



# Past Meets Present

Through a sensitive renovation, a near-century-old residence embraces old and new.

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"The courtyard is the highlight of the house," designer Carola Pimentel says. For a modern take on classic checkerboard flooring, she selected Prestigio's Carrara and Marquinia floor tiles from Unique Surfaces Tile. Framing the front door are vintage Maison Jansen palm tree lamps.

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he first time designer Carola Pimentel toured her clients' prospective new residence, it wasn't exactly love at first sight. The 1925 property had been abandoned for decades, and the overgrown landscaping only added to its

neglected appearance. Further complicating matters was the fact that to bring the Spanish Revival-style structure up to date, any renovation plans had to pass muster with the city's historical board. "When it was built, it was an important house," the wife explains, noting it was designed by prominent firm Kiehnel and Elliott. But none of these hurdles deterred the couple, who was drawn to the sizable lot located near relatives.

The new owners sought to update the property to better accommodate their lifestyle with three young children. "My clients wanted to respect the existing architecture but also elevate it in a modern way," explains Pimentel, who worked with architect Cesar Molina and general contractor Jose A. Ortega. Keeping the original part of the two-story structure intact, Molina's renovation plan made only a few alterations to the 1920s architecture, the most notable being an expansive new window in the living room to bring light into the large space. Period interior details, such as the living room's beamed ceiling and fireplace surround, were to be saved, while a new exterior stucco finish was specified to emulate the home's '20s-era façade.

What had to change, however, was the interior layout, which was no longer convenient by today's standards. A modern-looking addition was designed to house the kitchen, family room, laundry room and primary suite, while the original structure maintained the living and dining rooms, a new guest suite and the husband's office. In what could be described as a flash of genius, the architect conceived the idea of enclosing the existing courtyard that stood between the two wings, creating a bright, vaulted space that bridges the gap between the existing and new architecture. Impressed by Molina's design, the city's historical board gave its approval.

To complement the renovation, landscape architect Tyler Nielsen offered a subdued palette of foliage such as Java white shrubs with a warm green tone, Bahama coffee plants and, edging the property, buttonwood hedges. "We wanted to ensure the design embraced and framed the house," he says. "On the new addition, for example, we relied on massed trees that were more upright to give scale to the architecture. The clients didn't want it to be too tropical, so we were restrained about our use of palm trees and opted for more shrubbery."

Inside, the owners desired classically elegant spaces that are family-friendly yet ideal for entertaining, informed by their time spent in Spain. "Madrid is very formal and colorful, but it's also lively," the wife explains. "As much as we love modern, we wanted to bring that piece of Madrid to Coconut Grove." Pimentel portrayed this in moments such as a formal dining room with an abstract wallpapered ceiling, a dark gray office for the husband that mimics an English library and checkerboard flooring for the newly roofed courtyard.

Yet nowhere is this concept more epitomized than the living room, where she arranged multiple seating areas for gatherings of varying sizes. Harnessing a "flair for mixing different periods from diverse provenances," the designer describes, she re-covered the owners' furnishings and procured new items from buying trips to Spain for an eclectic but coordinated assortment. Coexisting here are pieces such as a neutral-toned cotton sofa, antique brass side tables, a silk-and-bamboo rug and blush midcentury velvet armchairs. "It adds a luxurious feel," Pimentel says of the latter materials. The color palette—neutral with shades of pink, hunter green, blue and tangerine—responds to the couple's assortment of art, which consists of abstract Spanish works from the 1950s-80s.

Post-renovation, the residence gives Pimentel a different outlook from when she first encountered it. "Our ultimate goal was to create serene, light-filled, functional interiors that incorporated the clients' art collection, globally sourced antiques and contemporary design," she reflects. The home's history now carries on thanks to its noble restoration. ■





Pink 1950s armchairs mingle with a vintage chandelier, étagères and side tables in the living room. Pimentel used a Lee Jofa textile for the draperies, Romo linen for the custom bench and a Groundworks fabric for the armchairs near the fireplace. A Robicara coffee table and Tacchini sofa complete the scene.

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**Right:** *Ainda* by Raul Eberhard joins an antique Murano leaf sconce against a Phillip Jeffries wallcovering from Holly Hunt. The 1970s high-gloss lacquer console stands by a Miguel Stuyck rug on Cobsa porcelain wood parquet flooring from Unique Surfaces Tile.

**Opposite:** Manolo Valdés artworks hang against a living room wall painted Benjamin Moore's Classic Gray. Kelly Wearstler's Melrose sofa rests on an Art + Loom rug. The vintage side table from Spain holds an L.A. Studio lamp in front of a Gio Ponti mirror.







**Above:** Farrow & Ball's Down Pipe colors the office. The RH sofa—topped with pillows in a Kelly Wearstler fabric—faces an Artefacto coffee table, while Coley Home chairs surround the antique game table. An Art + Loom rug grounds the room, and a Serge Mouille chandelier from Design Within Reach crowns it.

**Opposite:** Architect Cesar Molina enclosed the courtyard, forming a vaulted space that links the 1920s property's original and new construction. The staircase of Cobsa porcelain wood treads from Unique Surfaces Tile leads to an antique Roman mosaic tile. Benjamin Moore's Chantilly Lace adds to the bright feel.





Landscape architect Tyler Nielsen planted greenery such as Spanish shawl, sword fern and Florida palms. The pool features Arto tile coping, Soho Studio's Alchimia ceramic and a Bricklane brick patio. Summer Classics Home furnishings outfit the cabana.

