



INTERIOR DESIGN / JENNIFER KNOWLES, KNOWLES DESIGN
ARCHITECTURE / RANDALL STOFFT, RANDALL STOFFT ARCHITECTS
HOME BUILDER / TERRY CUDMORE, CUDMORE BUILDERS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / MAUREEN SMITH,
MAUREEN SMITH LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

PAST PERFECT

A DELRAY BEACH HOUSE CHANNELS FLORIDA'S HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE, OFFERING A REFINED RESIDENCE EVOCATIVE OF A BYGONE ERA.

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Designer Jennifer Knowles had to study up when homeowners Melissa Schechter and Andrew Brahms asked for a new house in Delray Beach that would pay homage to the area's rich architectural history. As a Vizcayan, Melissa has spent more than 20 years on the board at the Vizcaya Museum and Gardens in Miami and, working with historic preservation for that much time, wished to adopt a historically accurate home in the style of Addison Mizner, the famed South Florida architect responsible for such landmarks as the Everglades Club and the Boca Raton Resort & Club, among other notable properties. Melissa was also inspired by Maurice Fatio, Mizner's contemporary and another "pioneer of Florida architecture," as she calls him. "It was very important to her that this house be authentic to that era of architecture," Knowles explains. "So, I researched [the architects] to gain more understanding of their work."

The responsibility to craft a house featuring a Mizner-Fatio aesthetic—with stucco façades, wide loggias, pecky cypress and decorative-plaster ceilings among its hallmarks—fell to architect Randall Stofft, as well, who worked on the home with project manager Gary Stofft. For his part, however, Randall Stofft avoided the ornate Moorish and Italianate flourishes Mizner and Fatio often employed. "I gave it a little lighter, Mission-style detailing to keep it in line with the other Mission-style homes in the area," he says, though exterior details such as carved-stone columns, wrought-iron balconies and window grilles, and a wall of

Right: Hand-painted tiles by Mexican Tile Designs adorn the front walls of a Delray Beach home by architect Randall Stofft, designer Jennifer Knowles and general contractor Terry Cudmore; the look was inspired by the work of early-20th-century architect Addison Mizner, which was an important factor for homeowner Melissa Schechter. The front door is by Jeld-Wen.

Opposite: In the entryway, Knowles commissioned a local artisanal company, Belt, to forge the large, wrought-iron chandelier, that, along with the iron balustrade by South Florida Stairs, was influenced by Mizner's designs. Knowles re-covered the owners' existing sofa in a Schumacher fabric, and the stairs and main-level flooring are brushed and tumbled limestone from Opustone.



hand-painted tile still speak the language of Randall Stofft's predecessors. The architect then found a way to modernize the historically small windows of their era. "We used the windows in series, with transoms, to keep the traditional proportions but still give the house a nice light, bright feeling inside," he says.

Melissa, who also sits on the board of the statewide Friends of Florida History committee, wanted to ensure that the construction was historically accurate, as well, which was achieved through the work of general contractor Terry Cudmore. "The house is in the designated historic district of Delray Beach," says Cudmore. "So, while it is a brand-new house, we had to deal with the Historic Preservation Board for approval." Indeed, the home fits in completely with the surrounding historic homes and great attention was paid to all of the details, such as the roof, stucco texture, balconies

and railings. Melissa was particularly scrupulous about such elements as the clay-tile roof, the gutter style and the hand-hewn quality of the interior's cypress ceiling beams. "We spent a lot of time getting the right details," Melissa says, "but Terry really made it a super-easy process."

Inside, Knowles complemented the architecture with a mix of elegant yet cozy furnishings accented with pops of color in the fabrics, rugs and artwork. The color red takes center stage in the dining room, for instance, while blue was the color of choice for the family room and office. To put her own personal stamp on the design, Melissa enjoyed scouring auctions, estate sales and other venues for architectural salvage that could be used inside the house. "I wanted a beautiful home that really didn't seem like a new home," she says. One of her favorite finds was a mosaic-glass fireplace surround by Tiffany Studios.





DESIGN

Hand-hewn pecky cypress ceilings crown the family room, which Knowles furnished with a custom sectional in Cowtan & Tout fabric, a Hickory Chair armchair in a Jane Churchill velvet and a leather ottoman. She then designed a richly hued statement rug, fabricated by Artistic Looms, using early-20th-century patterns as a reference. The chandelier is by Visual Comfort & Co., the linen drapery fabric is Schumacher with a Samuel & Sons trim, and the artwork is *Out of the Mist* by Richard Johnson, acquired through Addison Gallery.

