



SUMMER 2015

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OPULENCE

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THE PALACES OF PERLA LICHI

HIGH STYLE OF A MIAMI ICON



the PRINCESS *of* PANACHE

Inside the enchanted walls of interior designer Perla Lichi

BY JOHN D. ADAMS

“For in truth great love is born of great knowledge of the thing loved.”

—Leonardo da Vinci

Master interior designer Perla Lichi was bestowed with a gift for magical thinking. Before we even began our interview, she inquired: “When is your birthday?” I tell her. “Aww, you’re a Virgo. I’m an Aries.” What does that mean? “That means I see the big picture and I need you Virgos to take care of the small details.” She laughs. It’s a joyful sound resplendent with wind chimes and music. And immediately I’m hooked. Lichi’s life is filled with this joy and music. And her enchanted interiors expertly combine both her verve and each client’s unique personalities and needs.

DESTINY TAKES A HAND

Lichi strongly believes in destiny. And it’s no wonder. As a young student, this artsy yet driven girl always knew she would join the

ranks of artists and designers. But for a time, she thought her life would follow a slightly different path. “When I was in high school I originally wanted to be a fashion designer,” she remarks. “I took all of the art classes, as I was always very artistic. Then during my senior year one of my teachers suggested that I enter a competition for the Ft. Lauderdale Art Institute.” To her own surprise, however, as she read the contest’s category descriptions for Photography, Advertising, Fashion Design, and Interior Design, she found herself drawn to something unexpected. “As I was reading the criteria, the Interior Design category suddenly really spoke to me. Frankly, I thought it was the most interesting and would be easy. I already knew how to do drafting, I already knew how

to make a floor plan and how to hand-sketch perspective, I knew colors and fabrics, so I thought, 'Well, that's an easy A.'"

For the Interior Design competition, the students were tasked with designing any room they desired. Perhaps because of her study of fashion design, Lichi felt completely unrestrained and let her imagination soar. "I did a really cool bedroom that included a wall with a big circle that opened up into the bathroom. The circle followed to a large Roman tub with columns, which you could see from the bedroom. I used all these shades of purples and pinks that were hot fashion colors at the time, but they weren't being used for interior design... I just went for it. I even designed a shag carpet. I took yarn from my mom's closets and made little pom-poms showing what colors I would use for the fabrics. I designed waves using four or five different colors going through the carpet. It was just something funky and completely new and different." Lichi got her 'A.'

Yet even with that success, Lichi spent her summer intent on selecting a school to pursue fashion. If her ease in the Interior Design class hadn't been enough of a sign to change direction, a phone call from the Institute finally solidified her true calling. Her design had been selected from scores of candidates across the country. "I had won the nationwide competition and was offered a fully paid scholarship to their Interior Design depart-



ment. My parents were ecstatic and I finally realized this was my true calling. I didn't choose Interior Design. It really chose me. And here I am 30-plus years later."

HARMONY IN HISTORY

The mid-1980s was a fertile time for the Interior Design industry. And Lichi was, as always, in the right place at the right time. The Florida residential building market was booming and after a year with a design firm to gain experience, Lichi struck out on her own. She began designing showcase houses for builders, taking their cues but always maintaining her unique visions for each space. "I always stood out from other designers. Sometimes it was good, sometimes maybe over the top for some people. But I just kept doing my own thing and what felt right to me and that's what has always allowed me to define my designs."

While trends come and go, Lichi has always considered herself a unique designer. "I began designing with a more contemporary aesthetic," she said. "But my biggest dream was to design palaces. As I began traveling the world, I would see 300-400 years of history in the palaces of Versailles or The Hermitage. I was exposed to classic design, opulent details. And the more I saw of the timeless classic design, the more detail and richness became





THE LOOK OF LOVE

Any artist can affirm that ephemeral states of passion or love can manifest into the physical. And every corner of Lichi's designs are expertly infused with love, care, and imagination. But having a "signature style" is nothing without the ability to transcend that style and allow the owners' voices to also be heard. And as with everything else, Lichi has a unique take on that process. "Remember when I asked when your birthday was? It is so important to understand people's personalities; and for me astrology and numerology help to inform what general direction to go in. It's a tool. I believe that's one of the secrets of my success. To really understand the person I'm designing for, then putting my own artist's conception in mind with the person who is going to live in the space. Everybody deserves to be the king or queen of their own palace," she enthuses. "You can make your own home your palace if it is put together properly and contains those personal touches that reflect who you are. That's what a good designer should be able to help you achieve.

"To me, interior design is my art and my way of expression. You have to understand the person you are designing for, put yourself in their shoes, then use your knowledge and ability to create for them. I care about every little corner, every touch. I put my soul into it." ●

Visit Perla Lichi on the Web at www.perlalichi.com

incorporated into my own design aesthetic. So I just kind of manifested my dream into reality. That was the goal... always in the back of my mind... and it happened."

While the building boom crashed during the Great Recession, Lichi's work had taken off in international markets. So once again, magically in the right place at the right time, Lichi thrived. She was able to build upon her turnkey interior design services, opening permanent offices in Dubai, while many designers in the United States were scrambling to find work.

THE PERLA LICHI TOUCH

There is always something fascinating and surprising in a Perla Lichi room. It's all about the proper use of the space, the details. "I utilize all of the space in a room. I detail every wall. I like to create one feature wall that is more important than the rest, but then balance that with the other walls so that you feel like the room is hugging you. I do a lot of tricks with mirrors where people may not initially realize a mirror is there because I'm reflecting a window with a view and they may think it's a window.

"I like to do accents on floors here and there, and I'm really into area rugs. You can customize any size, any shape, any color and tie them to your fabrics. Area rugs not only warm a space and make you feel good, they pull everything together.

"And I take my ceilings very seriously. They are truly the icing on the cake. They are what hold a room together."