



HOLLYWOOD COMEBACK

ONE DESIGNER WEAVES HER MAGIC
ON A HISTORIC HIDEOUT.

By Carolina Buia | Photography by Barry Grossman

Known for his lavishness, Al Capone has been memorialized as one of our most infamous, Prohibition-era bootleggers. But he was also an astute real estate investor. For him, Florida was not just a seasonal vacation spot, but it was a place to mix business and pleasure the way you mix a fine gin and tonic. It was a place where homes were a means to entertain and to move loot. While his home on Palm Island in Miami Beach remains a snapshot of exquisite excess, he owned other properties along the Florida coast. One of those was allegedly a 1920s art deco home in Hollywood, Florida. It was believed to be one of his hideouts. Today, the 6,500-square-foot home has been recast as a modern haven with sensational vistas.

Through numerous owners and countless redesigns, this white stucco home has withstood demolition. It is a fixture on the Hollywood landscape.



(above) While the exterior maintains its 1920s character, the inside has been updated with a crisp, modernist vibe.

(below) The book-matched feature wall in the dining room “ties the whole house together.”



But last year, when Coral Springs-based interior designer Perla Lichi entered the picture, she prescribed a gut renovation.

“We needed to modernize this old Florida home but still hold on to its art deco flavor,” Lichi says. “It was a challenge.

The second floor’s concrete slab and load-bearing columns were a constraint. The ceilings had to stay low. So we had to be creative in achieving height and space,” Lichi adds. “Yet, the second I walked in I said, ‘I know exactly what we are going to do.’ And my clients said, ‘Go for it.’ They had absolute faith in me.”

Popcorn ceiling was removed and replaced with a reflective mylar layer, embedded with long LED strips arranged in random, sculptural synapses.



Large format, white porcelain tile was chosen for the flooring to allow maximum reflection and give the illusion of amplitude.

Upon entering the home, a wood sculptural grille in silver leaf creates a distinct and separate entry. To the left is a colorful sitting room that leads to the guest quarters and beyond is the magnificent, slightly elevated dining room with its massive, illuminated feature wall made to appear like bookmatched onyx. Lit from behind, it blends a blues spectrum against whites, grays and taupes. The feature wall is also visible from the formal living room to the right and the kitchen and great

room in the back.

“It’s one of my signature design elements that I have used before in other homes and with different color schemes,” Lichi says. “This feature wall is an introduction to the colors of the pool. It ties the whole house together.”

The dining room features an Amini chandelier, a Modloft glass and white lacquer table and chairs by Whiteline. Alongside the dining room is a formal living room anchored by a highly polished, almost reflective, marble wall with an electric fireplace.

“They’re popular right now,” Lichi says. “But they’re more like a toy. This is Florida!”



The family room is a study in color, shapes, sizes and textures.



The indoor pool below a white-beamed ceiling inspired the turquoise and blue color palette.

The room feels inviting with its Natuzzi leather sofa, two white club chairs with chrome accents and a high-pile shag area rug from Fabrica that makes guests want to take their heels off. A Lucite table suspends translucent, turquoise Murano sculptures. Off to the side, a small nook along a bay window has two white chairs and a lacquered, white side table.

The back of the home ends in a wide row of wall-to-wall sliders that open up to a rectangular, indoor pool below a white-beam ceiling. Beyond are the Intracoastal and a parking space for a boat. It was between the salted and the chlorinated waters, whose colors shifted with the light, where Lichi found her inspiration. Her color palette became a mélange of deep blues, emerald-accented teals, deep turquoises and crystalline aqua-



(above) The formal living room features an electric fireplace set inside a marble wall.
 (left) The jelly bean shaped bar top is for drinks overlooking the water.

marines accenting the house against a clean, airy backdrop of white and various shades of gray.

“There are actually 110 shades of gray,” Lichi says.

Lichi split the massive great room open to the kitchen, and divided it into two smaller areas, one for TV viewing and one for water viewing. She continued her use of white leather sofas juxtaposed against gray shag rugs. Each rug has its own personality: gray-scale hue, shape and size. As in the living room, the sofas are adorned with oversized pillows in various textures, fabrics and shades of blue and slate. More aqua, turquoise and teal glass vases pop up against the white and gray tableau. The stark, geometric edges of the home are softened with a few rounded club chairs, also in white. And for a bit of whimsy, a pair of silver iguanas adds a bit of character. On the TV side of the great room, a giant throw in fuchsia, metallic silver, gray and black is draped across a side chair, drawing the eye.

“Oh yes, I forgot to tell you,” Lichi says. “I love to knit. Each and every one of my clients gets a personalized Lichi throw. In this one, this pop of fuchsia counters the blues.”

Lichi, who grew up in Hollywood, Florida, learned to knit sweaters from her mother, as a way to pass the time while expecting her first child. She noticed that her kids were outgrowing sweaters faster than she could knit them. It was time to knit blankets and throws: A one-size-fits-all heirloom. Today, she can knit a 72-inch-by-54-inch blanket in just one day, meshing threads sourced from all over the world, including metallics recently procured on her last trip to Turkey.



The airy and ethereal master bedroom has its own private sitting area.

“I love texture,” she says. “Iridescent, metallic, silk, fuzzy, wool, twill, ribbons. You know it’s a Lichi house if you can cover and snuggle yourself up in one of my blankets.”

As for covering up the load-bearing columns that once stood out throughout the home, Lichi melted them into the background by ingeniously clustering them with pedestals of various heights that were then topped off with Murano vases and chrome figures.

“They became like small little walls. We took lemons and made sweet lemonade,” Lichi says.

Alongside the great room lies the ultramodern kitchen with high-gloss, walnut panels. The backsplash is all glass mosaic. A white, quartz waterfall island provides extra seating. The leather swivel chairs are from Modway.

On the other side of the kitchen is a smaller bar top, which Lichi says is ‘jelly bean’ shaped.

“It was originally dead space, but we converted it into a fun bar and lounge area,” she says.

It is steps from the pool and features a gray-veined and white marble top, white leather

seating and Lucite pendants and sconces from Corbett.

Finally, up the new stainless steel, wire and wood staircase is the master bedroom and bath. Again, Lichi had to contend with height constraints, so the room got

the same reflective ceiling treatment as the downstairs. The floor is made from slate gray, 8-inch-wide wood floor planks. A super-plush, Arctic white rug stands out.

“We reversed the color scheme from downstairs,” Lichi says. “Dark floors, light rug.”

All the bedding on the king-sized, white leather bed was custom crafted, including pillows from various fabric houses, such as Duralee, Romo and Kravet. A tawny, tufted bench with Lucite legs adds a little femininity. Within the master is a small sitting area in a half-moon shape. Lichi

added a sultry vibe by making a feature wall wrapped in sparkling, silver pebble wallpaper from Jeffrey Michaels. As in the rest of the home, there are sheer, linen drapes in the master, for a bit of privacy and mystery. The result is airy and ethereal.

To walk its hallways, guests would never guess the alleged provenance of this home.

“I never knew this was Al Capone’s house until we were almost done,” Lichi laughs. “The owner mentioned it in casual conversation.”

“Scarface” innuendos aside, Lichi is just thrilled that the renovation ended up “gorgeous” and that her clients feel like Hollywood—Florida—royalty.

“But if Al Capone could see it now, he wouldn’t hide out here—he would want everyone to come out and enjoy it. He’d be hanging out by the bar or pool,” she says. Surely, with a gin and tonic in hand.