

VENETIAN ISLANDS

LARGE & IN CHARGE

BUILDING A BIG HOUSE SOMETIMES
REQUIRES YEARS ON THE PROJECT
CALENDAR—AND A PLAN TO ORGANIZE
ALL THAT SPACE.

*By Shayne Benowitz
Interiors by Deborah Wecselman Design
Photography by Blue Ocean*

Choeff Levy Fischman
Architecture + Design
built a 7,026-square-
foot home in the
tropical modern style.
The Venetian Islands
project took three years
to complete. Deborah
Wecselman Design
handled the interiors.



A lot can happen in three years.

That was how long it took for interior designer Deborah Wecselman's clients to build their five-bedroom, seven-and-a-half-bath tropical modern masterpiece on South Beach's Venetian Islands. They enlisted Choeff Levy Fischman Architecture + Design for the firm's signature preference for sharp midcentury lines using concrete and natural materials like stained ipe wood. And in their customary way, the architects brought the outside in through pocketing sliding glass doors that open up an entire wall to Biscayne Bay's glittering views.

The initial blueprint called for a 7,026-square-foot home at the southern edge of Rivo Alto Island. Choeff Levy Fischman principal Ralph Choeff is no stranger to grand homes—he designed retired New York Yankees slugger Alex Rodriguez's Coral Gables house. To organize all that space, he says his clients wanted an open floor plan, “yet not so open

that they couldn't compartmentalize the space. They also wanted one central element, a sculptural feature to draw the eye when opening the house.”

The result is a lower level divided subtly into seven flowing spaces through the use of angular white lacquer columns, Lucite shelving and a stainless steel and glass wine cooler. The space is anchored by an elliptical dark oak staircase with a stainless steel banister with lines reminiscent of an ocean liner's bow; the staircase is angled toward the bay. Overhead, a 300-square-foot skylight crowns the staircase with six sculptural light rings by Henge.

The second floor, which can also be accessed by elevator, is laid out in a halo, opening up the home vertically. “It's incredibly livable,” says Choeff. “Every space is comfortable and connected, revolving around the central core both upstairs and downstairs. You can talk to people from almost anywhere in the house.”



The living space, dotted with lacquer columns, is dominated by an oak, nautical-style staircase. Opposite page: The Boffi kitchen contains appliances by Miele and Sub-Zero, with pendants from Luminaire.

Wecselman and her eponymous studio joined the project in its first year to design the interior architecture and contribute furnishings. She was tasked with preserving the purity of the home's modern design, while also countering the strong architectural lines through softer furniture and finishes. "[The wife] has a design sense and had done a few houses on her own," Wecselman says of her clients, who also own a home in St. Barts. "They wanted a modern, clean envelope that would hold some of their more playful furniture and art. The finished product is very who they are."

With dark cerused oak wood floors, the home's walls, cabinetry and finishes are made up primarily of reflective and translucent surfaces (white lacquer, Lucite, glass and stainless steel), easily achieving the desired clean, modern effect. There's even a 96-foot-wide custom saltwater aquarium by Reef Aquaria Design embedded into a lacquered wall, plus a flat-screen television of the same scale.

The sitting room overlooking the bay epitomizes the clients' eclectic tastes and it's also Wecselman's favorite spot. "It's who I am. It's what I like," she says. Here, she plays with curved lines with a creamy custom Holly Hunt sofa with Le Jeune upholstery, a pair of turquoise velvet armchairs by Brabbu with aged brass legs, and a custom glass coffee table by Blackman Cruz with a subtly spiraling brass base and rim. "It feels glam and feminine, especially the turquoise chairs," says Wecselman. "They're like an homage to the 1950s and 1960s, but remade modern. They feel vintage and they're very comfortable. The velvet softens the lines of the architecture."

The space is anchored by a massive wool and silk area rug with a tiny hexagonal print by Stark Carpet, in a color palette that refers back to the room's furniture. There's also a pop art portrait of Al Pacino in *Scarface* hanging on the wall for an only-in-Miami touch.

Indeed, colorful pop art is a key design element that is splashed throughout the home; the collection greets guests from the moment they set foot inside. Paul Rousso's large-scale, three-dimensional "Candy Wrappers" hangs above the staircase. Inside the white lacquer custom Boffi kitchen featuring Sub-Zero and Miele appliances, a trio of Luminaire's Campbell Soup Can light pendants nod to Andy Warhol.

Upstairs, the art becomes more subdued and sexy with a series of black-and-white photographs of nudes frolicking artfully on the beach by St. Barts-based photographer Jean-Philippe Piter. Here, the master suite enjoys the southern exposure of Biscayne Bay through Choëff's signature floor-to-ceiling glass doors and balcony. The master bath boasts a freestanding Ornare custom glass bathtub and an oversized glass rainfall

The sitting room features a Holly Hunt sofa and a wool and silk rug from Stark Carpet, with a Lucite and stainless steel shelving unit serving as a room divider.



The master bath is uncommonly luxurious, with an oversized rainshower stall and a textured sand-colored vanity wall. Opposite page: A custom glass soaking tub by Ornare seems like it's outside once the floor-to-ceiling doors are slid open.



DESIGN DETAILS

TYPE
Single-family home

LOCATION
Venetian Islands, Miami Beach

ARCHITECT
Choeff Levy Fischman Architecture
+ Design
clfarchitects.com

INTERIOR DESIGN
Deborah Wecselman Design
dwdinc.com

RESOURCES

BLACKMAN CRUZ
Living room coffee table
blackmancruz.com

BRABBU DEMORAIS

INTERNATIONAL
Living room chairs
brabbu.com

DEBORAH WECELMAN DESIGN
Master bedroom area rug,
nightstands, leather wall paneling

HENGE
Skylight ring fixture
henge07.com

HOLLY HUNT
Living room sofa, master bedroom
wall covering
hollyhunt.com

JIM THOMPSON
Master bedroom chairs and
ottoman
jimthompsonfabrics.com

LUMINAIRE
Kitchen hanging light pendants
luminaire.com

RALPH LAUREN HOME
Master bedroom table lamps
ralphlaurenhome.com

ROGERS & GOFFIGON, LTD.
Master bed
rogersandgoffigon.com

STARK CARPET
Living room area rug
starkcarpet.com

shower—and leads to one of the most luxurious outdoor showers ever conceived.

The master bedroom is a plush, tranquil retreat in gray-green wallpaper and leather paneling with creamy upholstered swivel chairs by Jim Thompson. An alpaca boucle flat-weave area rug is underfoot. “It’s all very tonal,” says Wecselman. For a romantic touch, Alex Turco’s “Silver Kiss” hangs above the cushy, king-sized, gray upholstered sleigh bed by Rogers & Goffigon.

“What struck me about this couple is that they really love each other,” Wecselman says. “They designed a seating area as you walk into the master suite just for them to sit together and talk.” In a home that sprawls over many thousands of feet, sometimes big feelings just require a few. ■