

ROCKING OUT



From the entry, the owners' penchant for marble and stone is on display. Here, a 1970s Murano-glass and brass chandelier hangs from the bronze skylight. *Opposite:* The foyer, with hand-antiqued marble on the floor, a 1948 Melchiorre Bega table, and Murano-glass sconces from the 1960s.

Just how much marble and travertine can one house hold? This sophisticated South Florida abode—and its classically accented midcentury European style—leaves no stone unturned.

By Andrew Sessa Photographed by Eric Piasecki



A

AN EARLY CLUE that this Palm Beach County tour de force would be no typical home—and its owners no typical patrons—arrived in the form of stone slabs. The clients would email their newly commissioned design team photo after photo of hefty slices of richly grained marble, travertine, and granite from Italy, Turkey, and beyond.

Enticing as they appeared, these images also startled architect Daniel Kahan, of the South Florida firm Smith and Moore, and Jacksonville-based interior designer Andrew Howard—the duo, celebrated individually but working together for the first time, had miles to go before finalizing finishes and fittings. They were still conceiving their overarching schemes: inspired, at the clients’ urging, by Art Deco and midcentury modernism, with a neutral palette intended to highlight a growing collection of contemporary art, all within a neoclassical architectural envelope.

Yet the photos kept coming, along with messages that the clients had put dibs on scores of such chunks of stone, all ready to make their way to the site.

“It’s one of the more surprising things that’s happened

to me,” recalls Howard. “It got to the point where we had hundreds of slabs reserved.” Then the clients secured a 13-ton block of Breccia Capraia marble in Pietrasanta, Italy, and Howard says he realized “every detail here is going to feel superspecial and unique. Every room is going to be a showstopper. That’s heaven for a designer.”

The project was already shaping up to be something of a designer’s dream. The 12,000-square-foot six-bedroom house was to rise on a prime one-acre parcel just a stone’s throw from a peaceful tributary of the Intracoastal Waterway, where manatees swim and blue herons fly overhead. The husband-and-wife clients, parents of two young children, possessed not only a clear penchant for marble but also a strong, sophisticated visual point of view—developed while decorating previous homes and through extensive travels—plus artworks by such respected names as Charles Arnoldi, Billy Childish, Wolf Kahn, Massimo Listri, and Edgar Plans.

“We love stone,” says the husband, a commercial-real-estate investor. “I find it hard to believe anything can be more beautiful than book-matched marble. That

Below, from left: A Charles Arnoldi artwork with a 1940s French Art Deco Macassar-ebony sideboard and 1950s Jean-Maurice Rothschild chairs in the foyer; the spa, with silver travertine-slab walls, a Madra tub in oak from Unique Wood Design, and a white-oak massage table. Opposite: The gallery hall features a terrazzo floor, a Studio Drift chandelier, another Art Deco sideboard, and a painting by America Martin.





led the way in almost every room, even the butler’s pantry,” where riotously veined slabs of purple-and-green Calacatta Borghese marble top the emerald-lacquered cabinets and climb the walls as tall backsplashes.

Solid Calacatta Gold serves as wainscoting in the primary bathroom, and silver travertine covers the walls from floor to ceiling in the spa. Even more impressively, Calacatta Caldia Supreme comprises the entirety of the kitchen island: base, sides, and top. In a powder room, brass-inlaid, lilac-veined Turkish marble takes up every inch of the vanity, which includes a sink carved six inches into the thick stone countertop. Squint, and you could almost mistake it for an ancient Roman altarpiece.

THIS CELEBRATION OF a time-honored natural material dovetails seamlessly with the classically minded, century-spanning aesthetic the couple were looking for: “Though it’s a new build, we wanted the house to feel as if it could have been here a long time, with traditional bones,” says the wife, a competitive equestrian. “But inside, we wanted it to be more fluid.”

“We love pieces from the 1920s to the present day,” adds the husband, who points in particular to blue-chip French and Italian Art Deco and midcentury-modern design icons such as Paolo Buffa, Jean-Michel Frank, and René Lalique, all of whom have a presence in the house. “We wanted to make a home that tied these together.”

The ultimate goal, says Kahan, “was to create some-

thing that had timeless style and that was serious, but didn’t take itself too seriously.”

Perhaps the most dazzling realization of this ambition is the lounge and games room, in the adult-centric entertaining wing, where a monumental bar hand-carved in Italy from that single block of Breccia Capraia is a focal point. Sitting on a classic parquet floor, it all but glows under high coffered ceilings defined by warm-walnut beams, within walls clad in matching wood paneling.

Howard and project manager Kelsey Heneveld added contemporary elements to balance these traditional features: a graphically patterned hair-on-hide Kyle Bunting rug and a burgundy-lacquered Francesco Balzano console table so highly polished you can see your reflection in it. For the windows and glass doors, they commissioned floor-to-ceiling curtains in an overlapping patchwork of five jewel-toned fabrics.

Stone takes another star turn here in the form of the custom Ping-Pong table. The 1,700-pound piece recalls Milan’s 1980s Memphis movement, thanks to its sleek geometry and playful black-and-white-striped edging, even as its multicolored, inlaid-marble surface might have been pulled from the floor of Rome’s Pantheon.

