

COCONUT GROVE

A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

Designer Dawn Causa ensures that a chic Coconut Grove townhome makes efficient use of space.

By Riki Altman-Yee

Photography by Stephanie LaVigne Villeneuve

Interiors by Causa Design Group

Downsizing can sometimes be traumatic, but not for one Miami couple who lost nearly one-third of their floor space moving from Aventura into a 2,800-square-foot two-story Coconut Grove townhome. Aside from their personal belongings, three cats and a few pieces of art, the model and her businessman husband had plans to arrive relatively empty-handed. And they had an expectation of keeping their possessions largely out of eyeshot.

So they enlisted Dawn Causa, a 28-year design veteran and the owner of Fort Lauderdale-based Causa Design Group. When she arrived for the site visit, Causa realized she had her work cut out for her: "It was completely gutted," she recalls. Making the most efficient use of every square foot was her top priority.

Situated near the Barnacle historic site and built in 1970, the home wasn't new, but the couple insisted it look current and well kept. "They're very decisive people who prefer that everything have a place," Causa says. The owners requested that the interiors be kitty-friendly too. "I had to take that into consideration," Causa recalls. "I was told they have the smartest cats: They can turn on cooktops!"



BREATHING ROOM

The airy townhome provides for a glassed-in master bedroom and an open-plan kitchen, with Manhattan collection cabinets by Nolte Küchen. Dining chairs are by Calligaris, while the flooring throughout is by Tropical Tile & Marble. The architect was Ruben D. Bolanos



ART EFFECTS
From left: The townhome enjoys the feel of an urban art gallery; the master bathroom cabinets were custom-designed by Causa Design Group and were fabricated by Custom Millwork of Florida. Opposite page: For the master bedroom, Dawn Causa custom-designed the dresser and nightstand, and she had the bed upholstered in chenille-linen.

Causa and her crew created an entirely open floor plan. By employing glass to create railings and mark space, the designer ensured the couple could enjoy spectacular views of the colorful sailboats on Biscayne Bay from nearly every vantage point inside. Keeping the panoramas unobstructed—and fulfilling the couples’ desire to have possessions out of sight—required a strategy. Causa’s solution was to design custom built-ins in every room.

“I had to hide away everything,” Causa explains. “Everything is visible from everywhere inside the house. Concealing any clutter was critical to the design.” The upstairs office, for example, has significant storage and features a custom pop-up television below the interior window so the couple can see the bay when they aren’t watching the news.

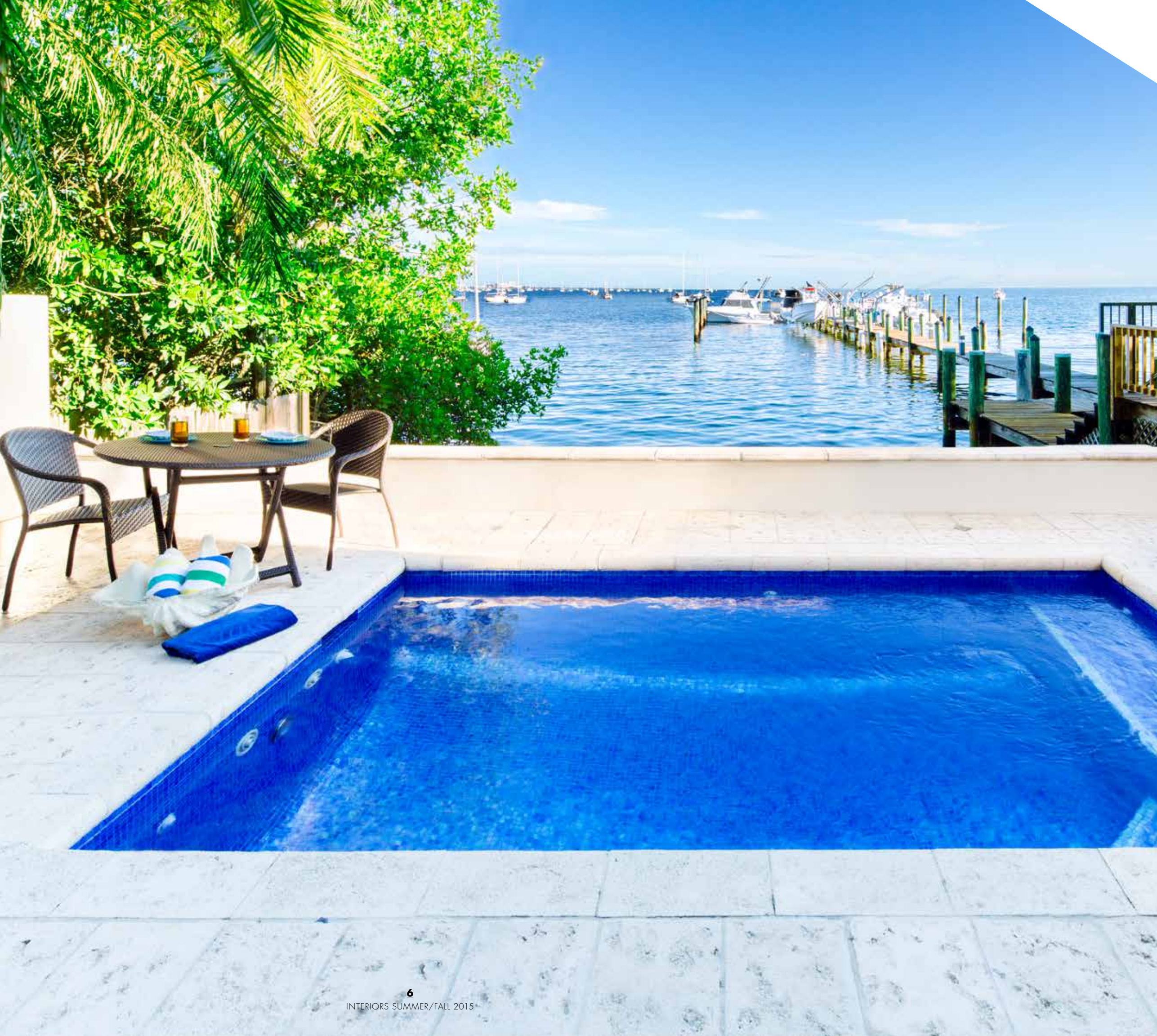
One particular challenge was the kitchen, which, as Causa says, starts literally at the front door.

