

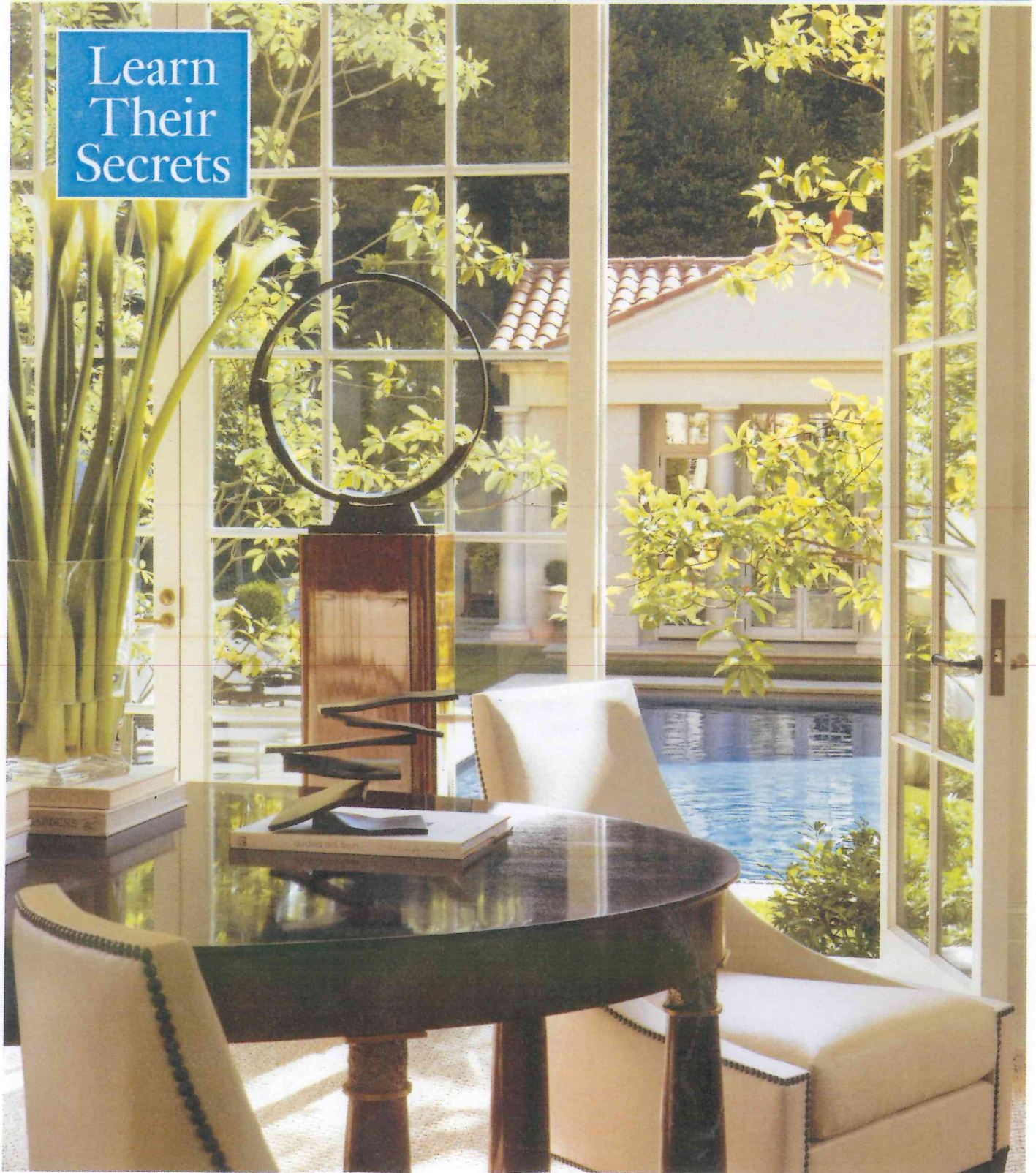
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Campion Platt

A BOLD TWIST FOR HIS
PALM BEACH COLONIAL
REVIVAL RESIDENCE

Text by Gerald Clarke
Photography by Ken Hayden



"The interiors are open and refreshing and take in the local spirit," architect Campion Platt (above) says of the Palm Beach, Florida, house he and his wife, Tatiana, renovated. RIGHT: A mirror surrounds the living room's fireplace. Platt designed the club chairs, with a Rogers & Goffigon fabric, the sofa, the low table and the banquette. Tiffany's silver-and-glass bowl. Orange side table, Christie's.







ABOVE: Originally built in 1924, the Mission-style house was converted to a Colonial Revival in the 1930s by architect Gustav Maass. "The house is 25 feet from the street," Platt notes, pointing to parallels in the open communities found in Sag Harbor and Nantucket. "Most people in Palm Beach have hedges, privacy."

RIGHT: A glass-droplet chandelier and the Judith Brown sculpture *River God*, set in the cabinet, add drama to the dining room. Chair cushion fabric, Rogers & Goffigon. "I remade this British colonial in Palm Beach," says Platt. "I was trying to give the idea of what it's like to live in Palm Beach and rewrite some of the rules."

