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# Outside *In*

TEXT BY ALEXIS CHICOYE PHOTOGRAPHY BY MORIS MORENO

Big Time Design Studios takes inspiration from nature to turn an empty getaway condo into a personalized boutique hotel.





Mid-century motifs are at the forefront of this design. Below: Bertolia barstools are the perfect height for the countertop. Left: A Platner chrome side table shows off its curves to the outdoors. Opposite page: Pops of azure blue Eames chairs dot the dining room, where the family loves to gather for entertaining.

### All white

With so many shades of white to choose from, it can be hard to select the right one. The kitchen sports Wenge cabinets, known for their close, fine veining, with a thick white granite countertop that flows over the edge like a waterfall, tying in the stylish wire Bertolia barstools. "White will often change based on the elements around it," Fortis says. "The little splashes of color and the subtle nature of the architectural elements really make it pop."

W

hen you want a space reminiscent of a luxury hotel suite à la Mondrian in South Beach, who better to call than the leading name in the hospitality design industry? Award-winning Callin Fortis of Coral Gables-based Big Time Design Studios, a collective specializing in high-end luxury hospitality public space, knows how to bring an empty space up a few notches. Since Big Time's start in Chicago, they have taken on a wide variety of significant projects, from designing the 8,600-square-foot Dirty Martini lounge in West Palm Beach to developing and launching 2,000 locations of the avant-garde brand of Crobar nightclubs. Hospitality design easily translated into home, and Big Time now does

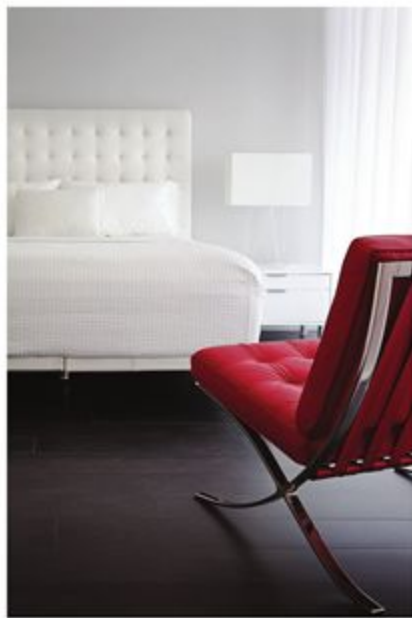
a comparable number of deluxe residential spaces each year.

After finishing a project at The Betsy Hotel, word of mouth led him to owners of a bare, 2,200-square-foot, three-bedroom condo nestled in Miami Beach. The couple, who live in New York full time, wanted their Miami retreat to resemble a personalized high-end boutique hotel—sophisticated, simple yet functional. Fortis, a conceptual designer who takes cues from the modernist principles of bringing the inside out and the outside in, was inspired by the engaging eastern view of the ocean, beach and clouds. "The intention was to bring the beach inside," he says. "I always try to create border-

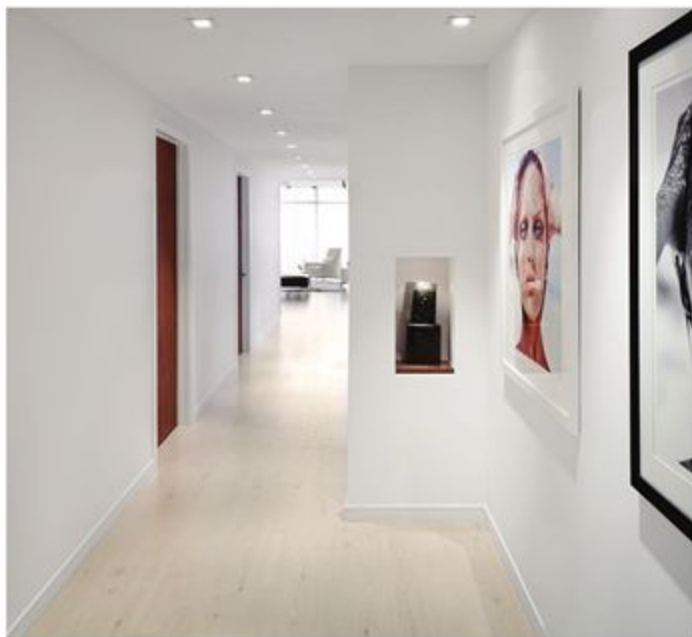




Left: A cool kids' room is outfitted with two leather tufted twin beds and a matching bench. Above: A peacefully designed bathroom is a beach respite. Right: Bold red in the guest room next to a grey wall gives a crisp, sophisticated look. Below: Floors throughout the space are porcelain stamped to look like wood plank and invoke the feeling of beach sand.



“Good design should be rolled around and embraced and scrubbed with a sponge and not just photographed.”



less transitions between space.” Seamless design came through in the little tricks and finite touches such as the floors, which can deceive the eyes. Made to represent sand, the floors throughout the house are actually a porcelain material stamped to look like wood plank. “The details are so sophisticated and complex that they just look perfectly simple,” Fortis says. The clean white palette echoes weightless clouds, while the blue splash of details in the azure Eames chairs ties in the ocean.

Fortis’ techniques for bringing in texture, color and tonal qualities to capture the essence of the outside—for instance the very sexy sheer white flowing drapes that carry motion and movement through the room—easily became the owners’ favorite part of the design. Also adding a sense of drama and height, a dropped ceiling with long, linear, custom-fabricated light pans floats in the center of the space, completely disconnected from the nearby walls.

Frequently doubling as fabricators, Big Time Design Studios also creates custom pieces when products that are already made don’t quite fit the client’s space. Case in point: the granite countertop on the kitchen island. Typically, countertops are one-inch thick but for this project the client wanted one that felt more substantial. So in his Coral Gables office, Fortis manufactured the granite countertop and made it six inches thick.

Ultimately, Fortis was given a mandate to create a home that was functional for his clients, who love to gather and entertain family, and were specific with him about how they wanted the space to function. “Design is really about creation and developing a personality, and people need to interact with it and not to it,” Fortis says. “Good design should be rolled around and embraced and scrubbed with a sponge and not just photographed.”



A simple, airy palette of light textured blues, light wood and lacquered and leather whites captures the essence of the beach in the master bedroom, with dark accents on the floors representing driftwood. Below: Complimenting iconic white Saarinen and Knoll pieces bring a casual tone to the room.



### *A bedroom story*

In the bedroom, walnut wood surrounds a darker, more enveloping color stamp on the porcelain floors to usher in a welcoming driftwood feeling. The wood planks appear to pierce through the glass out on to the balcony. "If you look through the glass, it's as if the bedroom floor is floating outside," says Fortis. Behind the tufted leather headboard is a cool blue custom plaster finish, tinted and manipulated by one of the designers to come to its soft texture. Mid-century design is present throughout the bedrooms as well, with two understated Saarinen chairs and a petite Knoll table, and a bold red Barcelona chair in the guest bedroom.