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AFTER TIRING  
OF COUNTLESS  
TRIPS TO L.A.,  
FOR A RECENT  
PROJECT, THIS  
DESIGN DUO  
OPENED A  
MUCH-NEEDED  
FURNITURE  
AND ART  
RESOURCE  
CLOSER  
TO HOME.

## THE HOUSE THAT BUILT A SHOWROOM

BY LISA MARIE HART  
*Photographs by Lance Gerber*



stone, and a golden Southern sunshine that reflects the climate of each place the clients call home.

Built in 1988, the home features an oval-shaped space. Though originally a “card room,” the couple envisioned a room to showcase their wine collection. Lazzaro designed a wine cabinet with custom millwork and a built-in banquette with waterfall granite side tables. To enhance the room’s potential, he installed flat-screen TVs on both sides of the fireplace. The spiky starburst chandelier is artistic and current.

The couple then challenged Lazzaro with remodeling the casita. He managed to tuck in a king-size bed without it looking crowded by choosing a long pattern for the bedding. He had a rug precision-cut to fit the room and added a narrow desk by Blu Dot. Drapes cleverly sewn in alternating denim give the room a dual personality: They’re striped when pulled across but appear to be solid gray when pushed open to one side.

Impressed with Lazzaro’s ability to sense their preferences and design their home accordingly, the client pushed ahead. The home is their second in the Desert Horizons Country Club community, and they wanted to make this one even more uniquely tailored to their lifestyle.

In shopping for the project, the men sourced products almost exclusively in Los Angeles. They knew the city well; they were still based there when they accepted the job. “Yet we would have preferred to shop locally. We just weren’t finding the quality and freshness in resources,” Lazzaro

From opposite far left: Soft curves in architecture and accents let the eye find cohesion throughout the home, from the wine room’s custom banquette to the kitchen counter and a mosaic coffee table in the family room.

ART AND FURNISHINGS THROUGHOUT REFLECT THE GAP THAT NICHOLAS LAWRENCE DESIGN FILLED IN THE LOCAL MARKET BY OPENING THEIR SHOWROOM. THEY ARE THE EXCLUSIVE SHOWROOM FOR SOME LINES AND THE EXCLUSIVE TO-THE-TRADE DEALER FOR OTHERS.

“Surely, you won’t want to change a thing!” said friends of an Indian Wells couple who purchased the former home of an interior designer. Little did they know this couple had distinct ideas for the casually elegant abode.

What began as the couple’s simple request for a wine room developed into a lasting relationship with Lawrence Lazzaro and Nicholas Hertneck of Nicholas Lawrence Design and a full home makeover. Designer decorating never implies that a true sense of home translates meaningfully from one homeowner to the next. The new owners understood that a designer residence, no matter how comely, is a far cry from a home with one’s own tastes, colors, style, and uses of space in mind. Before long, they were ready to manifest their own vision.

“It was already complete when they bought it,” says Lazzaro, who served as lead designer on the project. “But it didn’t live the way they wanted it to live. They wanted it to be comfortable so guests wouldn’t have to take their shoes off, but have a formality to it as well.”

The clients make their primary home in Texas. With Texan spirit, their desert retreat is “a little house that lives big,” says Lazzaro. The 3,200-square-foot home presents a graceful flow of intimate rooms, including a casita off the entry courtyard. They asked Lazzaro to apply a restrained palette of warm yellows and golds throughout the two-bedroom-plus-study home.

Lazzaro began with Benjamin Moore’s quiet, bone-colored Deep in Thought paint. “I wanted a background that disappeared to emphasize how light-filled the house can be,” he says. “And we were careful that it didn’t get too pink,” a common danger with similar hues. Accents are in copper and gold. Their subtle, metallic sheen agrees with colors pulled from nature’s paintbox: wheat,



says. Midway through the design process, Lazzaro and Hertneck made a landmark decision. Opening the Nicholas Lawrence Interior Designer Showroom at The Art Place in Palm Desert's Design District allowed them to bridge a gap in the furniture market and carry lines not previously available locally.

The soft architecture of the clients' late-'80s home inspired Lazzaro to play with an updated take on the style of design legend Steve Chase. "Though impactful on an international scale, Chase influenced the desert so much. He worked in taupe, beige — desert colors. And he used sensuous curves," Lazzaro says. "Those two things got Nick and I talking about what elements of Steve Chase's work are still embedded in our desert design consciousness. He created a design specific for the desert, and I haven't seen that since then."

Lazzaro worked meticulously throughout the home to rethink and modernize the work of the 1987 Interior Design Hall of Fame inductee. Lazzaro's contemporary results blend open spaces into one velvety watercolor painting. Stand-out pieces never compete with one another due to placement and kinship in the same color families.

