



Great Escape

BY EMILY J. MINOR

Designer Touches Transform A Traditional Boca Manse Into A Stunning Vacation Retreat

When interior designer Sybil Maxson was called upon to make over this majestic Boca Raton home, she was looking at a mansion that already had a lot of existing charm. The high ceilings. The many windows. The amazing outdoor space.

But the owners wanted Maxson—a long-time designer at Brown's Interior Design in Boca Raton—to turn their large traditional home into something more "transitional." That is, a step beyond traditional but not all the way to contemporary.

Retired with two homes elsewhere, the homeowners asked that Maxson make this getaway residence—used mostly for holidays and family gatherings—feel like Florida, but without that overly predictable beach look. No pinks. No greens. No Tommy Bahama grass cloth. The result is this stunning space—elegant and relevant, yet very, very livable.

"The most obvious thing is, you want to have a lighter, Southern, open-air kind of feeling to go with all the breezes," the designer explains.

The columns leading into the dining room lend a traditional feeling to the space, so designer Sybil Maxson opted for a more contemporary black-lacquered table that seats up to 10 people. She didn't want anything in the room to distract from the striking artwork, so she chose chairs with platinum-finished legs and upholstered them in silk. The demilune chests, used as side tables, are finished in real gold leaf; the domed ceiling is gold faux; the walls are shimmering silver. And the art is "designed to create great conversation," Maxson says. "She's mysterious and he's being blown away."

The existing stairway already made a big statement, and the front doors were magnificent—double black gloss finished to perfection. So Maxson took the whole two-story entry up a notch. First, she had the domed ceiling faux treated in silver and gray tones. Next? "I added the black molding, in order for there to be a relationship between the front doors and the staircase," she says. But the cherry on the sundae, if we may, is the custom chandelier that hangs down 15 feet. The piece was made by Studio Bel Vetro in California and is comprised of more than 100 hand-blown glass balls. The colors add to the entryway's elegance, bringing glistening tones of silver and bronze, and gold and clear glass. "Photos never do it justice," she says. "It's breathtaking in person."



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Using a fair amount of the homeowners' impressive art collection—from paintings to sculptures to pieces made from hand-blown glass—Maxson didn't rely on anything frilly during her redesign. Instead, she used lots of sophisticated shimmer, mostly in golds, silvers and bronzes, incorporated into fabrics, paint colors and hand-rubbed faux finishes.

RIGHT: This easy chair and ottoman with their elegant lines are from Hancock & Moore Furniture and designed for beauty and comfort. Leaving no detail unplanned, Maxson chose silver nail heads to finish the upholstery job, and mahogany for the chair's arms and legs. Those wood tones are carried through the room. The entertainment wall is dark and warm, and Maxson had the unique shadow boxes made to showcase some of the couple's impressive glass work. The striking wall art is from Kevin McPherin International Gallery in Boca Raton.

BELOW: The clients have an exceptional collection of glass sculpture and decorative glass, so Maxson wisely opted for this handmade glass coffee table in the living room, made by Christopher Reiser of Reflective Collections in West Palm Beach. The glass sits atop a Maxson-designed dark mahogany base and the glass is actually hand-carved, then painted with gold and silver leaf. "He's unbelievable," says Maxson, about Reiser's work.



RIGHT: For this living space, where the couple enjoys relaxing, Maxson used the same tones, but more casual textures. "It's a bit more relaxed," she says. The upholstered valances are finished in gold fabric with silver trim, but there's no shine to the fabric. The cream drapes were custom made from thick damask. The sectional is soft and comfortable, and Maxson relied on bolder black and bronze finishings for the throws and pillows. The coffee table with its stainless-steel legs and mahogany top is an original.



LEFT: Maxson found her inspiration for the couple's living room when the space was empty—something that happens more often than we realize. "I fauxed the fireplace, made it dark and then designed all those dark accents," she recalls. Next, Maxson ordered the two credenzas she had sketched out, the ones with the gold leather doors and black glass tops. The tufted valances in the room were arched to follow the original architecture of the windows. And Maxson used gold silk to upholster the two facing couches. "The homeowners are philanthropic and entertain, so they wanted a very elegant look," says Maxson, who added two contemporary crystal sconces on the mirrors above the fireplace to contrast with the room's traditional look.





And Maxson, who has been working in Florida for 25 years as a decorator, was able to bring another element into the couple's home: her love for creating custom pieces. Indeed, for the couple's living room, she sketched out and then ordered the two credenzas that flank the fireplace, which she—of course—also gave a major facelift. The credenzas are made of mahogany and finished with gold leather doors and black glass tops. "They really are exquisite," says Maxson, about her clean and sleek design in the main living space.

Each room has a tempo of its own, from the family room with the view of the pool, to the dining room with the conversation-piece art, to the luxurious master bath, designed around the two Victorian mirrors already owned by the residents. "It's a place to escape to, as opposed to a more permanent home," Maxson says. "It's a place to dream about." ○

ABOVE LEFT: The home was built with en suite his and her bathrooms, and this one was certainly designed with the lady in mind. The starting point, Maxson says, were the two antique Venetian mirrors, which she planked with gold sconces. The walls are finished with a gold tone that shimmers and fits with the exquisiteness of this private retreat. Even the draperies on the generous windows provide a wonderful shimmer that changes with the light. The floors are marble, and so are the countertops. "All in all, when you're in here, you feel like you're in an elegant spa," Maxson says.

LEFT: This first-floor powder room, often used by guests, was plain when Maxson first walked in, so she worked her magic with shimmer, glass and dark woods. The walls are finished in a white texture with silver accents and the cabinets were remade with mirrored doors. Maxson designed the doors' criss-cross effect, using her beloved mahogany. Beautiful lighting and art provide the final touches.

RIGHT: With its lake view and tropical landscaping, this outdoor patio didn't require much to be amazing. But Maxson attended to it anyway. "This furniture is so beautiful, it could really be used inside," she says. The coffee tables are stainless steel with glass tops and the hearty fabrics are from Kravet Home Furnishings. Moreover, the black and white color palette mimics the home's exterior rather than the interior.



The couple wanted a master retreat that was elegant and comfortable for both sexes, so Maxson continued with the same subtle palette, sneaking in masculine and feminine details. For the upholstered wall, she used silver fabric from JAB Anstoetz Group. The "waterfall" draperies—that is, they come up and over the valances—were made from a fairly sheer stencil-cut fabric, which allows light to filter in and out. The inviting chaise is a piece from Ferguson Copeland, now merged with another manufacturer, and the silk headboard and end bench were designed by Maxson.



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