone who wants to watch can do so from either space. More bookshelves cap the ends, and shelving on the dining room side holds a collection of shells that speaks to the beachfront setting.

Today, no matter how hectic the owner’s life might be, he is assured that his beach retreat awaits, welcoming him with mesmerizing views and calming scenes. With each carefully curated furniture piece, artwork and custom feature, you’d never know there were any time constraints. Ask Wolk and he’ll say the waterfront revival allowed for enormous creative freedom. “The only real parameter became the three-month deadline,” he says, “and that just made the project more fun.” ■



Sand-colored oak flooring from Home Expo Miami and a natural-hued Baxter sofa from Internum & Design allow the great room to mirror the beach tones just steps away. The large fish tank in the dining area, from Living Color Aquariums, brings the seascape tableside. Paintings by Richard Serra and Frank Stella from Evelyn Aimis Fine Art form a vertical gallery above the sideboard.



The side of the great room that serves as a den is made cozy with a rug by The Rug Company. A sofa from Carriage House sits like a sand sculpture beneath Norbert Brunner's swimmer-themed art from Claire Oliver, as does the Hutton lounge chair by David Edward. Pedestal-placed shells from Urban Art and a Phillips Collection side table also honor the coastal setting. The coffee table is by Poliform.

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The kitchen's all-white theme—including cabinetry fabricated by Arkin Construction—keeps the space as light as a cloud, while an Avonite backsplash by Aristech Surfaces and Gaggenau ovens from Monark offer contrast. The Carrara marble countertops, from Modern Interior Mall, were fabricated by Elegance Marble and Granite of Fort Lauderdale. Pencil-legged barstools by Zanotta continue the modern scheme.



Basket-weave chairs designed by Michael Thonet, from Bauhaus 2 Your House, surround the table in the casual dining area. Thin and light as a worn beach stone, the table is by Maxalto. Custom-designed cabinetry beneath the staircase has the same recessed edge as the walls to give the illusion that it is floating in the space. Accessories are from Urban Art and Niba Home.



Above: Light wood bookshelves in the office play off the base of Zanotta's Cavour desk. Wolk's custom cabinetry is the perfect perch for a geometric sculpture by Paul Thomas for Niba Home. Art by Nick Goss, from Josh Lilley in London, provides a bit of outdoor fantasy. The Rox rocking chair is by Davis Furniture.

Left: Unobstructed ocean views were of paramount importance and a glass-walled hallway on the second floor helped to achieve that. The railing, from Coconut Grove Glass & Mirror Company, runs past the office area and into the master bedroom, where Andrew Erdos' photographs from Claire Oliver pull the eye in as much as the panorama outside.

Nino Longobardi's coral-hued painting, from Evelyn Aimis Fine Art, lends softness to the guest bedroom. A chest from Jalan Jalan Collection holds the essentials for a weekend visit by the beach, while a bedside Giorgetti lamp allows for reading once the sun has set. In the background, Zilvinas Kempinas' art piece from Galeria Leme commands attention above the fish tank in the living room.

