

By Saxon Henry + Photography by Barry Grossman

# Miami Modern Rhapsody

A theater designer's cool tribute to MiMo

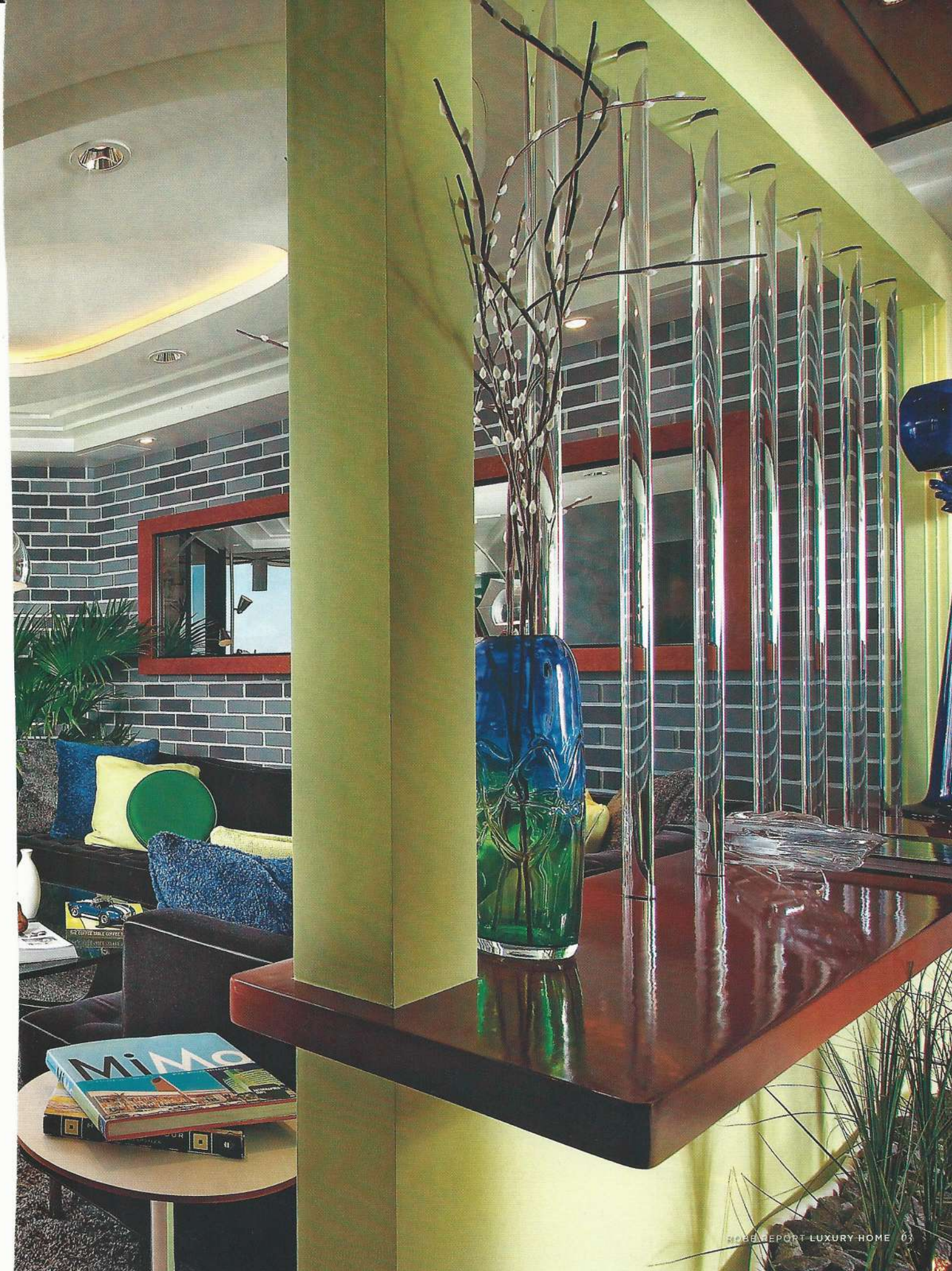
## JEFFREY SMITH ADMITS

that he is his own most maddening client. But one look at his Miami Beach condominium makes it clear that perfectionism has its rewards. Dubbed SkyLoft, his quintessential bachelor pad celebrates Miami Modern—or MiMo—style with abundant

