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# ACTING the PART

THE STORY OF THIS BEACHY RETREAT HAS UNFOLDED OVER THE YEARS, CULMINATING IN A LIGHT AND AIRY SEASIDE NARRATIVE FOR THE OWNERS AND THEIR FAMILY.

WRITTEN BY **TERRI FEDER** / PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TRIA GIOVAN**



INTERIOR DESIGN / JOHN BJØRNEN, BJØRNEN DESIGN  
ARCHITECTURE / THOMAS HOOS, HOOS ARCHITECTURE  
HOME BUILDER / BOB LYLES, RCL DEVELOPMENT  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / DAN FORD, DAN FORD & ASSOCIATES

Nothing says seaside getaway like weathered cedar shingles, a breezy balcony, a creamy stucco façade with crisp white trim and a chill vibe. And one such retreat, with its Anglo-Caribbean aesthetic (think wide roof overhangs, exposed wood outriggers at the eaves, vertically proportioned openings and columned porches), called to a couple on the hunt for a Florida vacation haven. “We had been coming to the community for several years to visit friends and loved it so much that we knew we wanted to buy a home there,” says the wife. “This house was our friends’ exact footprint, in reverse. So as we walked through it, we could picture exactly how we would use the home.”

But turning the charming house—originally designed by Brenner & Associates Architecture and built by Barth Construction—into their quintessential paradise would take time. The couple, who have three children, would eventually enlist New York designer John Bjørnen and architect Thomas Hoos to renovate the home in full. But when they first settled in back in 2007, the first order of business was making the interiors more family-friendly. “There were a number of scratchy sisal rugs, which are no good for crawling babies, and lots of ornate, dark wood furniture,” the wife recalls. With a newborn in tow and two other tots younger than 5 at the time, the couple limited their initial rework to ripping out the sisal and replacing the dark furniture with lighter pieces.

After a few years went by, the couple was ready to remodel. “We started with opening up the small galley kitchen to the expansive living room that was adjacent to it,” says the wife. “We said, ‘Let’s knock down a wall!’ And of course, it all ballooned from there.” They engaged Bjørnen to oversee the kitchen’s renovation and to revamp the ground floor. “As we progressed, I urged the owners to embrace a holistic approach and enable the whole house to breathe and flow differently,” says Bjørnen, who had previously remodeled their home in the Hamptons as well as an apartment in New York. Hoos was then recruited to handle the architectural changes. “We went with Tom because we loved his work in our friends’ home,” the wife says. The architect’s modernist sensibilities jibed perfectly with the owners’, and builder Bob Lyles was a natural fit to implement these changes. Rounding out the team was landscape designer Dan Ford, who was tasked with steering the landscape toward an elegant, easy-to-maintain tropical environment that would reflect the home’s

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—JOHN BJØRNIEN

minimalist slant. “We introduced a variety of palm trees, including solitaire, areca, Christmas, coconut, travelers and Senegal date,” says Ford, “and eliminated any aspects of the existing landscape that went against the design goal.”

When Bjørnen and the owners realized a third bedroom upstairs would be beneficial for the family, Hoos drew up options for a fresh layout for the second floor. “We ended up gutting and renovating the entire second level and adding an additional bedroom,” says Hoos, who devised a plan that connected each bedroom with the veranda and its glorious views. “All three bedrooms open through French doors to a balcony overlooking the golf course, and the balcony serves as an upstairs alfresco family room.” The largest of the three—a master suite—was distinguished with vaulted, tongue-and-groove wood ceilings. A shared kids’ bathroom, too, was introduced. Downstairs, an existing guest bedroom was tapped to create a den so that the family could enjoy two living areas—one for grown-ups and one for the kids.

When it came to the interiors, Bjørnen worked closely with the owners and designer Maureen Winter McDermott, who was in his employ at the time and has since started her own firm, Winter McDermott Design. “We started with a Pinterest board, a wish list and a mindful approach that the space was to have levity, an air of carefree Florida fun, and a light ode to the swanky style of the 1960s,” he says. They embraced the bohemian influences of midcentury modernism from the Palm Beach era, commingling vintage pieces with new and custom ones. “There were also some preexisting pieces that we folded in the mix, like the large midcentury teak credenza in the den,” says Bjørnen.

