



FORT LAUDERDALE

CONTEMPLATIVE CONTEMPORARY

Miami-based interior designer Michael Wolk creates a modernist-Zen space in Fort Lauderdale.

By Margit Bisztray // Photography by Troy Campbell

A great interior designer works in the art of three-dimensional space. Michael Wolk segued into the form from careers in cabinetmaking and furniture design, so his expressions are particularly nuanced. Wolk can design a room as well as the furniture to suit it. To prevent his projects from looking like personal showrooms, he carefully restrains himself—integrating designs of his own with pieces culled from a palette of resources. Due to the arc of his working life, those resources describe a catalog of the history and, it could be said, even anatomy of furniture. “I mentally dissect furniture,” says Wolk. “I look and I can see exactly how a piece is made.”

A recent project in Fort Lauderdale brought his discipline and expertise to the task: a home owned by a couple who appreciate both contemporary minimalism and antiques, and one of whom is a Buddhist. Designed by Miami-





based architect Ralph Choeff, the home demonstrates his signature, tropical modern style. Sweeping windows in the main living areas overlook a moody-blue canal, as well as greenery befitting a Zen shrine. No construction was involved (as Wolk puts it, “We didn’t have to break any bones or do any major surgery”), and the house provided an excellent canvas for disciplined, quality-driven interior design.

“The husband’s single dictate was, ‘Don’t interrupt the view,’” recounts Wolk. “As a Buddhist, hers were more specific, such as using only natural materials. We also incorporated Asian and Buddhist antiques from her own collection, including a set of prayer wheels. She knew exactly what she wanted, but once we met her approval, we were let loose and given the budget needed to do our best work.” Decisions occurred simultaneously and interactively: layout of the rooms, lighting, and floor and ceiling treatments (a high-gloss polish was removed from the marble floors, for example). Living room chairs by midcentury modernist Vladimir Kagan made the cut, as well as Arts and Crafts dining room chairs by Charles Rennie Mackintosh and bar stools by Norman Cherner. For the family room’s media and library built-in, Wolk stepped up with an elegant custom design in walnut. Facing it stands a sculptural coffee table he also designed, drawing on shaker and



Bauhaus influences, among others.

Antique heirlooms from the wife’s family also aligned with the project in a nearly meditative manner. A 19th-century painting of one of her ancestors was discovered in a barn on a family property. She had it restored and managed to acquire the diminutive rocking chair in which the child in the painting sits. Both adorn a nook in the dining room. “Antiques add incredible contrast in modern interiors,” says Wolk, “but they can be hard to work with in a functional sense—one reason there’s a noticeable trend away from antiques right now. It was nice to find a way to integrate the owner’s personal treasures.”

Unlike other art forms, interior design also integrates the people who will exist in it. When beauty and quality exist in harmony with living and with personal style, it’s art, but it is also a home. *Michael Wolk Design Associates, 31 NE 28th St., Miami, michaelwolkdesign.com* ■

From left: The long wooden dining table in the family room is by Phillips Collection and the wood wall design by Miles of Wood; the living room sofas are by Minotti and the textured bronze coffee table is from Tuell & Reynolds.



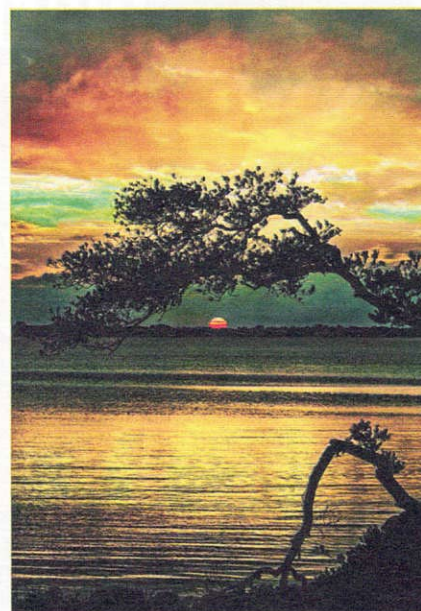
KEY WEST

THROUGH THE LENS

An ode to Florida, fine art photographer Alan S. Maltz binds his latest “oldest” collection in a new coffee-table book.

By Margit Bisztray

West; part of his Old Florida Collection, Maltz photographed “Arc of Light V” in Jensen Beach.



In 2008, The Ocean Reef Club in Key Largo commissioned photographer Alan S. Maltz to produce murals for the town’s event space, printed on canvas and mounted like tapestries, some 17 feet long. As if this alone weren’t a formidable challenge, the subdued, conservative palette of the venue clashed with Maltz’s famously exuberant colors. The solution for this prolific photographer in the fourth decade of his career, who has been named the Official Photographer of Florida by Visit Florida for a good reason, was, naturally, to create a new collection from scratch. For inspiration, the photographer daringly turned back in time, referencing vintage postcards from the Sunshine State and paintings from the 1950s to ’80s by the Florida Highwaymen. In the photographer’s own words, the resulting series “bring to light a feeling, a style, an essence—a heart-tugging pull to a simpler, freer, less technical time. I utilize a blend of sepia tones and muted colors on selected pieces, which transforms my art from present to past.”

A smashing success for the venue, the Old Florida Collection, as it grew to be called, has emerged as Maltz’s most beloved and popular to date, in particular an image titled “Bahia Honda Sunrise.” From an initial eight images, the portfolio has expanded to a size deserving of the artist’s next and sixth coffee-table book: *Old Florida... An Artist’s Interpretation*, underway in 2019.

An ode to Florida individually and throughout the span of his career, Maltz’s works have always tugged nostalgic heartstrings—whether for a tear-jerking sunset, an unspoiled waterscape or the momentary stillness of a heron. In the Old Florida Collection, the volume of the colors is turned down, but the chords still reverberate deeply. 1210 Duval St., Key West, alanmaltz.com