



Natural Elements on Palm Island

Text Sybil Robert **Photos** Mark Roskams

Interior design of a private residence is, no doubt, a very personal undertaking. Those who choose to work with a professional have countless choices, but it's important to search out a designer or design team that listens... one that

makes every effort to find out who you are and what makes you feel good in your surroundings. While for some that means surrounding themselves with very personal items, others find the "less is more" mantra made famous by Mies van der Rohe seems to best define the way they want to live.

For a couple from New Jersey who wanted to create a low maintenance, entertainment-ready second residence that was eco-friendly, they went to Charlotte Dunagan of the Charlotte Dunagan Design Group. The couple was building a Ralph Choieff-designed contemporary residence designed on Palm Island in Miami Beach and took





on Dunagan to complete elements of the interior with the architect, then go on to completely furnish the home. Dunagan says some of the bonuses of this particular property included a rare permit for a rooftop deck as well as a “grandfathered in” extra wide and extra long deck. This deck creates an incredible visual expansion of their back yard, which is actually a smaller lot on the island.

In an effort to keep the design very simple but still warm and “wow”, a few key design elements were created. There is a massive interior stone wall flanked by a nearly free-floating staircase, and barn-like sliding doors added a rustic contrast to the pale gray porcelain tile floor. In addition, an existing cavity in the wall was used to create a dynamic and elegant wine cellar with a bronzed porcelain background and metal racking system. Sleek glass doors were chosen to reveal the interior.

Beyond those occasional “wow” factor elements, the home was kept relatively low key, focusing on the indoor/outdoor connection to the home’s incredible location. And while some design teams make the mistake of adding too many pieces in what is essentially an “open plan” home on its main level, Dunagan designed these spaces with just enough, keeping them pared down and spacious in feel, letting the sculptural elements in the residence – like the staircases – stand on their own. Dunagan says she landed on this solution by listening to the lead and the desires of her customers. “This house was designed primarily as a second residence for my client,” Dunagan told us, “They wanted to have a very modern, very easy



Previous page: Oak and bronze finished spiral staircase was built by Jorge Fuertes, Stair Builders of South Florida. Left: OJ wall clock from Design Within Reach. Pianca Duo living room sectional purchased through MiaCucina. Above: Natural wood detailing from the home’s extensive roof deck.

maintenance home, but one that was warm and elegant. They wanted to attain this with very minimal pieces of furniture. In order to achieve an inviting and welcoming environment,



I had to focus on creating a few very impactful architectural elements such as the staircase, rustic wood barn doors, wine cellar and kitchen/dining room.”

Both the front staircase with its glass rail and stacked stone wall and the interior spiral staircase were a collaboration between the architect and designer. The main staircase wall is finished with stacked slate, which the designer hoped would give an organic and powerful look due to the rich variation of color in this natural stone.

For the sake of continuity, Dunagan continued the use of that material in the home’s living room, creating a seamless relationship between

interior and exterior of this home and its extensive outdoor living spaces. Finishing the interior with natural elements continues on the second level of the home with natural oak flooring and slabs of natural marble in the bathrooms. Most important to the client was to keep the high-traffic entertainment areas of the main level as maintenance-free as possible, so large scale, light gray porcelain was used throughout the main level.

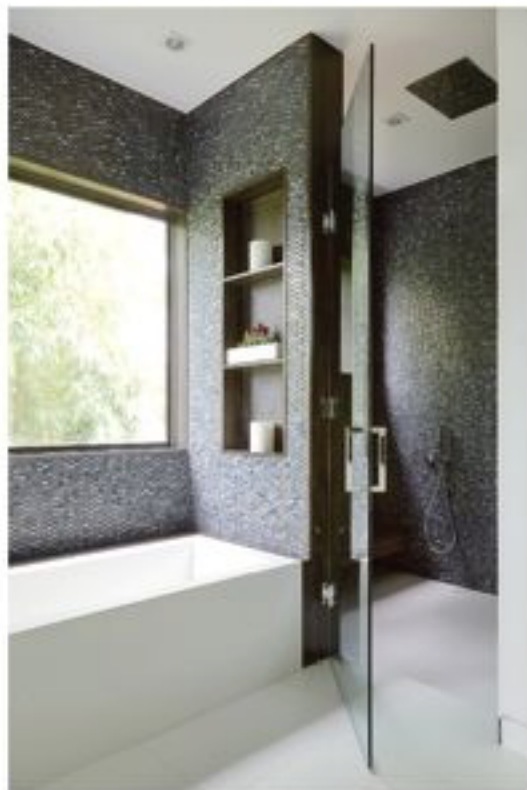
Across from the wine cellar, Dunagan created a vignette composed of a modern, seating area with *Kuadra*, high-backed corner units from Italian manufacturer Kastel and *Orion*, wire-frame side tables designed by Jarrod Lim for Bonaldo. Framing a tall glass window,

Above: The main staircase was made floating by the architect, while finish details were a collaboration between designer and architect. **Right:** *Kuadra* corner seating units manufactured by Kastel were purchased through *MiaCucina*, Miami. *Orion* wire-form occasional tables by Bonaldo were purchased through *Spencer Interiors*.

this little room-within-a-room makes the perfect spot for sipping a glass of wine while gazing at the gardens.

The kitchen from Eggersmann was designed to be sleek and hide all appliances as it is open to the main living space. The kitchen island, made out of rustic wood creates warmth and interest, and has a unique cantilevered extension made out of Corian which became the home's dining table. This element continues the home's informal, inviting atmosphere.

The light fixture over the dining table injects a random order whimsy into what is essentially a space ordered in a rectilinear fashion. Dunagan searched for just the right fixture and explained her final choice. "After looking at a multitude of options, it was clear to us that the use of a free-floating fixture would create the contrast needed in this very structured environment, and yet not add any additional colors," Dunagan said. "When we came across the Flos AIM Light Fixture from Maxalto, there were no hesitations. The fun came later when designing the composition, and during the installation of that great fixture." ■



Left: The dining table was custom made from Corian material. Flos AIM ceiling pendants from MaxAlto. Kitchen cabinetry is from Eggersmann, USA. Above: Tub is from Wet Style and mosaic tile from Ann Sacks.