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# House Beautiful

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**MAKEOVERS**  
HOUSE BEAUTIFUL 02.00

*Palm Beach, Florida*



*Interior design  
& Photographs by*  
VICENTE WOLF

*Interview by*  
LISA CREGAN



## FROM SOULLESS TO ETHEREAL

Tearing down  
walls in  
a 1970s condo

To bring "lightness and ease" to this 1970s Palm Beach condo, designer Vicente Wolf took down interior walls and created a flexible loftlike living area. A Magasin Sennelier French oak easel on casters serves as a movable TV stand. The L-shaped banquette and the ottoman are covered in wipeable polyester, Incognito Pearl in Glacier, from DesignTex. Wolf designed the oval cast-concrete and chrome table. The inlaid chairs are from India. Walls are painted Benjamin Moore's Super White.

The focal point of the open floor plan is the hexagonal bay window. Wolf designed the boomerang-shaped sofa, tufted ottoman, and cast-concrete and stainless-steel coffee table. He tucks the oversize ottoman under the open-framed table and adds a tray to create three tiers. McGuire Antalya armchairs and a Tucker Robbins tree stump table add texture to a minimal palette. The designer used linen gauze for Roman shades. "I like to have white wrap around the room." A Joel Meyerowitz photograph is on the easel.







LISA CREGAN: Wow. Not many designers could transform a soulless '70s condo into something so calm and ethereal.

VICENTE WOLF: No offense, but people are always calling my spaces calm and ethereal, and it's funny because neither one of those things applies to me! I'm hyper, not calm, and I think this apartment actually has a bit of an edge, a bit of irreverence, just not so obvious. See those inlaid Indian chairs in the dining area? You might think I was crazy to put them into such a minimal room, but I like that they look like they just landed there. And there's the 19th-century French table next to the modern bed. If I were thinking properly, I'd never have done that, right? It's like this place just fell together in a spontaneous way, very casual and fluid. I used to know Sammy Cahn, the great lyricist who wrote lots of famous Sinatra songs. He would just sit down at the piano and it would all come pouring out. That's what it's like for me with room design. I want my rooms to look like they just happened. I think that's what makes them seem relaxed.

But this holds together so beautifully—you must have had an overall vision.

Well, I didn't want it to be uptight, like some Palm Beach interiors. People can sit around here in shorts or come right up from the pool and feel okay. I mean, why have a second home in Palm Beach if you're going to fly down there to be uptight? The television on the easel, it's so casual, you can just roll it around to face wherever you want.

Did the owners give you free rein to do a big makeover?

Actually, they said, "Listen, we don't want to do a lot to this place." So I said okay, but you have to do two things. First, take care of that shiny, shiny Carrara marble floor or you won't be comfortable. Hone it down so you see less pattern, less veining, and make it more matte and monolithic. Second, you need to open up the living room, dining room, and kitchen so it's all one space. Now they've got a communal type of living thing happening here, and unobstructed views out to the Intracoastal Waterway. Opening up the width made the apartment very loftlike,

with windows wrapping around the entire space. We also made the master bedroom and bath one space so the bathroom wouldn't read bathroom. It's more like a sitting room off the bedroom, with sinks as furniture. Even the tub is a piece of furniture, floating there in front of the view.

What's the point of floating furniture?

I think there's an extravagance to floating furniture away from the walls. It creates the illusion of a larger space. Furniture against a wall can feel cold sometimes, like a high

textural, you put something smooth or slick next to it. And by the way, if that living room sofa had a pattern on it, it would be wrong for me. It would be taking a large-scale sculptural element and decorating it. I'm not a big fan of decorating. I think it trivializes the object. A lot of pattern makes a room less about the light traveling through it and more about the decorating. The more subtle I can make a room, the more me-as-decorator fades into the background.

But you must admit there are some signature touches here, like that enormous mirror leaning against the wall behind the desk in the master bedroom. And you do love a bed curtain, don't you?

Well sure, I guess mirrors are a signature of mine, I've been doing them for thirty years! When I first started doing it people would say, "Why don't you just hang it on the wall already!" But that wouldn't be the same. This way it's like an entrance into another room—you feel like you could enter another space. That's why they have to be very large, and they have to be leaning on the floor. If I hung this mirror on the wall, it would be just another solid piece of furniture—reflective, yes, but it wouldn't extend the space so much. And I do tie-on bed curtains for different reasons. In this case it was to create intimacy, because when you're in that bed you're out there in the middle of the room. It also brings color into the room in a vertical way.

I love the way you tucked the ottoman under the living room coffee table and still put a tray on top.

I know this sounds really strange, but to me it's like a Japanese

flower arrangement. They're always done with a high, medium, and low height. For some reason that imparts a peaceful quality. Maybe it just mirrors life—you're young, you're middle-aged, you're old. I like threes. Notice how there are three chairs around the dining table? Three antique Thai urns on the living room tray? Two seem very off to me. I guess threes are kind of spiritual too—like the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, you know?

PRODUCED BY DORETTA SPERDUOTO



school dance where everybody is standing around the perimeter of the gym. It's easier to walk in if the other kids are in the middle talking. It's more welcoming.

And why does it seem like there's so much texture when you use hardly any pattern?

The pattern here is in the artwork, it's in the view out the windows, it's in the way the light makes its way across the furniture. Playing one thing off another—like that tree trunk table against the woven chair—is what I call the yin and the yang. If you've got something

ABOVE: In the master bedroom, Wolf created space for a wall-size framed mirror and an Italian desk by eliminating a hallway. OPPOSITE: He designed the bed's powder-coated steel frame, coating it in white enamel "to look like a line drawing" against pebbly blue walls painted Benjamin Moore's Patriotic White. Bed curtains are VW Home's Linen Sheer in lime green. Shades are Bergamo's Dunes in ice blue. Anichini bed linens. Tina floor lamps from LightForms.

In the master bath, Wolf placed Clodagh Collection's Zen cast-concrete tub on a concrete slab inside the glassed-in shower enclosure to make it "a sculptural focal point." Faucets and shower fixtures by Waterworks. Wolf designed the nickel and mahogany console-style vanity and fitted it with glass Vitraform sinks. Floors and walls are honed limestone. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES



