

TRADITIONAL NOW

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THE MONACELLI PRESS



POLISHED COMFORT IN
PALM BEACH



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hat strikes me most about the interiors of this classic Mediterranean-style house in Palm Beach is how closely they resemble the people who live there. I envisioned rooms that would be appropriate for a tall, strikingly beautiful blond woman and her confident, charismatic husband. The couple entertains often, and the husband stressed that they wanted a big little house. They asked for classic layouts and graciously sized but not sprawling formal rooms. The interiors, correct but not buttoned-up, have an enveloping intimacy and combine formality with youthfulness, not always the easiest blend.



The formal layout of the living room accommodates two seating areas, a grand piano, and a game table. Occasional waves of pattern and the coffered, pickled-cypress ceiling keep the field of creamy whites and subdued golds from becoming static. Splashes of intense color from the contemporary art and punches of black from the piano and the Richard Serra oil-stick painting above the mantel energize and reinforce the youthful milieu of the space. The furniture ranges from a set of Biedermeier chairs around the game table to a bronze side table by contemporary furniture maker Ingrid Donat. The parchment chest is 1940s Continental.

The coffered cypress ceiling continues in the dining room but in a radial, star-shaped pattern. In decorating one recurring question is whether to play to or against type. Here I wanted to marry classical pieces with surprising choices. Louis XVI-style chairs surround a neoclassical table we designed. A 1940s Italian chandelier lends a modern air to the setting. The walls are treated in very subtle stripes of tone-on-tone Venetian stucco, adding nuance and depth to the intimately scaled room. The curtains are assembled of two layers of bronze organza; the horizontal pleated detail is a dressmaker-like effect.

Cypress reappears in the library, this time as paneling stained and polished a warm cognac color. To enhance light from the arched windows I installed sheer linen casements banded in tobacco-brown cotton satin. The Art Deco Giò Ponti desk is a refreshing counterpoint to the traditional paneling. A pencil drawing by Andy Warhol hangs above the limestone mantel, and a rug made of woven raffia and suede accentuates the informal mood.

LIBRARY





LOGGIA

During the milder months, my clients enjoy time outdoors. Since the house is intentionally not terribly large, we wanted to extend the living space into the garden. A loggia that looks out to soaring palm trees, pink bougainvillea climbing cream-colored stucco walls, and the shimmering pool expands the footprint of the house and is connected to the natural order and flow of the interiors. A dining table generous enough to seat twelve anchors the central portion of the loggia; at one end is a fireplace that often serves as a backdrop for pre-dinner drinks. Coffered cypress ceilings allude to those inside and make the space feel like a proper outdoor room rather than a porch.

The master bedroom suite is awash in sea-foam green and white and opens to a terrace overlooking the pool and gardens. I decided to avoid the bench so often seen at the foot of a bed and selected instead two generously sized upholstered chairs and an ottoman. My clients often host guests, and this arrangement turns the bedroom into a private retreat where they can read the morning papers, catch the news, and enjoy coffee before heading downstairs.

It is always a pleasure to think about my clients inhabiting the rooms we have worked so diligently to craft just for them. I imagine this couple barefoot and casual on a Sunday morning or dressed to the nines to receive friends for dinner. Whatever the pursuit of the day, their environment allows them to feel very much at home and thoroughly self-assured.



MASTER BEDROOM