“It looks like a million dollars, but you can still play on it,” says Howard, emphasizing the layer of levity the table provides. “This space is just very approachable. It’s an adult paradise.”

The husband agrees. “This room puts a smile on everyone’s face,” he says. “You feel like you’ve been transported to a 1920s supper club or a private club in London.”



Opposite page, left: The bar was custom-carved for the clients from a block of Breccia Capraia Verde marble, the leather-topped brass stools are bespoke, the chair is by Alexander Lamont, and the cow-hide rug is from Kyle

Bunting. The walls, beams, and floor are walnut. *Above:* The marble Ping-Pong table in the bar and games room is by Moniomi, and the Francesco Balzano lacquered console table is from an edition of 12.

“This room puts a smile on everyone’s face. You feel like you’ve been transported to a 1920s supper club or a private club in London.”



The kids' rooms, as artfully decorated as the rest of the house, use more-durable materials. Here, a bespoke bed in Holland & Sherry wool and navy leather with Phillip Jeffries Vintage Weave blue grass cloth on the walls. *Opposite:* The dining and great room, with A. Rudin chairs surrounding the twin round tables and artworks by Sandy Ostrau (above the mantel) and Arnoldi (right).





“It was never about something being the most expensive thing. Instead, it was about the right thing.”

Above: Decorative painter Stephen Floyd created the glazed strié walls in the primary bedroom. The chandeliers are alabaster and brushed gold, and the mirror is 23-karat gold. *Opposite page, right:* The marble theme carries through to the butler's pantry, where Breccia Capraia covers the countertops and backsplash.

OTTO

EARLY IN THE design process, the owners told the team about their love of Florence's Palazzo Tornabuoni, a grand 15th-century aristocratic home that has been reimagined as a 21st-century private-residence club. Its mosaic-floored, neoclassical interior so impressed the clients with its mix of modern and contemporary furniture, accessories, and art, that the palace became a touchstone for the project. As at Tornabuoni, the inspirations and individual pieces of furniture that enrich the South Florida house share a classical aesthetic that Kahan and Howard refracted through a prism of modernism.

One early find—a massive seven-tier chandelier of brass and Murano glass from the 1970s—hangs dramatically from the middle of the oval skylight that crowns the double-height foyer. Its installation proved so complex, “our electricians wanted to kill us,” the husband quips. The piece keeps glittering company with 10 Murano sconces that bathe the walls in soft light, plus a graphic, brightly colored Arnoldi painting hung above a 1940s French Art Deco sideboard whose inlaid Macassar-ebony surfaces echo the gray-and-white marble checkerboard floors. “The foyer made a statement and a promise: that every space in this house would meet or exceed the level of the neighboring room,” says Heneveld.

Consider, too, the grandly proportioned living and dining area. Here, in front of a mantel carved from another single block of marble, two 1950s armchairs by Gio Ponti and a pair of custom sofas upholstered in Scottish cashmere surround an expansive Art Deco-inspired coffee table whose horn-marquetry legs support a bleached-parchment top. Thin slices of translucent selenite clad a console table nearby, while shards of gypsum on cabinet doors radiate in a sunburst motif.

In the primary bedroom, a mirror framed in shimmering 23-karat gold appears to float beneath dentil crown molding, and in the wife's dressing room, another vintage Murano chandelier hangs from a ceiling panel hand-embroidered by artist Sophie Coryndon. That artwork, too, is finished in gold.

These pieces, and many more, animate the house, turning it into a stone-cold stunner. And when it came to selecting each of these sumptuous elements, the designers discovered they had something in common with the clients.

“The wife tasked me with tempering her husband's ability to walk into a showroom and immediately find the most expensive thing there,” Kahan recalls with a laugh. “I had to warn her that it just so happened to be my superpower as well.

“But it was never about something being the most expensive thing,” the architect adds. “Instead, it was about the right thing.”



FOR THIS YOUNG FAMILY, the right thing wasn't necessarily the most precious, either. The owners “have an exceptional level of taste they wanted to meet,” Kahan continues. “But they also understood the practicality of having two little kids and needing them to feel like they could play.”

That understanding led them to Howard, who has two school-age children and a reputation for designing homes that are as lovely to look at as they are hard to destroy. “Andrew does a great job of disguising the ability of fabrics and finishes to stand up to daily use by a modern family,” notes Kahan.

Howard seamlessly incorporated elements that increase durability without sacrificing style. His go-to tricks: In the kid-friendliest spaces—kitchen, family room, their bedrooms—he traded out cashmere, brushed suede, and other fragile textiles for top-shelf indoor-outdoor performance materials, all the while maintaining the same sophisticated aesthetic as the rest of the home.

“The house is extremely livable,” the husband says. “The kids can have fun, come in with their feet wet. We don't have to treat it like a museum.”

The family has called their new house home for about a year now, and he says they don't have any regrets. “We didn't cut corners, and, in the end, as you add it all up, that makes a difference,” the husband notes. “When you think about it as the place you're raising your kids—and that hopefully they'll come back to one day with *their* kids—you realize it was the right decision.” ●