

GULF COAST DESIGN+DECOR

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA





Walnut trim and beams with French polish, along with Venetian plaster, reflect the ocean colors and provide an open atmosphere.



COASTAL REFINEMENT

A full renovation of this waterfront condo reveals a warm and sophisticated vacation home

Story by Emily Ballard
Photography by David Palermo

*T*he homeowners of this waterfront condominium have a full-time residence in Connecticut, but were looking for a vacation home they could escape to during those colder winter months. Having found the perfect location in place, they enlisted the services of Hilton Architects to completely renovate the space and redesign the home for optimal coastal enjoyment.

Charles (Chuck) Hilton is approaching his 30th anniversary in the architecture business, and as the principal of Hilton Architects, he has been an innovative leader in high-end residential projects. He says that over the years, his designs have been fairly traditional, but as the market has changed, there has been a shift to cleaner and more contemporary designs, especially on the interior side. With this in mind, Chuck sought to expand his business and add an interior design division to keep up with industry demands and his business vision. He had worked with Amy Andrews on numerous successful projects in the past, so the two agreed to merge her interior design practice with his architecture practice. The result was the launch of Hilton Interiors in the spring of 2017, a collaboration producing extraordinary work in the design field.





The designer chose a neutral palette to evoke warmth and relaxation, with sand-colored tones that match the surroundings.



The kitchen and dining space was opened up to allow for spectacular ocean views that were not accessible in the original design.

Room with a View

When the clients of this home approached Chuck and Amy, they were seeking a place that afforded comfort and relaxation. Their children were grown, and they wanted a vacation home with easy access to the waterfront to facilitate their love for outdoor recreation. "They are active in a lot of recreational activities," Chuck explains. "They are out in the water, surfing, playing golf and doing all sorts of things. It is kind of a pad for this active recreational type of lifestyle."

Chuck had worked with these clients on past projects, so he had great insight into what their vision for this home would be. His design process is a collaboration with clients: he asks them to create a wish list with everything they want, and then he writes out a program to present to them. He will show them lots of pictures and suggest a style or direction for the design, and then get their feedback.

Since he had a great rapport with these homeowners, he and the clients were able to generate a concept that met all their needs and wants in a style that matched their personality. "They were forthcoming in explaining how they live and what their dreams and expectations are," Chuck recalls. "And since we know and understand

them, we reciprocated with visually descriptive images to share with them."

The condominium is a little over 2,000 square feet with two bedrooms, one a waterfront master, and the other an interior. Although it was built right up to the waterfront, which was ideal for the homeowners, the space did not fully utilize its prime location. "The one thing that was really important to them was to open it up because the way the walls were placed, the interior didn't share or participate in the waterfront environment very much; the master bedroom and living room were the only water views," Chuck says, describing the original layout.

Chuck didn't think a totally open plan was the right fit for the space, but his team was able to open up the walls and create wide openings between the rooms. The existing master bedroom had a lot of built-in cabinetry that was cluttering the room and blocking some of the views; they removed that to expand the space and achieve the additional light that was so important to the clients.

The entire project was a gut renovation, all the way down to the studs. All the windows and doors were replaced, and the heating and wiring were stripped down and built back up.



“On the architectural side of things, we used some traditional materials, but in a little cleaner, more contemporary way,” Chuck says. “For example, the inside trim is walnut, and all the finishes have a reflectivity to them to pick up the waterfront and environment.” They also used a French polish on the beams, with walls of Venetian plaster, which helps the reflection off the water bounce and travel into the interior rooms of the condo.

Amy recalls the challenges of trying to maximize functionality of the space and meet all the items on the client wish list. In addition to enhancing the ocean views, she focused on improving the laundry room, powder room, storage areas, en suite guest room and master suite. “This was definitely challenging because we were restricted in space,” Amy explains. “We achieved it: really having the view and opening it up, updating it, and making it feel family-friendly yet elegant. It was a fun process.”



The goal was to apply a clean design without being too contemporary. The team wanted to make sure it did not come across as stark. With the new design, the dining room and kitchen now have stunning views over the water, a feature that was missed in the original layout.

Outdoor Comforts

With the property so close to the waterfront, a high priority of the design team was to create an outdoor space that was beautiful and relaxing and could withstand the harsh elements of coastal living. The guardrail was changed to metal and glass, elements that were less obtrusive to the view. Side windcreens were also replaced with glass to maintain the view and provide protection from the wind.



The terrace surface was redone with stone that could withstand the sun and salt. “We used a stone that we could bring both inside and out, so as you stand in the living room and look out, it is one continuous surface that goes from one to the other,” Chuck explains. Amy added the final furnishings to capture the environment, and complemented the space with a long, linear custom-built fire pit that helps take the chill out of the evening air.

Since the unit was part of a larger building, the renovation needed to account for load-bearing walls and utilities running to upper-



level units. The windows and doors were redone to be strong, durable and impact-resistant. This was a tricky process, Chuck explains, as it was important to stay with the residential feel of the property, but to install premium high-endurance windows.

“The exposure and wear and tear that everything takes being direct waterfront is a big deal,” Chuck says. “You need to think about the materials with the outside and even inside, with tarnishing. The salt air is everywhere, and the sun is so pervasive in terms of fading.” For this

reason the glass is laminated, which is great for UV protection as well as protection from the elements. Amy made sure to use insulated curtains and shades that drop down automatically to block the sun at high times.

Taking into account the sandy feet that would inevitably enter the space, the team installed limestone floors throughout the main area, and filled the space with durable rugs and carpets the same color as sand. The entire condo was designed with a soft, clean and warm palette of neutral colors. Wood and stone details infuse the space and reflect the water-



Wood mixed with lighter colors produces an elegant and refined design with the comforts of a vacation home.

front atmosphere.

“If you go from room to room, you’ll notice consistent attention to detail, and consistent materials and palette throughout. It’s not that big a place, so if you were to do different things from room to room, especially with the rooms being so open to each other, it would get kind of busy and fight each other,” says Chuck. “We came up with a nice palette that could be customized appropriately from room to room, but also have a cohesive feel.”

The strategy was to employ a low-key color scheme to enhance the blue reflected from the water. Techniques used to visually open a somewhat small space include a sliver window in the bathroom, allowing a little view of the ocean, and a glass and stone shower.

The completed project is updated home that oozes refinement. Comfort and warmth are found in every room, creating an ideal space for relaxing and watching the waves, or entertaining guests.





A sliver window in the master bathroom offers an additional water view and makes the smaller space feel larger.

Details such as thin tile and glass were used to visually guide one's attention and make the space feel bigger.



An innovative architectural design matched with a cohesive and individualized interior is what Chuck and Amy bring to their clients. This home has an idyllic setting and needed their touch to bring it to life and reveal the beauty from within. The team was able to achieve this on both the exterior and interior spaces.

When Amy describes her aesthetic and her work, she revels in the quest. "Everything is a challenge and everything is fun," she says. "Whether it is a super-contemporary beach house or a traditional farm house, it is fun to have things to research and projects to work on."

And that's why Amy and Chuck of Hilton Interiors work so well together, and the beautiful homes they create are a true testament to their detailed work and elevated designs.

Resources

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