

DESIGN + DECOR

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BRISTOL TOWER

An Unconventional Multicultural Mix in a Miami High-rise

Kakee House of Design starts with a blank slate and transforms a stark, modern condo into an eclectic retro-modern haven.

Story by Weryl Siegman | Photography by Kris Tamburello



The happy home, with its light-colored walls and custom-made wooden accents, is a mix of white and black with black piping. The pieces of custom-produced imagery by artist Joseph Kampman from the past.

Through the years, all of this spectacular apartment is to have behind my preconceptions about modernism, and enter into a wonderfully eclectic and imaginative world of multicultural influences. The two-bedroom unit is located in Miami's iconic Brickell Town, a six-story, luxury mid-century modernism designed by Leon Raimundo, on the southern section of Brickell Avenue overlooking Biscayne Bay. The apartment's lower-floor location allows for delightful morning views of the palm trees being the most below, in full display from the unit's floor-to-ceiling windows and full-length balcony, creating the sensation that the view-facing, sun-filled residence is sitting in the middle of a tropical rainforest.

When he purchased the apartment, the owner, a multi-faceted world traveler and art lover, hired Aml Katar of B13 Studios for the interior design. The client wanted something worldly and unique, rich-looking and layered with patterns and textures. "He was looking for something different, not cookie-cutter," Aml explains. Because his client loved red, it became the dominant color in the design scheme. Aml was given carte blanche to take whatever direction he chose, using the empty dwelling in his career. "His left the kitchen as it is because it had recently been redone," Aml continues. "All the walls in the apartment were white-washed, which was perfect for letting his extensive art collection, which I helped curate, really pop." The dark wood floors, finished with high-gloss polyurethane, were also left intact.

Aml is an Indian-born interior



The focal point of this living space is vintage designer lighting, which, on a circular table, surrounded by mid-century modern chairs, reflects by Kawayama of Design.



person who grew up in Michigan and later moved to Florida, where he received his MBA at the University of Miami and became a wealth adviser for large banks. Ultimately, he followed his true calling as a designer. In addition to running his own interior design firm, BCI Studios, which specializes in high-end residential interiors, he is also the proprietor of Kaker House of Design in Miami's Antiques and Design Plaza, a storehouse that sells beautifully restored vintage and antique furniture. It is also filled with rugs, pillows, lighting, art, sculpture and accessories from around the world. And personally sources each item in the store, regularly traveling globally on shopping trips as well as attending auctions and estate sales. He is also an esteemed furniture designer, with his own workshop staff. "I first fabricated his one-of-a-kind contemporary creations for his clients. I love juxtaposing vintage and antique pieces," he says. "The quality is so excellent, it holds up throughout the years. Repurposing them into new, useful objects gives them a new lease on life and creates an aesthetic that otherwise can't be reproduced." His creativity is on display in the Biscayne Towers apartment, where most of the pieces were purchased directly from him. And a chandelier is fabricated in his workshop specifically for the project.

The elegant apartment features a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows running the length of the space and opening onto a gracious balcony. The

space is ample, with the living, dining and master bedrooms off to the left of the entryway, and the second bedroom, used as a den, off to the right. Because the 1970s building features a round construction, the windows have a slight curve, lending a modernist feel to the apartment. With its stark white walls, dark wood floors and abundance of glass, the space provides the perfect

canvas for its eclectic, colorful and explosive interior. And masterfully combined the standard materials of mid-century modern—chrome, glass, brass, Lucite—with soft and tactile elements such as wool, silk, cotton and fur. Retro and modern furniture and accessories are cleverly paired with antiques and vintage pieces. The apartment abounds with color, texture and warmth, accompanied by a splash of playfulness.

A vintage stool can't go beyond the entrance foyer to be thoroughly taken in by the brilliant and magical multicultural mix of vintage and modern, traditional and contemporary, used and eye-popping. First to draw attention is a modern console made from a 1970s vintage brass and chrome base with a glass top. On top, various objects float around the world as an eclectic collection including a Buddha head, an Asian box, a modern sculpture of a face and nose, and various religious items. One is their dinner is an ornate custom-made chair featuring a long hair





Meditation table set with an over-sized carved wooden back. A fanciful group of masks, including an antique cloth loosing mask, adorns one of the walls. The thick-piled rug is handmade Turkish *ovsenak*, and the pair of ottomans was crafted from vintage Moroccan rugs in *Paul's* workshop.

The living room is a masterful mélange of art, furniture and accessories that inspires a wide range of cultures and eras. Red and white predominates, carefully chosen so as not to detract from the artwork carefully hung on the stark white wall behind the sofa. The four chairs feature a limited-edition series by the multi-awarded Dutch artist James Turrell, made from computer-generated printed images based on the work of Joseph Albers. The sofa is from the 1960s, newly upholstered in white Belgian linen and accessorized with patterned red silk shag pillows. Framing the sofa are a pair of modern wing chairs in matching white linen with black contrasting piping. The iron-legged bench made from reclaimed wood inspired from the Dominican Republic provides a soft, natural touch. A graceful vintage brass leaf sculpture sits atop a quarter-century 1960s coffee table constructed from cheese and bean. The mid-century modern side tables are made from recycled stone, a material that was commonly used in that era. A colorful Turkish kilim pulls the room together perfectly.



The dining room has an elegant, understated simplicity. At its center is a vintage lacquer dining table featuring a round glass top set on a base of lacquered black stables, and surrounded by four striking mid-century modern chairs that were completely restored and refined in Aul's studio. The stunning rectangular chrome bench against the wall was originally a coffee table, above which is mounted a mirror from the 1960s.

The work of internationally renowned artists is on display in one corner of the master bedroom. A portrait by the Irish artist Joe Mulligan is hung just outside the door, complemented by a mid-1950s Lucite bench below. Another by Mulligan and a black-and-white portrait by the Italian painter Tiziano Manfrotti are displayed inside. The bedroom is accented in red, black and white, with a handmade, naturally-dyed rug from India offering more neutral colors in a diamond pattern. The linen headboard, custom-made in Aul's workshop, provides a bright splash of lipstick red. The bed is accentuated by matching handmade Moroccan embroidered pillows that were made in Uzbekistan and finished by hand in Turkey.

The two bedside nightstands are French from the 1950s, newly lacquered in white. Two handmade Moroccan poufs finished in black leather with white stitching are placed by the windows. Off to the side are a vintage chrome lounge and white lacquer chest on a metal base. The mid-century modern lamp sitting on top features a wonderfully restored gold-folied shade that reflects the window light.

The second bedroom was transformed into a study/lin for the owner to both work and relax. The 1950s sofa is upholstered in oversized

fabrics from a man's passport case, a charming and whimsical touch. The two lamps pair a mid-century modern ceramic base with a contemporary modern shade. A vintage window desk is positioned to face the Florida landscape. "The legs on the desk are ballerina," explains Aul. "They are meant to look like ballerinas in poses." The base of the vintage Asian lamp was originally a vase, now given new life as a lighting fixture, with a custom black fed shade. The desk chair with railroad ties in Italian, made with black denim jean fabric, picks up on the clean theme of the den's sofa fabric.

"What I loved about this project was the freedom I had to create something totally different and authentic for this client, using one-of-a-kind items," says Aul. "And what he loved was that his apartment was transformed from an empty space into a vibrant home with a unique but lived-in look. The best moment was when he walked in the door for the big reveal."

Artist

James Dwyer
Lake House of Dwyer
 Studio 3-11
 Aul Kaler
 8025 Bayview Boulevard No. 11
 Miami, FL 33158
 305.294.4343
 info@lakerdwyer.com