



# DESIGN OF THE TIMES

A KITCHEN REMODEL-TURNED-MAJOR RENOVATION RESULTS IN A DIVINE DREAM HOME FOR ONE PALM BEACH COUPLE

BY KELLEY MARCELLUS | HOME PHOTOGRAPHY BY CARMEL BRANTLEY

Palm Beach had long been a favorite vacation spot for Krista and Frank Speno. It's where the couple and their three daughters—now grown—spent time playing at The Breakers, soaking in the island's climate and charm. When Frank's company, Sanders Capital, made the pandemic-era decision to permanently relocate its offices from New York City to West Palm Beach, the Spenos couldn't resist the opportunity to turn the desti-

nation into their permanent home. "We'd been coming here for years and planning to get here one way or another," Frank says. "When the company relocated, it was a gift from the gods." Frank's family has deep roots in the area: His great grandfather was a contemporary of Henry Flagler and worked in the railroad business. "I'm pretty sure and quite confident that he helped Flagler bring the railroad here," he says. Old



INSET: CUSTOM-PAINTED CARRARA MARBLE TILES COVER THE WALLS OF THE KITCHEN.

OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP: THE LIVING ROOM WITH ITS ORIGINAL COQUINA STONE FIREPLACE; KRISTA AND FRANK SPENO AT HOME IN PALM BEACH.



newspaper clippings from 1934 announce the engagement of E.R. Bradley's niece, Peggy Bradley, to Frank Speno Jr., son of Frank Speno of Ithaca, New York, and Palm Beach.

Krista and Frank purchased a "Sea street" property in Midtown in January 2021, banking on the first rule of real estate: location, location, location. This new home base allows the couple to make the most of their subtropical environment, with proximity to The Breakers (where they are members who make regular use of the fitness center and amenities), often biking or walking to this and other favorite haunts in town. Krista is also a championship tennis player, having been a collegiate athlete who continues to compete in several local leagues.

"She's an equally gifted shopper," Frank quips.

While the vantage point was exactly what the couple had been hoping for, the actual house left something to be desired. Built in 2000, the interior felt dated and not quite to their liking. Enter Alexandra Naranjo, an interior designer who splits her time between Toronto and West Palm Beach, where she operates a showroom and studio on South Dixie Highway.

In Spring 2021, Krista visited the Kips Bay Decorator Show House Palm Beach on Flagler Drive in West Palm Beach, which featured the work of 20 interior designers from across the country and benefited the Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County. For the Mediterranean Revival-style show house, Naranjo designed the primary bathroom, creating a fantasy



jungle within the shower by sealing a tropical de Gournay wallpaper behind glass. Krista was so inspired by the space and Naranjo's innovative thinking that she engaged Naranjo to lead the redesign of her home.

At the time, however, Krista notes that they were just planning on remodeling the kitchen, which was not very big and outfitted in shades of red, brown, and yellow—in contrast to the coastal chic mood she'd hoped for. "I hear that 'doing the kitchen' is code [for] doing your whole house," she adds with a laugh.

Early in the remodeling process, the Spenos found issues with the original construction of the home. "Structurally, I felt like it wasn't up to snuff," says Frank, who eventually hired Rogers General Contracting Corporation of West Palm Beach. The house was taken down to the studs and reassembled. "We had to take some steps backward, but it was

**ALEXANDRA NARANJO IS PICTURED AT THE RESIDENCE'S FRONT DOOR, WHICH IS MADE FROM CYPRESS (LEFT). HER DESIGN SIGNATURES—INCLUDING ORNAMENTAL IRONWORK, BESPOKE MILLWORK AND HARDWARE, AND LACQUER—ARE APPARENT THROUGHOUT THE HOME.**

**OPPOSITE PAGE: THE CURVING LIMESTONE STAIRCASE FEATURES AN OPEN-WEAVE, DIAMOND-PATTERNED IRON RAILING CUSTOM DESIGNED BY NARANJO.**



“BEING IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE OCEAN, WE WANTED SOMETHING COASTAL, SO WE USED ALL TYPES OF BLUE HUES IN THE HOUSE, STARTING WITH WHAT YOU SEE IN THE KITCHEN.”  
—Alexandra Naranjo

“The [living room] ceilings are grass cloth, and we left the natural state of the wood,” Naranjo says. “Whereas in the kitchen we carried the beautiful seafoam to the beams.”

Between the two spaces is a moment of drama “with a high-lacquer surprise,” Naranjo says of the bar, which features an iridescent turquoise and gold backsplash. The Spenos point to this space as an example of where their designer’s talent really shines.

“Krista and I don’t always have the exact same taste, and we struggle to meet in the middle,” Frank says. “Alexandra did a great job of getting us both what we wanted and challenged us to go in a different direction too.”

The bar is a gathering point and conversation piece when the Spenos entertain. “I just love the bar,” Krista says. “It brings the colors from the kitchen to the family room to the dining room. It brings everything together.”

