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BLENDING PAST AND PRESENT IN BOCA RATON



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Topiaries in matching urns flank the front entrance. Just inside the foyer, a statement-making gilded table with Delft ginger jar helps separate the foyer from the living room without chopping up the space or obstructing the view of the water.

SARASOTA STYLE

*"The first things I purchase are the carpets.
Then I get inspired and bring the whole room scheme together."*

INTERIOR DESIGN Charles Allem, Charles Allem Associates, New York, NY
 BUILDER Ken Roche, Metrix Construction, Sarasota, FL
 TEXT Diane Benson Harrington
 PHOTOGRAPHY Kim Sargent, Palm Beach Gardens, FL

Designer Charles Allem, a self-described nomad, has been all over the world, working in such places as New York, California, Palm Beach, London and South Africa. In all his travels, however, he'd never made it to the west coast of Florida. So when one of his clients asked him to design a waterfront home in the Sarasota area, Allem was pleasantly surprised.

"It's very different. It's more relaxed than the east coast," Allem says.

FACING: Designer Charles Allem likes carpeting to set the tone. This antique Sultanabad carpet features marvelously muted tones that complement the unique combination of peach and oxblood used for the furnishings. The designer's penchant for the eclectic brings together a chinoiserie cocktail table, English chairs and a classic upholstered sofa. The staircase and balustrade make a stunning architectural statement. Gilded bronze scrollwork with leaf detailing is topped with a walnut handrail.





A hint of Venice and the flavor of France fill the dining room. The gilded wood centerpiece, table settings, and detailed lamp and chandelier are reminiscent of the splendor of Venice, while the mirror, reproduction table and dining chairs offer a different kind of savoir-faire. Allem highlighted the owner's extensive collection of porcelain plates by wrapping several of them in gilded frames and displaying them on the walls.

RIGHT: On the way to the dining room, the homeowners pass by these voluminous draperies of pure peach handspun silk. The reproduction French chair with its deep peach leather cushion mimics the host and hostess chairs in the dining room.

The home and the decor he created bespeak the calmer, less glitzy influence of Florida's western shore - just one of the Sunshine State's many faces.

For this, the fourth home of an international businessman and his wife, Allem borrowed nuances from Mediterranean villas for an undertone of sophistication. But the overall theme is strictly Florida elegance.

"I always look at the setting first," Allem explains. "I don't like jobs that are transported - like a New York look in the Florida area. In this case, the clients have a simple, not fancy, lifestyle. But they're very sophisticated and they like things to look gorgeous."

The handsome home's decor begins from the bottom up, with almost all of its 10,000-plus square feet — from the foyer through the home's living areas to the sweeping back terrace - covered in a layer of limestone. "I like flow. I like a space



to continue. I don't like rooms very structured and closed in," Allem says.

The designer keeps comparing elements of this Sarasota home to the Hotel du Cap in the South of France, one of his favorite hideaways. It's not the famed hotel's style, as much as its very essence and ambiance, that Allem wanted to draw upon for this residence.

"I just saw the water and the style of the home they were building, and it transported me instantly to Hotel du Cap," he says. "It's sophisticated and gorgeous, but if you wanted to put your feet up, you could."

Allem accomplished much of that feeling with colors, materials and fabrics. In addition to the limestone under foot, the home is filled with such features as wainscoting, overscaled crown molding, and parchment-colored walls. With rare exception, the fabrics are all cottons or silks. Allem created a true canvas for the decor by keeping all the walls and ceilings throughout the home in the same soothing parchment tone.

LEFT: A French walnut commode and tapestry chair form a picturesque corner in the living room. The chinoiserie floor lamp, Portuguese porcelains and an impressionistic style painting by Pesce completes the setting.



In the home's oversized family area, this ample breakfast table is yet another place to show off blue-and-white porcelain. Even at breakfast, Allem says homeowners shouldn't skimp on details.

The designer also found ways to define spaces without erecting walls, letting the eye sweep through the home, yet still keeping the proportions cozy. In the main living area, for instance, Allem positioned an exquisite, statement-making gilded table, topped with an oversize Delft ginger jar. Virtually on its own, that single element creates a distinction between the foyer from the living room, but doesn't impede the home's flow.

In the living area, and throughout the home, Allem continued moving from the floor up. After the limestone, he next selected the area rugs. "The first thing I purchase in a home is the carpet. Then I get inspired and bring the whole scheme together," he says. Here, he's used a combination of antiques and reproductions.

"I love mixing antiques and good reproductions together," Allem says. "Today, you can't just do a whole home in antiques because the price is out of control, and the home begins to look museum-like. I'd rather have a good piece of reproduction furniture than an inferior antique, just for the sake of having an antique."