When people think of Palm Beach, they usually picture the great estates that line the shore, places with fancy names like La Bellucia and Mar-a-Lago. But there's another, more modest Palm Beach, where the houses have street addresses, not names, and where you don't need a calculator to count the number of rooms. It is that Palm Beach, which has village charm rather than sweeping grandeur, that Oscar A. Jose, a developer from Indianapolis, helped to create nearly 100 years ago. And it is in that Palm Beach that Tatiana and Campion Platt have found their ideal winter retreat.

Jose—he pronounced his name "Joesy"—bragged that his development, which he called Poinciana Park, was "most ideally located." And most ideally located it still is, just a short walk from the Atlantic on one side and the Intracoastal Waterway on the other. "It's so close to the beach that you can walk there in bare feet," says Campion Platt, a New York architect and designer. The Platts, who also have a loft in lower Manhattan (see *Architectural Digest*, September 2007) and a summer house in the Hamptons, had spent three years searching for just the right Palm Beach retreat, not too large and not too small. "In most of the houses we looked at, you walked right into the living room," says Platt. "This house has a more formal entry."

Built in 1924 in the Mission style, the 3,000-square-foot house was extensively remodeled in 1936 by Gustav Maass, a



well-known local architect, who added a big bay window and turned it into what is known as a Colonial Revival. It was that style that reminded Platt of a movie he admired: 1988's *White Mischief*, a story of decadence and murder in the Kenya of the early 1940s—beautiful people and beautiful houses in an exotic setting. "I liked the gauzy white curtains," says Platt, "the dark



woods, the African influence overlaying the British colonial bones of the houses—and the mischief in the air. We wanted something quite different from the usual Palm Beach house. We wanted to rewrite some of the Palm Beach rules and to create a tropical sense of luxury in a fresh, bohemian way: colorful, historic, modern and intimate.”

Since they didn’t want to change Maass’s exterior, the Platts asked the town to give their proposed renovation a historic label. Impressed with their plans, the Palm Beach Landmarks Preservation Commission said yes. “In perfect scale and form with the neighborhood,” is how Jane Day, a commission consultant, characterizes the house that finally emerged. “A model for

preservation in Palm Beach,” adds the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach, which later gave the couple an award: a bronze medal and a prize of \$10,000—a sum they gave to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County.

Once inside the door, however, Campion Platt was free to let his imagination roam. “I like things to be in contrast,” he



says. "I like things that make the eye pop." But he wanted his wife's eyes to pop, too. A former executive of AOL and cofounder of a new Web site, *famegame.com*, Tatiana Platt has a slightly different voice from his, he says, "and I wanted a house for both of us, not just for me." To bring her into the design process, he treated her like a client, setting up formal meetings, complete with presentation boards, in his Madison Avenue office.

"Unless I had a strong feeling about something, I would give her at least two options," says Platt, "and if there was something we didn't agree on, we'd

discuss it." Their one disagreement was over living room mirrors. She wanted more—"Women always want more mirrors," he says—and he wanted fewer. The result was a compromise, a floor-to-ceiling mirror that surrounds a pure white stone fireplace.

"When I think of Palm Beach, I think of light," says Platt, and with the exception of the library, which is paneled in pickled cypress, the house almost dances with light. Light in the living room, where the sofa is white linen and the walls have a slight pink blush. Light in the dining room, where the chandelier is made up of drops of solid

glass. Light in the master bedroom, where the floors have such a high gloss that they reflect the sun coming through the windows. And light in the garden, where water gushes from a slot in the white-painted stucco wall at the far end of the pool, directly across from the kitchen.

There is even light at night, and when the sun sets, a projector on the second floor can turn that stucco wall into a movie screen. "When you're having cocktails, you can surf a movie," says Platt. You can even surf *White Mischief* and see for yourself the inspiration for the house that surrounds you. □



OPPOSITE: For the master bedroom, which has lavender Venetian plaster walls, Platt conceived the nailhead headboard and the stacking boxes. "When considering furnishings for a space," says the architect, "my inclination is to design if I can."

ABOVE: The pool fountain wall doubles as a movie screen. Exterior armchairs and settee, Restoration Hardware. "It's a small, simple bungalow house," says Platt. "But when you go inside, it's totally different. My tool kit was respect for history."

Designer Q&A



Campion Platt

Q. What's your favorite room to design for yourself and why?

A. I like the challenge of smaller spaces, so I guess I'd say the den. It's not as big as a living room, can have many functions—TV room, library, office and bedroom—and usually requires some special planning to come out well. In my own den, I incorporated all of these functions and more, yet still managed to make it comfortable and inviting.

Q. What's the most difficult part about designing for yourself? What's the best part?

A. I love the experimentation process in design, so what better guinea pig than myself? The best part is finding that magic between what's in the mind's eye and the end result—making the art and function sing.

Q. Did you use the Internet? What is your favorite online shopping site?

A. I like 1stdibs, Phillipsdepure.com, Sothebys.com, Christies.com, Artnet.com and DWR.com, but more for the practical than for the aesthetics of the design. I usually have to see things before I buy. If I can, I design chairs, sofas and the like.

Read more from this interview at ArchitecturalDigest.com.