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INTERIOR DESIGN / ANIL KAKAR, KAKAR HOUSE OF DESIGN
ARCHITECTURE / JAN STANBURY, J. STANBURY DESIGN INC.
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / STANLEY MATZ, ROJESTIC GARDENS

VENETIAN GLAMOUR

A DESIGNER TRANSFORMS
HIS PALM ISLAND WATERSIDE
RESIDENCE INTO A GRAND
MEDITERRANEAN-INSPIRED VILLA.

WRITTEN BY MINDY PANTIEL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KRIS TAMBURELLO

Vicaya, one of Miami's most-renowned domiciles with stunning gardens, presides over Biscayne Bay like a stately Venetian palazzo. It was there that designer Paul Chaffin rose to prominence in the early 20th century with his deft melding of European furniture styles from various centuries with ornate antiques and modern Renaissance pieces. It is no accident that Villa Louise, the Palm Island residence of designer Anil Kakar and his partner, Don Lawson, emulates Chaffin's penchant for the eclectic. Albeit smaller than Vicaya, the rooms are layered with an equally mindful mix of pieces like 18th-century French chandeliers, Swedish antiques, and Moroccan rugs, and the walls feature the same rich saturated colors that define the venerable Miami landmark. "I love Vicaya," says Kakar, who credits the building for his home's inspiration. "It looks like it could be centuries-old, and has a sense of history that I tried to evoke in my own house."

But while his predecessor started from the ground up creating a new structure, Kakar was faced with the daunting task of transforming a dilapidated 1930s house, yet, fortunately, it had "absolutely gorgeous bones." To help reshape the space the owners turned to architect Jan Stanbury, who added a sun room next to the living room and upper-level master suite, extended the dining room by 8 feet to create a stronger connection with the water, and reworked the former maid quarters into an office/sitting room. Employing local artisans, the exterior stucco walls were repainted a more appropriate tone of salmon, the roof was topped with authentic Spanish tiles, Corinthian pillars were inserted in the loggia, and two fountains were covered in Tunisian tiles.



Homeowner and designer Avi Kazar infused his refurbished Palm Beach home with Mediterranean charm. "Each layer tells a story," he says about the living room's handwoven Moroccan rug and ceiling beams made of original Dade County Pine. The corner built-in constructed around antique European windows balances the existing fireplace, where antique logs are lit from behind to mimic fire. Williams-Sonoma Home accents decorate the walls, while a custom linen sofa fabricated by Sherron Lewis Design Center and a granite coffee table from Monica James & Co. anchor the room.

At this juncture, landscape designer Stanley Metz was tasked with creating gardens to match the old-world architecture. "The property was pretty run-down. After cleaning it up, we added sculpted podocarpus in the front to mimic Italian cypress trees, which don't do well in humidity," says Metz, who also introduced picnic roses and cone-shaped garcinia for a formal touch. In the courtyard, silver buttonwoods with gnarly twisted trunks give the illusion of Tuscan olive trees, and glazed terra-cotta pots overflow with ornamental citrus plants for a more relaxed look.

Inside, the arduous yet extremely rewarding undertaking of covering the walls with lime-based paint began. "It's been used for centuries in Europe and you apply so many layers the walls never need to be repainted," says Kazar of the process that yields the rich hues long associated with Italian buildings. "There's an uneven look to the color that adds a sense of age."

In the living room, where a mottled tawny backdrop meets French terra-cotta tiles, great care was taken to preserve the Dade County pine ceiling. "You can't even get that kind of wood anymore and we must have sandblasted off 10 coats of paint," says Kazar who suspended an 18th-century French chandelier from the rafters, and saved the existing fireplace with its original copper embellishments. Like many items throughout the house, the furnishings and antiques were

Below, left: "I chose a salmon-colored, lime-based paint like you'd see on Italian and French villas for the stucco walls," says Kakar of the home's exterior and entryway into the courtyard.

Below, right: Landscape designer Stanley Matz transformed the overun courtyard into a Tuscan paradise with terra-cotta glazed pots filled with ornamental citrus trees.



Corinthian columns make a striking statement in front of the home's main entrance, while a pair of custom stone chairs sits on the terrace steps and leading inside (up to the living room) are the necessary French Chippendale armchairs from the catalog. An ornate mirror found in Europe rests against the wall.



In the sun room, an addition by architect Jim Starbuck, crystal lamps by Carol Stupell set on petrified wood side tables act as showstoppers in the light-filled space. Throw pillows from Kakar House of Design, the designer's own boutique, enhance the custom Belgian linen sofa that rests upon a Brazilian cowhide rug, and the antique gilded French chairs are upholstered in silk by Donghia.

A 19th-century Italian wood-and-metal candle chandelier illuminates the dining room where artwork by Michael Brun dominates one wall and a surburban mirror from Stewart Galleries in Palm Springs, California, graces the other. A Swedish settee and dining chairs surround a custom wood table fashioned in the style of a Belgian Library table. Just beyond the French doors, the outdoor cabana features Sunbrella drapes fabricated by Atlantic Awnings.



“SITTING ON A SOFA AT THE TABLE CREATES A MORE INTIMATE DINING EXPERIENCE.”

—ANIL KAKAR



"I love the contrast of all the white with the greenery in the courtyard," says Kakar about the guesthouse suite he built to a jewel box. The 19th-century French armchairs flank an antique English table, and the Mongolian lamb rug is from Advanced Trading. Built-in bookshelves painted Benjamin Moore Decorator's White are filled with collectibles and tomes, which are hand-wrapped in white paper in keeping with the soothing ambience.

unearthed during travels to often-exotic locales. "Everyone told us we would buy rugs in Morocco, so even though we had bare floors we promised we wouldn't do what everyone else had done," recalls Kakar of their attempt to avoid purchasing anything while visiting. "Of course, by the end of the trip we had bought several, including the one on the living room floor."

Beams meant to mimic the wood of the living room ceiling were added to the expanded dining room, where Swedish antique side chairs and a settee covered in Belgian linen provide seating around a carved-wood table. "Sitting on a sofa at the table creates a more intimate dining experience," says Kakar noting that the addition of an adjacent cabana also helped extend the entertaining space.

The ochre-toned walls shift to green in the office/sitting room where Kakar blended a 19th-century Belgian cabinet, contemporary mirrored cube tables, and a hide rug at one end of the long rectangular space, and an old French day bed and a chandelier fashioned from French wine barrels on the other. Meanwhile orange walls with a stenciled border permeate one of the guest rooms where the swag-printed drapes and gilded screen are meant to be reminiscent of a mini palazzo in the Floating City. "It's Venice all the way," Kakar says.

In the master bedroom, the robin's-egg blue walls tie back to the water views, the antique bergère chair is dressed in a "Chanel suit-style fabric," and the Syrian mother-of-pearl chest is piled high with Murano glass. About his graceful Italian hideaway Kakar says, "When we get home at the end of the day, we want to be transported to another time and place. And when we are here, that's just how it feels." ■

A Syrian bone-and-mother-of-pearl-inlay chest provides the perfect display space for a vintage Murano and Swedish art glass collection in the master bedroom. The uniquely shaped headboard is swathed in Ralph Lauren velvet and the bed linens are Pratesi.



Overlooking the pool, the master bedroom walls are covered in a tone of robin's-egg blue bringing the outdoors into the sleeping quarters. The antique bergère chair from Kukar House of Design wears fabric matching the walls. The sconce on the bed wall is antique metal, and its counterpart on the opposite side is composed of antique French crystal.



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