“I asked for a fireplace in the office specifically because I found this piece,” she says. Another big score was a door from the Kennedy family’s Palm Beach compound—a home Mizner originally designed. “We both thought it was such a cool piece of history—and perfect for this home in particular,” says Knowles, who used it as a door to the cabana bathroom off the family room. “It really adds a layer of character and personality to the room.”

As the interiors took shape, Knowles blended the furniture and fabrics with Melissa’s collection of antiques, which includes porcelain china from Czar Alexander III’s Russian Imperial Palace that dictated the dining room design. As the designer contemplated each room in the house, built-ins were a key factor so they could hold Melissa’s existing collections and provide room for future acquisitions. “One of the primary focuses was thinking about storage and display,” the designer says.

It was also about comfort. “The owners wanted to be able to put their feet up,” says Knowles, who designed a large custom sectional for the family room. Another imperative was making seamless transitions to the outside, where the L-shaped property stretches down to the Intracoastal Waterway. To create continuity, limestone floors and beamed pecky cypress ceilings flow from the family room to the poolside loggia, just as Mizner and Fatio’s work did in their day. “Inside space should transition to outside space,” Knowles explains. “That was intentional from the beginning.”

As for the gardens, landscape architect Maureen Smith put a tropical spin on classic French garden design, envisioning lush vegetation as a “picture frame” leading the eye toward the pool and waterfront. Randall Stofft, meanwhile, made sure each exterior elevation on the corner-lot property was beautiful in its own right. “The site is totally unique,” he says. “We wanted to wrap each room around a particular view.” The final result is just what the owners were after, Knowles says of her clients. “This was their big endeavor—their dream home,” she says. And one that would have made Mizner proud. **L**

Opposite: The dining room was decorated around Melissa’s collection of Czarist Russian china. Roman shades in a Manuel Canovas fabric pick up the china’s scarlet and lilac accents, as does the cherry chenille by Colefax and Fowler that covers the Hickory Chair chairs.

Below: A wall in the dining room features *Skip to the Good Part* by Casey Matthews from Addison Gallery, it hangs over a console by Formations. The sconces are by Ironware International through Jerry Pair, the chandelier is by Currey & Company, and the parquet-topped dining table is by Century.



“COLOR PLAYS AN
IMPORTANT ROLE
IN THE DESIGN; IT
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MORE NEUTRAL
HUES OF THE
ARCHITECTURE.”

–JENNIFER KNOWLES



Above: Knowles chose Athena quartzite from Marble of the World for the kitchen's perimeter counters and backsplash. The Roman shade was made from a Larsen linen, and the hardware is by Ashley Norton from Millers Elegant Hardware.

Left: A custom hood by Copper Kitchen Specialists anchors the kitchen, where Knowles designed and Classic Kitchens of South Florida fabricated the cabinetry and island. The honed black granite island counter from Marble of the World resembles basalt, Knowles says, and is accompanied by J. Douglas barstools. The light fixtures are Visual Comfort & Co.

In the office, a vintage mosaic surround by Tiffany Studios anchors the fireplace, which was fabricated by Suncoast Stone. The desk is vintage, the light fixture is Currey & Company, and the rug is by Surya. *Solace and Nourishment* by Sharon Kingston graces the wall, while shelving, fabricated by Classic Kitchens of South Florida, displays Melissa's collections of English tea caddies.



The bathroom adjoining the exercise room is a nod to Mizner's Moroccan-style leanings, Knowles says, as evidenced in the Currey & Company light fixture and the mirror by Mirror Image Home. Knowles designed the vanity, which was fabricated by Classic Kitchens of South Florida, and the accent tiles are from Country Floors.

The homeowners “like the look of an all-wood bed,” Knowles says, so she chose a four-poster bed and a complementary nightstand from Hickory White for the master bedroom. The wall lamp is by Visual Comfort & Co.



Knowles designed everything in the home—especially the floors and fabrics—to stand up to the owners' dogs. In the sitting area of the master bedroom, the homeowners' armchairs flank a vintage accent table before a wall of windows that looks out to the pool. The hardwood flooring is from Designer Floors.

Knowles refurbished 19th-century lanterns that Melissa found as salvage from a New England church; they now hang in the loggias off the family room and master bedroom. Randall Stofft Architects designed the pool, which was fabricated by South Florida Pools, while landscape architect Maureen Smith designed the pool patio and planting layout.