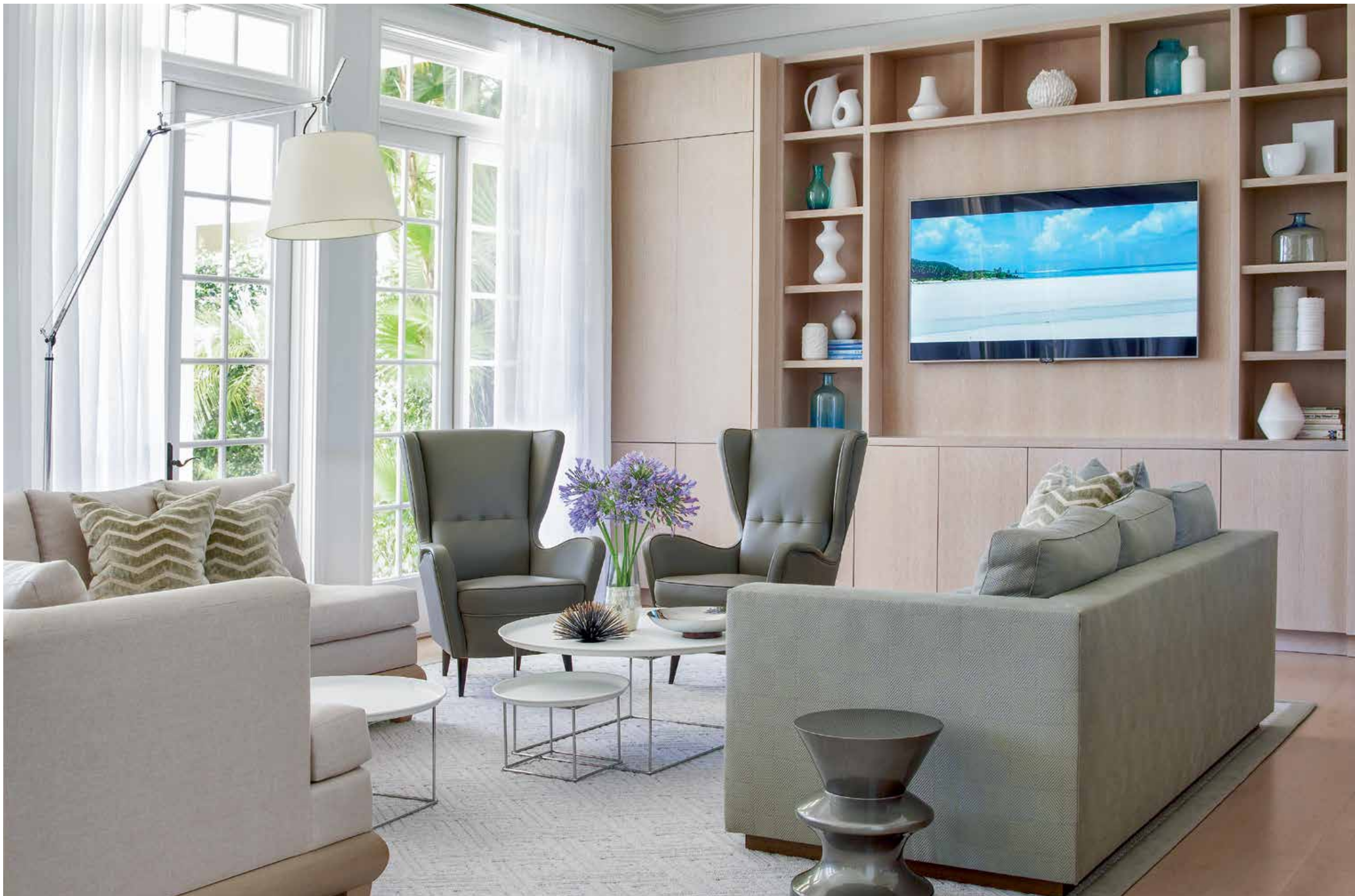
Along with a tailored, airy aesthetic, the couple requested a warm and welcoming feel. “The owners wanted a home that they could escape to and kick back in with sandy feet,” explains Bjørnen, “but they also wanted a place where they could entertain friends and family.” Things needed to be sophisticated enough for cocktail parties but not so precious that kids couldn’t let loose. “I asked for tables without sharp edges, sofas you could sit on in a still-damp bathing suit without ruining them, and a dining table that could stand relatively heavy use without getting scratched,” says the wife.

