



THE SOFTER SIDE
OF MODERNISM ON THE
VENETIAN ISLANDS

Text Jillian Whitaker **Photos** Paul Stoppi

Architects and interior designers have been trying to soften modernism's hard edges for generations. To many, the style suggests boxy architecture, stark white walls and heaps of concrete, chrome and glass. However, modern design can

also be something altogether different: soft, fluid shapes highlighted by warm, natural materials such as wood, stone, leather, teak and even linen.

On the Venetian Islands in Miami Beach, for instance, sits a gentler more sensual example of modern design. At first glance, Dilido 212 — as its called by its owners — is unapologetically modern. Created by luxury brand Casa Clara and designed by architect Ralph Choeff, the home's exterior is void of decorative embellishments,

instead characterized by geometric shapes, distinct right angles and white walls. And at 11,500 square feet, it has a powerful presence that commands attention. However, if you



look closer, there is a warmth, use of texture and level of detail that counters the sterility. For example, a 40-foot waterfall made from a deep, gray Montpelier stone runs parallel with the walkway that leads up to the entrance. The enormous 10-foot-by-6-foot front door is crafted from a beautiful, buttery European oak wood by Italian manufacturer Listone Giordano. And rather than take up every inch of its expansive double lot, the home sits back about 50 feet on the property, leaving room for ample outdoor space in the front, back and side yards.

“A modern house of this size could read as a museum,” the owner says. “Not here. Not us.

With the right furniture, we set out to create a very detailed, comfortable art-filled home.” His wife and co-owner agrees: “This is a tropical modern home. It’s a blend of modern design and materials that soften the stark shapes to create a warmer home.” The pair worked with Coral Gables-based Charlotte Dunagan Design Group to create their ideal interior: a luxurious space that combines contemporary aesthetics with a tranquil, inviting ambience.

“It’s a large house, and the ceiling height is enormous,” says Charlotte Dunagan, owner of Charlotte Dunagan Design Group. “However, it still feels cozy. Even though it’s modern and

Warm colors, textures and custom furnishings from Henge make this large living space more inviting. Seen here are the brand’s *Eighty* armchairs, *X-One* sofa, *Nomad* coffee table and the exquisite *Light Rings* chandelier. The floor-to-ceiling fireplace is a combination of stone and Boffi’s metal *Piombo* panels.





sleek, we used a lot of texturing in our finishes to create warmth.” Dark wood of many different varieties — ipe, eucalyptus, drift oak, Brazilian rosewood — can be found throughout the home as panels, shelving or cabinetry. Creamy limestone flooring from Portugal on the first floor evokes the earth, sand and sea. Stone countertops by Boffi and a spectacular floor-to-ceiling stone and metal fireplace in the living room add elegance and visual interest to their respective spaces. “The design of the home is based on warmth and comfort,” the owner says. “We chose a palette of earthy tones — browns, creams — and you see them repeated because we wanted them to read as both exterior and interior elements of the design.”

The furnishings, almost exclusively from high-end Italian furniture house Henge, were created for far more than a purely visual purpose. Soft, simple silhouettes and classic forms dominate the home. For example, the oversized Hypnose sofa in the casual living space is both comfortable and relaxed yet doesn’t compromise the virtues of modern design. “When we found the Henge line, our driving focus was to make the large space feel warm and inviting,” the female owner says. “We enjoy Italian design.” All the finishes and fixtures in the kitchen, bathrooms and closets were designed in collaboration with Boffi — also an Italian manufacturer. By sticking to the same brands throughout, each room is unique yet unified, a challenge in a home of this magnitude. Standout pieces include: the bronze *Light Rings* chandelier by



In the casual family and dining rooms, stylish lighting solutions are paired with Italian furnishings from Henge: two Hypnose sofas, the Stone table, six leather Strip chairs and the Y light pendant. The kitchen island, cabinetry and hood are all Boffi compositions.



Henge in the living room that was made custom for the space; the sleek, simple and highly covetable *PO* bathtub by Boffi in the “her” portion of the master suite; the *LY Dining Table* by Henge made from solid wood and metal mesh, and the aforementioned 40-foot waterfall that greets visitors at the front of the home and evokes the sound of rolling sea waves.

It’s also what you don’t see that makes this home truly exceptional. For instance, the eucalyptus wood shelving in the social room features a luxurious, suede lining on its interior. “No one would guess that it’s there,” the owner says. “But I know it’s there. And that makes me feel good.” Also hidden from view is a private staircase that travels from the master suite to the kitchen — its entrance cleverly disguised as kitchen cabinetry. “We are private people,” his wife says. “We want to slip down quickly to the kitchen and not run into anyone.” Just behind the main kitchen is a second and equally state-of-the-art chef’s kitchen that is completely separate and unseen from the main kitchen and living areas.



Outside, the couple made a very conscious effort to create a near-seamless transition between indoors and out. “The biggest part of the project was trying to connect the interior with the outside,” Dunagan says. “It feels like one big extension.” Rich, tropical ipe wood covers the rear exterior of the home, providing a warm counterpoint to the clean lines and

The show-stopping master bedroom comes with sweeping views of the ocean and Miami skyline. The master bed is by Henge as well as the *S* day bed, *K* table, *K* drawer and *Strip* chair. Top Right: In the “her” portion of the suite, the *PO* bathtub by Boffi and 19th century French mirror create an extravagant retreat.

calculated austerity of the architecture. The limestone flooring from the first floor continues out onto the patio, blurring the lines between both spaces. When closed, floor-to-ceiling glass pocket door panels provide a picture-perfect view of the bay and the downtown Miami skyline. "When you have the most beautiful view in the world, you have a responsibility to highlight those views every way you can," the owner says. When opened, they slide into the wall, completely disappearing from view. This feature can be found in the main living areas on the first floor as well as the guest and master suites on the second floor.

The outdoor cabana, which includes a living area, bar and kitchenette, was designed specifically to optimize viewing from all angles, so it doesn't interrupt the wide-water views from the first or second floors.

"For us, this isn't just a house," the owner says. "It's a lifestyle." Exactly what kind of lifestyle?

It's one centered on entertaining, where the open, airy layout encourages interaction, and the kitchen has double ovens, double refrigerators, double freezers and top-of-the-line appliances by Boffi and Gaggenau. However, it's a private place, where the master suite has its own den, living area and even staircase. It's a tropical life, where just as much emphasis is placed on the outdoor spaces as the interior design. And finally, it's a lifestyle meant for a modernist — a clutter-free space full of clean lines, contemporary art and high-end Italian furniture — yet a modernist who still values comfort above all else. ■



Ipe wood paneling, limestone floors and contemporary furniture by Royal Botania complete the transition from indoors to outdoors in this seamless, modern home design.