Custom cabinets (by Nolte Küchen) were built to stash tabletop items, while a large island provides expansive storage for cookware.

In the bathrooms, electrical outlets and appliances are ensconced in bathroom drawers, while makeup mirrors emerge from medicine cabinets via elbow hinges. “Everything was cantilevered, recessed or flush,” Causa says. Christmas trees are tucked away inside the house, stored horizontally in cabinets behind the sofa, and there’s even a tiny storage unit on the rooftop.

Since the couple arrived sans furnishings, the trio shopped often, mostly in Miami’s Design District and in various boutiques, including Artefacto, where they sourced their modern glass-topped dining table. But the couple relied on Causa herself to create many key pieces: She custom-designed the bedroom dresser and nightstand, and she had the bed upholstered in soft chenille-linen.

The color scheme, with its shades of gray and white with lots of natural accents, lends the home more than a bit of an art gallery quality. “It’s really contemporary,” Causa says, “not too cold and industrial. Wood gave it warmth and made it earthy.” Fittingly, a few pieces of art did carry over from the pair’s past residence. One such piece is “Marlboro Man,” a nearly 3-foot-tall, 225-plus-pound bronze sculpture by artist Kevin Berlin. A handful of smaller, less encumbering works are found throughout the space, and the couple asked



PLUNGING IN
Designer Dawn Causa. Opposite page: The Coconut Grove townhome enjoys waterway views and a plunge pool.

DESIGN DETAILS

TYPE
Townhome

LOCATION
Coconut Grove

INTERIOR DESIGN
Causa Design Group
(causadesigngroup.com)

RESOURCES
Artefacto
Moon dining table base
(artefacto.com)

Brand Lighting
Tech Lighting Metro LED light bars in bathroom
(techlighting.com)

Built by Owner
General contractor/construction
(builtbyownerinc.com)

Calligaris
Cruiser dining chairs covered in charcoal gray fabric
(calligaris.us)

Flor
Parallel Reality gray carpet tiles
(flor.com)

Nolte Kitchen
Manhattan Collection kitchen cabinets
(noltekitchens-usa.com)

Tropical Tile & Marble
Gray Charme rectified porcelain floor tiles throughout, mosaic tiles in bathroom, kitchen and office
(tropicaltile.com)

Causa to select works from various artist friends' portfolios to fill the walls. A large-scale painting of Mick Jagger against a riotous background by Jim Ceravolo and a depiction of Marilyn Monroe realized in doughnuts, painted by his wife, Candice Ceravolo, hang in the living room and bathroom, respectively. "Radio Girl," by Lisa Adams, reclines just above the master bedroom's headboard.

Interestingly, the house is notably green. Sunlight keeps it bright during daytime, and LEDs, both decorative and recessed, take care of the job otherwise. "They didn't want to deal with lightbulb changes," Causa recalls, so she found appropriate fixtures by Flos and Tech Lighting. The black-, white- and gray-striped "rug" in the living room is a medley of recycled carpet tiles from Flor. "It was perfect for the cats," Causa explains. "If there's an accident, the couple can just pull it up and put down a new one." Clean living all around. ■