

# PALATIAL SPLENDOR

Written by **Al Alschuler**  
Photography by **Carlos Domenech**



**Ramon Pacheco, ARCHITECTURE / The Pineapple Designs, Inc., INTERIOR DESIGN**  
**Kendall Country Estates, Inc., CONTRACTOR**

*T*intent upon erecting a large enough house to harbor their entire family, as well as accumulated antiques, Pedro and Maritza Garcia-Carrillo scrutinized several potential sites for the palatial home of their dreams. Their former house had become too small for their prized possessions; architecturally, it was considered “too contemporary” and, thus, inappropriate for its traditional interior furnishings.

One providential visit in 1992 to Tahiti Beach, a coastal enclave southeast

of Coral Gables, led to this lush inland lot, 125 feet wide by 330 feet deep, alongside a scenic mangrove preserve. The couple coveted the privacy of its peaceful environment, envisioning an elegant setting for the vintage furnishings that Maritza had acquired during the past 15 to 20 years.

They agreed “then and there,” as Pedro recalls, to purchase it.

Fernando Sanchez of The Pineapple Designs, Inc., was well acquainted with her purchases. A traditionalist who has decorated pe-







An 18th-century terra cotta figure is the focal feature of the central courtyard and its landscaped fountain, all open to the sky. Antique sconces flank a balcony overlooking a placid setting with antique, reclaimed French terra cotta tile from CountryFloors.





riod residences for a wide-ranging clientele, he encouraged Maritza to travel to Atlanta, New Orleans and other cities in search of select objets d'art and accessories.

After one such excursion, her husband was surprised to find their living and dining rooms empty of all former furnishings and redecorated with antiques they had purchased. By then, Sanchez recalls, "she was inspired, even addicted...an enthusiastic collector."

Although Pedro did not, at that time, share her passion for such vintage collectibles, his interest piqued as plans for their new home progressed. A successful contractor whose firm, Kendall Country Estates, Inc., consistently ranks as one of Dade County's "top ten" residential builders, he had relatively few requests other than "an old-looking house with contemporary conveniences and comforts."

Architect Ramon Pacheco had been recommended by Pedro's former associates at Arvida. Familiar with other commissions of Pacheco, the couple soon recognized his sensitivity to





their needs and appreciated his advice, aptitude and ingenuity.

Sanchez, who assisted with the landscape design as well as the decor, served as the designated go-between. He elaborated the owners' edicts, including a central courtyard, domed foyer, combined kitchen and breakfast room, large closets and bathrooms, with recommendations of his own regarding architectural elements which were to be incorporated within the interior.

The showplace his clients envisioned, advises Pacheco, advocated a villa ostensibly "as venerable as Vizcaya" or "a Mediterranean version of Havana Vieja." He proposed an arrangement of several gallery-like settings to display their many antiques, including two corridors on the ground floor and two above flanking a symmetrical, centric, open-to-the-sky courtyard. The front-to-rear axial layout would proceed

with a vestibule/double-foyer concept. Only one appreciable change was made in Pacheco's preliminary plans, the architect recalls: "We initially envisioned a grand European scale accommodating crown molding, beams and appurtenant architectural details that Sanchez had assembled." Although the elevation on the ground floor was reduced at Pedro's request, the ceilings in the master suite and in four other upstairs bedrooms remain 12 feet high.

As preparations progressed, Pacheco carefully measured every antique and architectural element the Garcia-Carrillos owned at the outset, an estimated 85 percent of the house's current contents, so that his plans might make proper provision for their placement. Some required restoration prior to installation.

Work on the house ceased for some six months in the destructive wake of Hurricane Andrew, as the construction crew from Pedro's firm

**The music room is a popular gathering place for family and friends, including a number of celebrated Hispanic entertainers.**





Clerestory windows and French doors fill the family room with abundant sunlight. A pastoral scene from Argentina and a carved angel, both late 19th century, are anchored overhead.





moved elsewhere to effect needed repairs. Plans otherwise proceeded with few deviations.

Royal palms frame the frontal facade, while a fragrant Ylang-Ylang tree serves as the centerpiece of a circular driveway paved in old Chicago brick. A combination of old and new red barrel tile installed in an authentic Spanish style tops the villa that was oriented to overlook Biscayne Bay. A Roman pool in the rear is accompanied by a spa, waterfall and fountain, as well as an aviary for exotic birds.

Visitors entering through the front vestibule with its checkerboard marble floor proceed to a towering foyer whose domed ceiling fresco was painted by Armando Perez, a local artist. An adjacent 12-foot-high salon encompasses elaborate seating ranging from a pair of prized French bergeres, circa 1780, to gilt-framed Louis XV chairs, all arranged formally atop a large antique Agra tapestry carpet. Here, too, is an

antique mantel and one of four working fireplaces. Tall windows are treated to pelmet draperies created from fringed silk damask, circa 1839.

A wooden balustrade, rescued from an old Atlanta theater and retrofitted as a balcony, overlooks the ochre-tinted family room, whose comfortable leather upholstery was selected by Maritza. Abundant sunlight enters through a series of French doors, lofty clerestory windows and one of several vintage panels of circular stained glass.

An impressive array of antiques is assembled in the dining room as well, including a double-pedestal Sheraton table, circa 1780, surrounded by Chippendale chairs. Curtain panels, composed of pieced period linens, complement recessed niches created by architect Pacheco. Their symmetrical pattern conforms to the door of a neighboring butler's pantry.