A mix of peach and oxblood form the color base for the living area. "I love to use those two colors; they work so wonderfully together, and it's not predictable," Allem says. Textures and finishes also make a statement, with the peach linen velvet of the sofa, the peach leather and antique walnut finish of the matching chairs, the appealing worn feel of the Sultanabad carpet, and the chinoiserie of the cocktail table.



The owners love the blues - the color, that is. So Allem headed for one of his favorite fabrics with a teapot motif. The club chairs are in navy blue, and more blue still adorns the Portuguese porcelain throughout the room. To divide the ample space unobtrusively, Allem used back-to-back sofas with a sofa table between the two. One side faces the entertainment center; the other overlooks the water.

Behind the sofa, the balustrade is a scrolled, antiqued bronze with walnut hand-rail. "It was important for me to have that architectural element. It gives strength and character. And with this being a new house, you want to have elements that make it look not new. Nothing in this house looks new. It looks very lived in and very comfortable," Allem notes.

The dining room exudes the same feeling. The antique-look table is really just a skillfully finished painted wood table with a light walnut stained top. The French mirror is antique, while the French-style chairs are reproductions. The table settings allude to Venice, with antique china and glassware, as well as the gilded wood monkeys and palm tree used as a candleholder.

The black painted server under the mirror features a 19th century Italian marble bust and a detailed Venetian-style lamp. A special touch, Allem chose to highlight the owners' extensive collection of porcelain plates by wrapping several of them in gilded frames and decorating the dining room with them.

The room where the couple spends most of their time is decked out in blue, the wife's favorite color. Allem wanted this family room area to be slightly more casual, but still retain sophistication.

"I cannot stand rooms that compete with each other in design, where one room outdoes another room," the designer says. Here, comfortable, favorite fabrics — such as the teapot motif cotton-and-linen tapestry fabric

- achieve that goal. "This couple has a wonderful dog, a boat, and a casual lifestyle. I wanted a very relaxed yet sophisticated look. This fabric from Brunshwig & Fils has a real style to it that really starts the room off."

The family room has a hint of Colonial English, but the dark woods feature a relaxed finish, and the furniture is slightly less structured. In the family area, as in the living room, Allem achieved a visual separation of spaces.

"This is a very large room - at least 30 by 20. I didn't want to do different seating areas in a family room because it's informal. So I decided to divide it in two with back-to-back sofas with a table between them," Allem explains.

Lining the table's top is a wonderful selection of the antique Portuguese blue-and-white porcelain teapots. The room's expansive breakfast table brings even more blue-and-white porcelain into the picture.

The favorite blue shade carries through to the master suite, though much more subtly. The Charles II four-

poster bed is a marvelous reproduction. "What I love about it is that it's strong. It's not a dainty bed, and I'm not a dainty designer; I like statements," Allem says.

The bed reaches toward the room's high ceiling, bringing everything into proportion. The '30s-style upholstered chairs, with rolling curves, have wonderful boudoir appeal. "I like a bedroom to be a little sexy," Allem whispers.

In all the bedrooms, Allem opted for sisal carpeting. "I'm not into polished marbles; I think they're overdone. I love raw finishes and wood floors. When I do have to use wall-to-wall carpeting, I prefer using sisal."

In the back of the home, Allem exemplifies the virtue of restraint. The 60-foot lap pool with martini bench is adorned only by two simple Italian urns. Mother Nature, he notes, has added the crowning glory of the waterfront view.

Ultimately, Allem strives for a home that enhances, not competes with, its surroundings. "It all goes back to making the home fit the setting," he says. Precisely the balance struck in this little slice of Sarasota.



LEFT: A reproduction Charles II four-poster bed commands attention in the master suite. Curvy, '30s-style boudoir chairs provide soft, subtle sex-appeal. Under foot, wall-to-wall sisal carpeting is the designer's choice for bedroom flooring.

SOURCES

Entry

Urns - Nancy Corzine, New York, NY
Gilded table - Replica, Los Angeles, CA
Chandelier - Phoenix Day via Nancy Corzine, New York, NY
Poly-chrome Delft ginger jar - Nancy Corzine, New York, NY

Living Room

Sofa - Randolph & Hein, New York, NY
Fabricated by Clarence House, New York, NY
Cocktail table - Rose Tarlow via Randolph & Hein, New York, NY
End tables - Rose Tarlow via Randolph & Hein, New York, NY
Armchairs - Rose Tarlow via Randolph & Hein, New York, NY
Antique Sultanabad carpet - Hakimian, New York, NY
Table lamps, accessories - Yale Burge, New York, NY
Additional accessories - Apple & Carpenter, Sarasota, FL
Balustrade - Designed by Charles Allem Associates, New York, NY
Chinoiserie screen - Nancy Corzine, New York, NY

Two bodies of water, and two simple but classic urns. Allem, who designs homes to suit their settings, says the terrace with its 60-foot lap pool needs no further elaboration.

