

A wall of mirrors expands the “royal” effect of a thoroughly gilded and silver-touched formal living room. Eschewing traditional wall-mounted art, the ceiling, the flooring, and each piece of hand-carved furniture creates the artistic focal point.

ALL THAT GLITTERS

Guyana, A Tiny Country Atop South America, May Not Be French — But It Does Have Its Own “Versailles”

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The dining room's luxuriously upholstered chairs surround a custom table topped with mirrored inserts rimmed in silver and bronze. "I want to focus on the details," says interior designer Perla Lichi, who explains that though dramatically draped, she keeps window fabric subdued.



WHILE TRENDY THESE DAYS OFTEN MEANS INDUSTRIAL, spare, monochromatic ... with jutting, angular lines and furnishings, there are still those who hold that what is beautiful is the very opposite. That was the aesthetic sought by a Guyanese family who described to interior designer Perla Lichi the timeless, classic and utterly luxurious vision they had for their 15,000-square-foot estate that would be both an entertainment showplace and their home in Guyana.

Lichi is a designer who has made "palatial style" her signature. She has established relationships with fabricators and artisanal workshops throughout the world to craft hand-wrought pieces from pietra dura flooring to hand-chiseled moldings to crystal-studded bespoke wallpapers. Her woods come from Brazil, Ecuador and Indonesia; crystal from Dubai; and marble from Italy. It is no wonder that the owners, who requested "royal opulence" in which to entertain guests, found Lichi to be the perfect choice.

RIGHT: Made for grand receptions, the grand entry and its vestibule are built to impress. From the floor medallion in 14 shades of marble to a chandelier of "Middle Eastern" drama, the palatial space casts a spell. The hand-sculpted, gilded scrolls on either side of the entry are the "pride of the home," the designer says.



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No details are omitted in the kitchen, where the mosaic backsplash is streaked with metallics; the domed ceiling is a hand-painted fresco; and each illuminated glass cabinet front carries its own gilded insert. Even the cabinet pulls are Swarovski crystal.

The living room is a symphony in gilded mahogany, glittering walls, diamond-beveled mirrors, and a coffered ceiling covered in silver and gold medallions. The roses and furls of the sofas and chairs are all hand-carved and covered in platinum silk velvet and embossed velvet damask from Belgium and France.

Leading the way into the formal receiving vestibule and dining room is the grand entrance with its horseshoe stairway in carved marble that ascends to the private living quarters above. Even the clearstory windows near the apex of the 27-foot-high, quadruple-tiered, domed ceiling are ornamented with gold and silver scrollwork. A small hand-wrought balcony has its own carved medallion beneath a secondary dome, while a dramatic chandelier which Lichi describes as "hanging jewelry" casts a regal glow around the space.

The scale of the dining room, though expansive, is more suited to intimate gatherings. But Corinthian columns, ornately carved chairs, the coffered ceiling and proscenium-like draperies continue a quiet elegance. Lichi incorporated silver and gold as well as mirrored panels into the table's surface to reflect the gilded splendor from the medallions overhead.

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Having traveled and lived around the globe, Lichi's aesthetic is broad enough to encompass many tastes. "In an ice cream store you can choose from 33 flavors or more! Why should I push you to chocolate or vanilla?" she laughs. "I come to understand my clients' style and personalities first."

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Comfort and usability shape the kitchen that became a place of "fusion," the designer says. Combining the practicality of stainless-steel ovens with old-world lines found a middle ground in silvers, golds, and the subtle blend of textures and surfaces.

But this is also a family home. And little dwellers have dreams too. Lichi "consulted" with the three young daughters who also share a playroom upstairs. "They each wanted a 'princess' room," she says. A flowered room dressed in pink became one such private place. The canopied bed uprights are wrapped in fabric and the ivory headboard and moveable side rails are soft in embossed leather. Though furnishings were kept subdued, the six-level domed ceiling is color-accented, a kind of stairway to the heavens from beneath a canopy draped in lace chiffon.

All in all, a palatial creation, inspired by the past, actualized in the present — attesting to how a grand vision can inspire hand and soul. ♦

ABOVE: Like a new peppermint candy, a daughter's room, one of the three girls' "princess" bedrooms, sparkles in pink. South American wood flooring warms each sleeping space that takes on the flair of its owner.