On the other side of the wine room's fireplace, the living room is configured for conversation and relaxation. A tête-à-tête sofa keeps the modest footprint from becoming weighed down, as do 10 cocktail tables that convene as a functional centerpiece. The marble-topped jigsaw puzzle

pieces converge or divide to suit the client's every need. Underfoot, Tai Ping Carpets produced the luminescent custom area rug that Lazzaro designed in silk and wool.

Dining chairs with Art Deco lines become less linear when customized in leather and velvet. "Steve Chase often used oversized, Art Deco-styled pieces that were popular in the '80s, but they can get out of hand," Lazzaro says. "So we paid close attention to the scale and finishes to keep the proportions in line with today's tastes." The square table for eight was a custom collaboration with Bay Area modern blacksmith Daniel Hopper, who experimented with designs for the base. Its swooping arcs are mirrored in the vintage 1970s Mazzega Murano chandelier Lazzaro selected from Christopher Anthony Ltd.

"We went against trend with the window treatments," notes Lazzaro. Roller shades could never achieve the drama of floor-to-ceiling drapery. Sheers by Coraggio Textiles were dyed to order and filter the light, topped with luxurious woven fabric by Manuel Canovas.

Across from the open kitchen, two walls of glass encase the family room. A pair of vintage Vladimir Kagen Nautilus swivel chairs from Christopher Anthony Ltd. revel in the natural light. "You can't go wrong with Christopher Anthony," Lazzaro says. "It's our all-time favorite of the local antique stores." A low mosaic table shimmers in golds that move from matte to gloss. One of the two rugs was altered to fit the space exactly: The edge was removed,

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below: Nicholas Hertneck and Lawrence Lazzaro in their Palm Desert showroom. opposite: The Nicholas Lawrence Design team worked with a modern blacksmith to custom-design the dining room table's base. Custom drapery and a vintage chandelier add floor-to-ceiling drama.



"OUR CLIENTS EXPECT US TO BRING MORE OPTIONS TO THE PROJECT THAN THEY HAD EVER CONSIDERED AND TO OVERSEE THE PROJECT WITH UNPARALLELED ATTENTION," LAZZARO SAYS. "WE WORK HARD TO EXCEED THEIR EXPECTATIONS."



the middle trimmed, and the outer border sewed back on. Lazzaro says he and Hertneck usually work with three quality options: high, medium, and low. "None is a fail; each is equally suitable to the project," he explains. "Yet every time, she went for the really luxe, good stuff. Her husband likes to joke that he gave her an unlimited budget and she exceeded it. You only live once!"

The two were introduced to the client by landscape designer Lin Phillippi of Vintage Landscape. She and her team designed the landscape that plays an important role in the enjoyment of the home. From entry courtyard to windows framing statement foliage to abundant glass across the back of the home, Phillippi's lush desert exterior integrates with Lazzaro's thoughtful interior.

In their new Nicholas Lawrence Interior Designer Showroom, plentiful floor models offer a touch-and-feel experience with collections from Alf da Fré (Italian upholstery), Trica (chic and contemporary case goods and furnishings), and made-in-California DellaRobbia. Hertneck's 30 years of interior design experience helped secure exclusive arrangements with New York City-based Area for natural bedding and luxurious throws and with M3LD, which produces midcentury modern, Brutalist-inspired lighting and accessories. They also represent Gina Berschneider Custom Upholstery. "In L.A. they are nicknamed 'upholsterer to the stars,'" Lazzaro says. "When they closed their showroom, they asked us to represent

— left to right, from opposite: Vintage brass chest with custom acrylic base below a Ken Sloan painting, all from Christopher Anthony Ltd. A bedside vignette groups around a Brutalist table lamp, also from Christopher Anthony Ltd. Nicholas Lawrence Design created custom millwork for the wine room.

them. If you can imagine it, Gina Berschneider can make it. The quality is A-plus." Set against atypical gallery walls in Farrow & Ball's Hague Blue, the showroom presents a residential environment for artwork, antiques, and design consultations. Artists David Stanton and Johnnie Papandreas are exclusively represented. Nest's sultry line of home fragrances can provide the perfect candle or diffuser for the most discerning nose.

On every project, Lazzaro says, he and Hertneck work as a team, providing clients two sets of eyes and creative ideas. A lead designer naturally emerges based on whomever best connects with the client. "It's a dialogue between us. We both participate and push each other to make it better," Lazzaro says. "There's not a lot of ego in our office. It's about making the client happy and doing the best design."

Whether clients want to reimagine a room or rejuvenate an entire estate, Lazzaro says he brings honesty, openness, and sensitivity to their version of the ideal home. "I don't believe people hire us to say yes," he says. "They hire us to say no, or yes and no. They expect us to bring more options to the project than they had ever considered and to oversee the project with unparalleled attention. We work hard to exceed their expectations. For me, the most rewarding part is meeting a client who has a sentence or two to say about what they would like their home to be, and then we nurture that sentence or two with ideas — growing them into a chapter — and eventually into a very much-loved book."

