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EXQUISITE ESCAPE

Fashion designer Josie Natori and architect Calvin Tsao conjure a serene, sophisticated setting at her Palm Beach pied-à-terre

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With its lively profusion of Mediterranean architecture, overreliance on pink, and preppy apparel, Palm Beach, Florida, was the last place New Yorker Josie Cruz Natori had in mind for a holiday retreat. But after looking at properties in Miami Beach (too hip, she concluded) and the Caribbean (too inconvenient), the East-meets-West-minded designer of lingerie, ready-to-wear, and home furnishings decided to give the storied resort community a closer look. Soon she acquired a two-bedroom pied-à-terre in a serpentine 1960s apartment building—painted salmon-pink, of course—that wraps around a free-form courtyard planted with swaying coconut palms and blasts of scarlet bougainvillea.

“Within a single day,” the designer says, “I went from ‘Over my dead body!’ to ‘We can land at the airport and be on our boat in less than a half-hour? I’m sold!’” Her husband, Ken (who is the chairman of her firm, the Natori Co.), is an avid fisherman and keeps the couple’s 42-foot-long Viking boat moored a short walking distance from their warm-weather haven. When he isn’t playing golf, he’s off trolling the Atlantic for mahimahi. Josie, meanwhile, can often be found reclining poolside. “We have discovered our little piece of paradise,” she says.

The Natoris handed the remodeling and decorating reins to Calvin Tsao, a founding partner of the Manhattan firm Tsao & McKown Architects and the mastermind behind five other Natori projects, both commercial and residential (including a recently



Above: Josie Cruz Natori, in a dress from her ready-to-wear collection, stands on the terrace of the Palm Beach, Florida, getaway she shares with her husband, Ken Natori, the chairman of her namesake brand; the apartment was renovated and decorated by the New York City firm Tsao & McKown Architects. **Opposite:** In the living/dining area, painted in a Benjamin Moore off-white, a lantern by JF Chen hangs above a table by BDDW, and chairs by Kerry Joyce for Dessin Fournir. For details see Sources.



Left: An Auguste Garufi mixed-media work dominates one wall of the living/dining area; Tsao designed the sofa, chair, ottoman, and carpet, the latter of which was made by Vanderhurd; the Christophe Delcourt floor lamp is from Ralph Pucci International.

Right, from top: Floor cushions from Walker Zabriskie Furniture and a lounge chair by Dedon furnish the terrace; the pendant lights are by Property. The kitchen features Caesarstone counters; the ceramic tray is by Peter Lane.



completed minimalist pavilion not far from New York City, set on a 22-acre compound where the couple's son, Kenneth, a vice president at the Natori Co., and his young family also have a house). The fashion designer envisioned the Florida getaway outfitted with airy rattan furnishings and tactile ethnic accessories, in sharp contrast to her Manhattan home's spare rooms and elegant Asian artifacts. Tsao, a native of Hong Kong, felt that the Palm Beach place should be a sanctuary. Given the winning results, it's clear both client and architect got what they wanted.

The renovation would be relatively minor—certainly nothing like Tsao's makeover of the Natoris' New York apartment, which took seven years. Once the work started, however, the team dived into the deep end as only perfectionists can. They began the 12-month redo by addressing the awkwardness of the residence's slice-of-pie-shaped rooms. Tsao adjusted walls to create a more gracious and flowing floor plan. A sound-deadening layer of cork was laid under the oak floors to muffle the tap of high heels, and the terrace's sliding glass doors were framed with gleaming mahogany, a luxury that Tsao

estimates was the project's greatest extravagance. The terrace's ringside view of the waterway's parade of yachts and the sounds of breeze-rustled palm trees make it "my favorite spot in the apartment and remind me of Manila, my hometown," Josie says. "I love lounging out there."

Subtle touches bring the outdoors in. The same end tables are used both on the terrace and in the adjacent living/dining area, creating a visual continuity between the spaces. And a striking polygonal metal-and-glass lantern over the dining table echoes the terrace's geometric railing, a hefty



Right: In the master bedroom, painted in a Pratt & Lambert beige, a 1940s reading lamp is attached to the Tsao-designed headboard; the pillows, coverlet, and throw are by Natori Bedding, and the carpet is by Vanderhurd. The vintage Sergio Rodrigues desk is from Noho Modern, and the desk lamp is by Blackman Cruz.

Left, from top: A Steinway piano stands in the guest room, where a Ross Bleckner artwork (left) and an Indonesian textile hang above a custom-made daybed; the pillows are by Natori Bedding, and the cocktail table is from Walker Zabriskie Furniture. The master bath features a Kohler tub and fittings and a Lacava sink, as well as towels by Natori Home; the tile on the tub surround is by Nemo Tile Co., and the flooring is by Ann Sacks.



construction that helps temper the sun that streams into the west-facing rooms most afternoons.

“We tailored the project around the quality of the light,” says the architect, adding that he was intrigued by how the sunshine suffused the interiors, establishing bright patches here and shadows there. The apartment’s largely brown-and-white scheme emphasizes that duality. A burnt-orange armchair and ottoman, for instance, are placed in a sunny spot in the master bedroom, while custom-made furnishings in sand and stone hues nestle in dim corners, where vibrant shades would lose their power. The architect also brought natural light deep into the spaces by deploying a range of reflective surfaces, eschewing commonplace mirrors in

favor of burnished metals and silvery artworks by Brooklyn artist Auguste Garufi.

Richly embroidered pillows by Natori Bedding accent the master bedroom. “The impetus for my home spin-off actually came from working with Calvin,” says Josie, who will expand the collection with carpets in the near future.

She notes that the Palm Beach dwelling has had an impact on her ready-to-wear line. Though she typically favors dark colors in her daily wardrobe, Josie quickly fell under the sartorial spell of the Sun Belt. This year’s resort collection included kicky dresses and separates in Day-Glo colors—yellow, fuchsia, lime, purple, and more—some of which now hang in the master bedroom’s wood-paneled walk-in closet.

Just as every Natori residence must have sufficient clothing storage, space must always be allotted for pianos. Trained as a concert pianist before detouring into investment banking and then, in 1977, into fashion, Josie owns six Steinways. In Palm Beach, one of her four grands (she has two concert grands as well) occupies the guest room, which also serves as a music room and study. Here she plays Chopin or Rachmaninoff while her husband relaxes with a cigar and a newspaper on the room’s bespoke lounge—a design inspired by a classic Chinese opium bed. The cozy quarters are where the couple often unwinds at the end of the day. As Josie explains, “Ken and I feel like newlyweds again.” □