For the finishes, materials were chosen that are low-maintenance, long-lasting, and light-colored. For example, bleached-walnut flooring with a silver-gray stain was used throughout the home, lending a more contemporary feel. “It created such a beautiful, fresh effect that lightened everything up,” Lyles says. In the kitchen, custom cerused-white-oak cabinetry pairs with gray-and-white Caesarstone countertops that realistically mimic the veining and depth of marble without its fragility. And fabrics had to be soft yet tenacious. “We used a lot of durable fabrics, such as Sunbrella fibers, Nanotex textiles and faux leathers,” Bjørnen states. Complementing the materials is a quiet palette of naturally silvered tones—soft sands with hints of gray and blue—with an occasional pop of lemon yellow as an homage to the Sunshine State. The serene scheme helps mask any actual sand that finds its way inside.

Today, the property sustains the family’s vacation lifestyle of kicking back, swimming, enjoying the beach and entertaining. “We love this home so much,” confides the wife. “It is where we are happiest and most relaxed. If we’re on holiday, we’re here.” ■



Élitis’ faux-horsehide vinyl wallpaper sheathes the foyer’s walls. Photo prints from the owners’ collection are displayed above a custom floating console from Comerford Collection in Bridgehampton, New York. A pawn-shaped citrine stool, also from Comerford Collection, punches up the color quotient.



A cerused-oak built-in by LaCorte Enterprises anchors the living room. Seating includes vintage Paolo Buffa armchairs and custom sofas by NY Custom Furnishings. They rest on a rug from Designer's Touch Flooring, along with Artemide's Tolomeo Mega floor lamp from La Luz in Brooklyn, New York, and B&B Italia coffee tables. Custom sheers from The Shade Store filter in natural light.



**Above:** Caesarstone countertops, from Double E Marble & Granite, keep things light and airy in the kitchen. Pendants by John Pomp, from Comerford Collection, illuminate the space. Walnut BassamFellows Tractor stools are from Design Within Reach. The Brizo Solna faucet is from Southern Plumbing.

**Right:** A combination of textured white and cerused-oak cabinetry by LaCorte Enterprises offers a tailored look and ample storage. The Wolf range is from Jetson Television and Appliance, and the flooring is cerused white oak from Designer's Touch Flooring.



In the dining area, a Tommy Extension table from Comerford Collection centers Wishbone chairs with custom cushions from Suite NY and a bench wearing Kravet shagreen, upholstered by NY Custom Furnishings. A John Pomp chandelier keeps with the home's modernist spirit. Panels from Phil Barnhart's *Flow* series dress the wall.

Part of the spacious dining area was commandeered to create a dining lounge, which features Vladimir Kagan's sinuous Serpentine sofa and an oversize mirror from Joseph Anuso 20<sup>th</sup> Century Design. Flanking the vintage mirror are angular Roll & Hill Agnes sconces. Silvered trunk tables from ABC Carpet & Home and Moroccan tray tables from West Elm further the room's lightness.



Élitis' wallcovering reappears in the stairwell, topped with clerestory windows. Sculptural and commanding, a brass Gio pendant with bronze and satin finishes, from Room in New York, reflects the iconic wall art by Curtis Jeré, from Palm Beach Antique and Design Center. Underfoot, a Couristan runner with custom Sunbrella binding, from Designer's Touch Flooring, imparts pattern and sophistication and is forgiving in the well-trafficked space.



In the master bathroom, a freestanding Wetstyle Ove bathtub is complemented by a Brizo tub filler, both from Southern Plumbing, and Walker Zanger's Helsinki Silver Dusk flooring in a chevron pattern. An occasional table by Oly stands next to the tub.



**Above:** Benjamin Moore's Silver Satin paint sets the stage for serenity in the master bedroom. Vintage chests from ABC Modern in Atlanta flank a custom faux-ostrich bed by NY Custom Furnishings. A Tibetan lamb ottoman from Comerford Collection is at once furry and fun. The custom draperies are from The Shade Store.

**Left:** The master bathroom features spa-like amenities, such as a steam shower whose walls are sheathed in Walker Zanger tiles. The shower's built-in floating bench is clad in Caesarstone's London Grey stone, as are the custom vanities by LaCorte Enterprises. The sconces are from La Luz.



**Above:** With its forever views of the golf course, pool and mélange of palm trees, the back terrace is a study in luxe relaxation. The double chaise by the existing pool is by RH.

**Left:** A cozy family lounge on the upper veranda is perfect for viewing epic Florida sunsets and sneaking solace with a good book. Hubbardton Forge pendants from La Luz suspend over a grouping of furniture from the owners' collection.



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