**The wood balustrade salvaged from an Atlanta theater was retrofitted for an interior balcony that overlooks an array of seemingly incongruous, yet entirely comfortable contemporary seating. The chandelier is solid, hand-hammered copper; the mirror, 18th-century Italian.**





Beveled marble tops the island separating the breakfast room from the kitchen whose cabinets, designed by Fernando Sanchez, were built on site. Hand-painted ceramic tiles, including a vegetable panel backsplash, from Country Floors, embellish its walls. The foundation was recessed to accommodate flooring of old Chicago brick.

Casual by contrast is the breakfast room with its pine table, rush-seated chairs, stained-glass chandelier and floral Kilim area rug. Marble tops the island separating it from an adjacent kitchen with its Viking stove. The cabinets, which Sanchez designed, were fabricated on site by Pedro's construction crew. Blue and white ceramic tile continue the "old world" feel, further enhanced by the old Chicago brick flooring.

Also located on the main floor are the music room, a bedroom for Pedro's mother and another for the maid. The other four bedrooms, including a master suite encompassing an enormous bathroom, sitting room, large closets plus a separate room for Maritza's treasured collection of dolls, are located on the upper floor.

The couple is well satisfied with the creativity of designers Pacheco and Sanchez. "Our home is not only our dream come true," adds Maritza, "it's also a gathering place for family and friends." Albita, a friend and a popular entertainer, selected their residence for the ceremonial debut of recent recordings last Fall.

Christmas time at the Garcia-Carrillos, which extends from the week before Thanksgiving till Three Kings Day on January 6, is an especially festive scene. There is a Lilliputian village in the family room, an electric train elsewhere and assorted evergreen trees throughout the house. "We really go all out," asserts Pedro.

A section of their Christmas tree is severed after the holidays and inscribed with notations about special events the family observed during that year. Duly recorded on one of the most recent tree remnants is a prominent entry attesting to their pleasure with this new home.

## RESOURCES

**CeramicTile**  
Country Floors  
94 N.E. 40th Street  
Miami, FL 33137  
(305) 576-0421

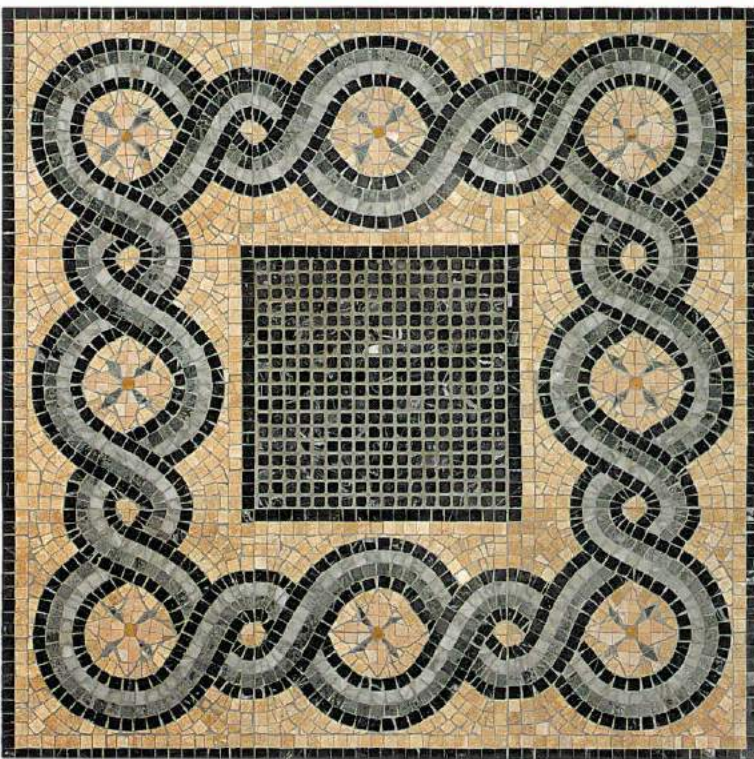
**WoodFloors**  
Century Floors, Inc.  
7450 S.W. 42nd Street  
Miami, FL 33152  
(305) 553-8140





This interior gallery, one of four that secure the central courtyard, accesses the kitchen and adjoining breakfast room. All four are treated to vaulted ceilings, arched doorways and dark-stained, oak plank floors from Century Floors.

## COUNTRY FLOORS



**MOSAIQUE ROMAINE** handcrafted mosaics of stone & terra cotta based on the tangible remains of Roman occupation of the Near East, North Africa, Spain, France and Britain. Shown above: OG Group I Opus Lapideum 5/8" Nero Marquina (field); OG Tunisie Guilloche B with flower (border).

94 NE 40th Street  
Miami, FL 33137  
(305) 576-0421

DCOTA, 1855 Griffin Rd.  
Dania, FL 33131  
(305) 925-4004

New York • Los Angeles • San Francisco • Greenwich • Philadelphia • Buenos Aires  
Toronto • Montreal • Vancouver • Sydney • Melbourne • Dealers in most other cities



**CENTURY FLOORS, INC.**  
FLOORING CONTRACTORS



PHOTO BY CARLOS DOMENECH

**INSTALLATION • REFINISH**  
**CUSTOM DESIGNED HARDWOOD FLOORS**

MEMBER: NATIONAL WOOD FLOORING ASSOCIATION  National Wood Flooring Association

**TEL: (305) 553-8140 • FAX: (305) 265-7206**  
**7450 S.W. 42ND STREET • MIAMI, FL 33155**