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INTERIOR DESIGN / RENÉE GADDIS, RENÉE GADDIS INTERIORS  
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# OUT *of* AFRICA

ADMIRATION FOR THE EXOTIC LOCALE OF MOROCCO SETS THE TONE FOR A KALEA BAY RETREAT.

WRITTEN BY MARY JO BOWLING / PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATHAN SCHRODER

**T**hey've never seen Morocco in person, but Thomas Bodnar and Liza Santo wanted the style of the North African country to inform the design of their Kalea Bay condominium in Naples.

"Perhaps the movie *Casablanca* planted the seed of inspiration," Bodnar says. "There's passion in Moroccan design, and we wanted that vibe for our home."

So they brought the idea to their interior designer, Renée Gaddis. For Gaddis, the Kalea Bay complex is familiar territory, as she's completed several projects there. But the idea of a Moroccan-style interior in Naples was a new and welcome concept for her. "When a client comes to me with something different, it's exciting," Gaddis says.

Even so, she knew she did not want a literal translation of the style. "There can be a fine line between 'inspired by' and kitsch," says Gaddis, who turned to Instagram for recent photos of Moroccan architecture. "I wanted it to look elegant, not like a themed restaurant." The decision to utilize traditional Moorish motifs but in neutral colors was also driven by the work of the late Joseph Glasco, an American artist who frequently used shades of black, ivory and gray in his paintings. "Glasco's style lends itself to the theme," says Bodnar, who collects his work. "All the pieces we purchased seemed to fall into place—they complement the rooms and enhance the mood."

Next, Gaddis turned her attention to "breaking the box" of the condo's form. "We wanted to install can lights and accent lighting for the art, but this is a condo, so normally that would involve dropping the ceiling by four inches, which is not something we wanted to do," she says. Enter general contractor Chad Smith. "Instead of lowering the ceiling, we attached LED backlit panels to it," he explains. "It was a

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challenge, but after Renée designed them and we installed them, they looked incredible." Gaddis notes that the panels not only provide a place for the lighting to live, but they also add a unique architectural element. "Anytime you can make a condo more than four flat walls and a ceiling, that's a good thing," she says. "These dropped panels read as a kind of modern take on a coved ceiling."

After that change was made, the team turned their attention to a vertical surface—specifically a shower wall in the master bath, which they replaced with a floor-to-ceiling sheet of glass, effectively creating a glass box. "Having a see-through shower is not a standard choice," Gaddis says. "Sure, you sacrifice some privacy, but in return you get to enjoy a stunning water view while showering or bathing, plus a lot of natural light in the bathroom."

With the background in place, it was time to reinterpret the architectural details Gaddis discovered early in her research. In the kitchen, the oversize sculptural back of the banquette is reminiscent of the arched doorways found in Moroccan riads, the traditional houses of the country. "This is a large family," Gaddis says, adding that Bodnar and Santo have five children. "They wanted to have a casual spot to gather and opted to forgo a formal dining area. But the back of the banquette does lend it a certain sophistication."

That flavor carries to the adjacent kitchen, where the pattern of the tile backsplash mimics the lines of the banquette. Gaddis designed the light fixtures composed of clusters of pierced-metal spheres through Tazi Designs, a company that specializes in Moroccan imports. "These are some of my favorite items in the house," Santo says. "They glow during the day and cast interesting patterns at night."

The darker hues of Glasco's art set the tone for moody neutrals in the family room. "This is meant to be the quiet area," Gaddis says. "The family can come here to have one-on-one conversations or to watch a movie." Like the rest of the home, where the neutrals are lighter, it's texture that provides interest. "In this house, texture brings richness and, in lieu of bright colors, art provides the 'pop.'"

Morocco is on the bucket list for this travel-loving family, but until then, the spirit of their Florida home makes for a complete retreat—both physically and stylistically. "We live in a Frank Lloyd Wright-style house in the Midwest, where the winters can be harsh," Santo says. "In just two hours via plane, we can be here—and the decor and the weather make it feel like we're a world away. I relax as soon as I walk through the door." ■



Interior designer Renée Gaddis fashioned a hanging console for this entry mirror from RH. "We added the chain to give it a Moroccan look," she says. The geometric-patterned runner also recalls traditional textiles from Morocco.



For this large family, a gathering space requires considerable seating; Gaddis provided it with a custom sectional fabricated by Raebecca Drapery by Design. Armchairs by Burton James are covered with a Schumacher fabric in St. Marks Print. Distinctive fretwork is carved into the marble coffee table by Global Views.

In the kitchen, Gaddis worked with Tazi Designs to create one-of-a-kind pierced-metal light fixtures. The brass pieces are beautiful day and night—the homeowners love the patterns they cast in the evening. Noir Furniture's Abacus counter stools sit atop Legno Bastone wood flooring.



At the start of the project, Gaddis turned to Instagram for recent photographs depicting Moroccan architecture. Her research led to the lines of the banquette back, which was crafted by Raebeca Drapery by Design and upholstered in Kravet fabric. Palecek chairs surround a Theodore Alexander table.



The clients' art collection also inspired the decor. Homeowner Thomas Bodnar feels artist Joseph Glasco's paintings "perfectly complement" the style. On one end of the living room, the designer accented a pair of paintings with a hand-carved Oly Studio bench and a Hooker Furniture chest.



The stunning views are a primary feature of the home, and the owners and their guests can enjoy them from a daybed and chair by Janus et Cie. Slices of teakwood from Asian Loft on the wall make an organic, artistic statement.

**Opposite:** The cast-resin bed by Oly Studio and a drum ceiling fixture by Arteriors make for a dramatic combination in the master bedroom. The visual texture of the light is picked up in a pair of Made Goods stools that sit at the foot of the bed.

**Below:** In the master bathroom, the MTI tub is oriented toward the view. The wallcovering was hand-crafted with recycled pulp by Lori Weitzner for Donghia. A Bungalow 5 resin side table imparts a tribal note.