The couple’s primary bedroom is a study in soft coastal colors and textural linens. Its closets boast custom-made cabinetry with a lacquer finish and handmade hardware, while the his-and-hers bathrooms reflect Krista and Frank’s personalities. Her bath features a floor-to-ceiling marble slab on the walls and marble tile on the shower enclosure, with a soothing tone-on-tone color scheme that is carried through to the embroidered window treatments.

Meanwhile, Frank’s bathroom has a moodier, more dramatic feel. “It’s a bold statement,” Naranjo says of the blue agate stone in the shower enclosure, brushed nickel hardware, and high-gloss vanity. “Frank is really outgoing, and this bathroom suits his personality.”

Personality extends to the outdoor space, which transformed from “an overgrown tropical rainforest” to an open area suitable for entertaining and enjoying the pool, spa, and waterfall feature, Frank says. Also at home in the garden is a 5-foot-tall frog statue that once graced their New Jersey yard. “We dress him up for the holidays,” Frank jokes.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: THE COUPLE’S PRIMARY BEDROOM INCORPORATES SOFT COASTAL COLORS AND TEXTURAL LINENS; HANDMADE HARDWARE ADORNS THE CUSTOM-MADE CABINETRY; KRISTA’S BATHROOM SOOTHES WITH MARBLE AND A TONE-ON-TONE PALETTE.

UNEXPECTED APPLICATIONS OF COLOR APPEAR IN THE RENOVATION, SUCH AS THE USE OF SEAFOAM ON THE KITCHEN CEILING BEAMS (ABOVE) AND THE TURQUOISE AND GOLD ON THE BAR (LEFT AND BELOW).

worth it. It’s built like a fortress.” Naranjo reimagined the entire floor plan and the spatial relationships within the home. She eliminated a wall between the original kitchen and family room and imbued a “palette that is light and fresh,” she explains. “Being in close proximity to the ocean, we wanted something coastal, so we used all types of blue hues in the house, starting with what you see in the kitchen.”

The seafoam barstools spawned the color scheme for the custom cabinetry. Texture was important, Naranjo says, pointing to the hammered farmhouse-style sink and the cabinetry hardware that was handmade in Italy. The focal point, however, is the custom-painted Carrara marble tiles that cover the walls. “I decided to play a game with the eyes,” Naranjo says. “It looks and feels like wallpaper, but it’s cleanable, easy to work with, and gives so much movement to the space.”

Krista says it’s a favorite feature. “It’s not loud at all,” she notes. “It’s very Palm Beachy, and I love it.”

“Even though it’s largely brand new, there are a lot of elements that are very typical of Palm Beach,” Naranjo continues. “That was on purpose because we wanted to be respectful of the house and the area.”

The only thing saved from the original home was the living room’s coquina stone fireplace. Also in the living room, a custom rug by Naranjo leans toward a deeper teal than is seen in the kitchen, while the sofas are neutral. A precious gem chandelier hangs from the raised coffered ceiling and brings in a soft green.





CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: FRANK'S BATHROOM SHOWCASES DRAMATIC ELEMENTS SUCH AS A HIGH-GLOSS VANITY, BRUSHED NICKEL HARDWARE, AND BLUE AGATE STONE IN THE SHOWER ENCLOSURE; THE LIGHT, AIRY CASITA FEATURES TROPICAL ELEMENTS IN A NEUTRAL PALETTE.

In addition to amphibians, the Spenos often host their daughters, ages 32, 29, and 22. The older two bring their husbands and the couple's first grandchild, and the youngest brings her college friends from the University of Miami, where she is a student.

"The kids grew up going to The Breakers," Frank says. "This house is what is getting them to come back and going to keep them coming."

With that in mind, the couple and their designer paid special attention to the guest spaces. A freestanding casita is the most coveted spot for visiting daughters, friends, and former neighbors—whom the Spenos are encouraging to relocate here.

In order to bring more light and an airy feel to the casita, Naranjo began by opening up the ceiling. She built cabinetry into the wall and covered the entire thing with wallpaper by Alessandra Branca of Casa Branca Palm Beach. Custom herringbone caning appears on the closet doors. Teak-inspired tiles that were handmade in Hawaii serve as backsplash for the bar and bathroom, which also has an oyster shell-shaped vessel sink.

"I wanted to give it that exotic kind of feel," Naranjo says of the casita. "It's very tropical and serene."

The project lasted from May 2021 to September 2022, thanks to both its scope and COVID-



THE FREESTANDING CASITA ENCHANTS GUESTS WITH ITS THOUGHTFUL DETAILS, INCLUDING WALLPAPER BY ALESSANDRA BRANCA, TEAK-INSPIRED TILES ON THE BACKSPLASH FOR THE BAR AND BATHROOM SHOWER, AND AN OYSTER SHELL-SHAPED VESSEL SINK.



induced supply chain challenges. Throughout the process, Naranjo traveled frequently between Toronto and Palm Beach, all while dealing with pandemic restrictions. For their part, the Spenos are thrilled with the outcome. And while they spent last summer on the Jersey Shore as work on their home here was being completed, Frank says he was itching to get back by September.

"I've always wanted a Palm Beachy house," Krista says. To which Frank contends, "You'll never get me out of here." <<

