

Art Beckons in Modern South Palm Beach Home

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A Home Conceived As Art, From an Entrance Waterfall, To the Elevator Interior, To a Jellyfish Sphere

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Designed by architect Ralph Choeff, this 7,850-total-square-foot home is all about drama. Even the Amarr garage doors from Crawford beg attention. With a grid of frosted glass and wood, they open to a showroom, a dream-come-true for an avid car collector.



In a light-filled living room that reflects the colors of the ocean, sofas from Century are covered in silk and cottons that take on an elegant iridescence. Magnificent Aquariums' "Jellyfish Sphere" comes alive with modulated and synchronized mood lighting.



An open floor plan creates a free-flowing aura in the dining room, perfect for entertaining. Century's mahogany table easily seats a party of eight, while Schonbek's chrome and crystal chandelier circles light as shadows playfully dance around the indoor-outdoor space.



For fun, a glass-fronted elevator with an ocean view through the dining room, celebrates the 50th anniversary of the historic Apollo 11 moon landing, complete with a constellation of stars that envelops Frank McKinney suited up as an astronaut.



With walls of glass that completely disappear to expose the oceanfront deck, the family room is a gem fashioned with Century's sinuous sofa wrapped in a blue velvet and cotton blend. Sit on one end and you're looking at the ocean, sit on the other and you're facing the kitchen — a favorite gathering spot in the heart of the home.



Glazed and fired, slabs of 11,000-year-old natural lava top the kitchen island in a fiery blue. Chrystorama pendants from Capitol Lighting shimmer above the island, while counter stools from Hooker tuck neatly beneath to avoid obstructing the view of the Atlantic Ocean.



Upstairs balconies, the roof-top terrace and a lounge that rises 44 feet above the beach offer an additional summer kitchen, spectacular views and soft ocean breezes.

a love affair with the sun and the sea, a geometric “tropical modern” home, faced in glass and Ipe wood at the ocean’s edge in South Palm Beach, captures the senses. At its entry, a cascading waterfall flows into a glass-lined pond where “floating” wood platforms lead past the glass and porcelain three-story stairway to the mahogany front door. “I’m a real estate artist ... I create 3D art on a sundrenched canvas,” developer Frank McKinney says. “The waterfall is a piece of art. It’s like a movie screen, constantly moving, and the tiles are almost iridescent. Walking to the front door over the pond, I want guests to be in a bit of sensory overload.”

Of course, the dramatic vista provides a backdrop for the 7,850-total-square-foot home, designed by architect Ralph Choeff. Every room is oriented toward the Atlantic Ocean, a spectacular canvas of nature. Huge expanses of glass completely retract and disappear, creating the feeling of tropical indoor-outdoor living. “When my husband described his intent for this home to me, he said he wants people driving up to be instantly curious, to be completely infatuated by the time they reach the front door,” interior designer Nilsa McKinney says. “Frank wants them to fall in love in the living room, be in love in the master bedroom and blissfully married by the time they return downstairs.”

Inside, the home echoes the elemental power of its environment with its contemporary vibe softened through the combination of transitional-style furniture, a seaside-inspired color palette and exotic materials, always in keeping with an artistic flair. To capture the imagination (yet provide a Zenlike experience) in the living room, Frank designed what he calls a “Jellyfish Sphere,” a huge globe-like aquarium that holds dozens of slowly undulating jellyfish that change color with the LED lighting as they move through a gentle current of water. “Why not have the first impression when walking into the home be about art?” he says. “Guests are greeted by the ocean before they even look through the glass doors at the Atlantic beyond.”

Smart home technology allows the lighting within the sphere to be changed, modulated and synchronized, casting similar hues over the glass stones in the ribbon fireplace, as well as the surfaces in the glass-fronted wine room and bar. With the romantic mood set, an intimate seating area comprises comfy custom sofas, upholstered in a silky cotton textile the color of soft silver, placed around a marble-topped cocktail table with a nickel base. Echoing the ocean in a muted tone, large porcelain-tile flooring the color of seafoam with a subtle leather texture flows throughout the main living areas.

Beyond a glass-enclosed wine room housing an expansive curated collection, the dining area impresses with a mahogany dining table surrounded by chairs varnished in a darker ebony stain for contrast. And the highlight, so to speak, is a Schonbek chrome and crystal chandelier. “It’s soft and playful with a personality of its own, something you don’t usually see in a dining room,” Nilsa says. In ode to the ocean, the family room’s statement sofa is covered in a posh blue blend of velvet and cotton and circles a stainless-and-glass cocktail table. “I wanted to get away from hard edges to create softness,” Nilsa says. “Customized to fit the room, it mimics a breaking wave.” Nearby, the kitchen is sleek and angular in champagne-hued Neff cabinetry, multi-layered with a glossy varnish to reflect the ocean. While eye-catching as well as functional and high tech, the countertops steal the show. “They are slabs of 11,000-year-old natural lava from Auvergne, France. Because they were glazed and fired in a giant kiln, they have this rich blue color that pulls the eye through to the ocean beyond,” Frank says.

All about outdoor living and sheer enjoyment of the ocean, as well as gracious entertaining, an alfresco kitchen and grill are on a large deck that stretches along the exterior of the main floor. Here, the 50-foot-long infinity edge lap pool runs the expanse in soothing complement to the ocean.

And finally, a word about the elevator, a moving piece of art which also has an ocean view as it ascends three floors. Frank tells its story: “Fifty years ago in July 1969, the Apollo 11 lunar module landed on the moon. So, in the elevator, I had an artist depict the inside of the module, with buttons, levers, controls and screens.” Frank, ever the showman, is painted in prominently as the astronaut manning the controls, specifically pushing a button labeled

“Buy.” The bottom of the elevator is a faux-painted cosmic black hole, overlooking earth and pinpointing Florida. “I’m also flying outside the capsule. The Milky Way is here and Nilsa has her own galaxy,” Frank says. “I don’t know why they would, but the new owners can paint in a face of their own,” he quips about his image, adding that the “Buy” button can be changed at that point to read “Sold.”

Story Credits:

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