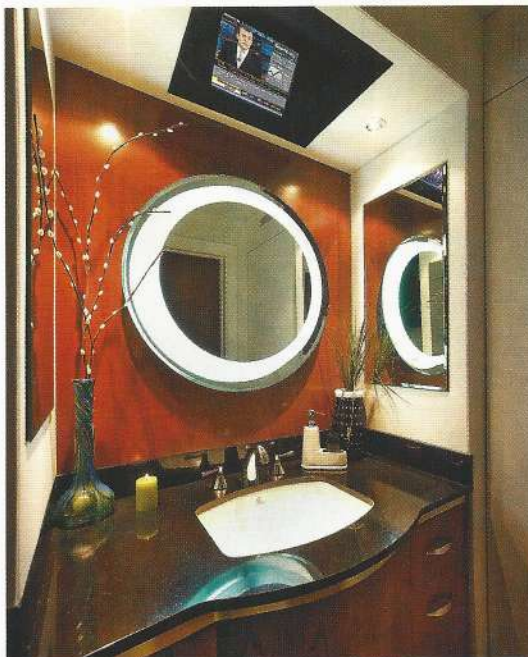












charm, combining classic Nelson and Castiglioni lighting with furniture by some of the era's brightest stars: Jacobsen, Wormley, Saarinen, Bertioia and Noguchi. "I don't feel that any other styles of architecture or interior design measure up to mid-century modern or MiMo," says the founder and CEO of First Impressions Theme Theatres. "Something happened to people during that time—maybe it was the water, I don't know—but the designs that came out of those decades were and are pretty spectacular."

Smith chose traditional surface materials to complement both his period pieces and the new furniture built to MiMo-inspired specifications by his company's craftsmen: Venetian plaster on the walls, granite for the



Previous pages: Home theater designer Jeffrey Smith chose classic MiMo hues of apple, green, cobalt blue, platinum and natural cherry for his 1,200-square-foot Miami Beach condominium.

Opposite: A black-and-white harlequin pattern adorns the door leading from the living room into the cinema; the door weighs 500 pounds and is six-and-a-half inches thick.

Above: An undulating mirror in the powder room is framed in leather.

Below: The living room sofa, inspired by Edward Wormley's design for Dunbar, is upholstered in French mohair. Isamu Noguchi's coffee table, a mid-century modern classic, is punctuated by an Arco floor lamp.







countertops, and terrazzo on the floors. "There are many materials in here that were in favor and then fell out of favor, like the terrazzo floors, which are so easy to maintain," he says. "We had terrazzo floors when I was growing up while all of our neighbors had carpeting. I hated it then because I wanted to be like all the other kids, but now I realize that mom was right." Enhancing the mid-century decor and materials is Smith's collection of B-movie posters, each representing a film he admires.

If the interiors read like a movie set, there's a good reason. Smith spent six years as a set designer for Metro Goldwyn Mayer before he began creating home theaters in 1975; even afterward, he continued

to take on set design projects for films such as *Scarface* and the television series *Miami Vice*. This big-budget background has made Smith a natural choice for those seeking spectacular home theaters, and his client list includes Cher, Jennifer Lopez, Celine Dion, Mel Gibson and Donald Trump. "Our theaters often run into the millions of dollars," he says. "It's all about luxury, and our clients want no expense spared when it comes to creating a fantasy theater in their homes."

Though his own theater is the smallest Smith has ever built, it is just as lavish as the largest—and has even more functionality. "It is called a convertible theater because it transforms into a guest bedroom with only a few adjustments," he says. "We built everything in this





room. The two front loungers are on casters so they roll easily to either side of the room, and the back seats fold into a bed." It's a favorite place to share the latest releases with friends. "Everyone seems to love watching movies here," he says. "I think it's because they get to experience theater-quality screenings in such an intimate, comfortable setting."

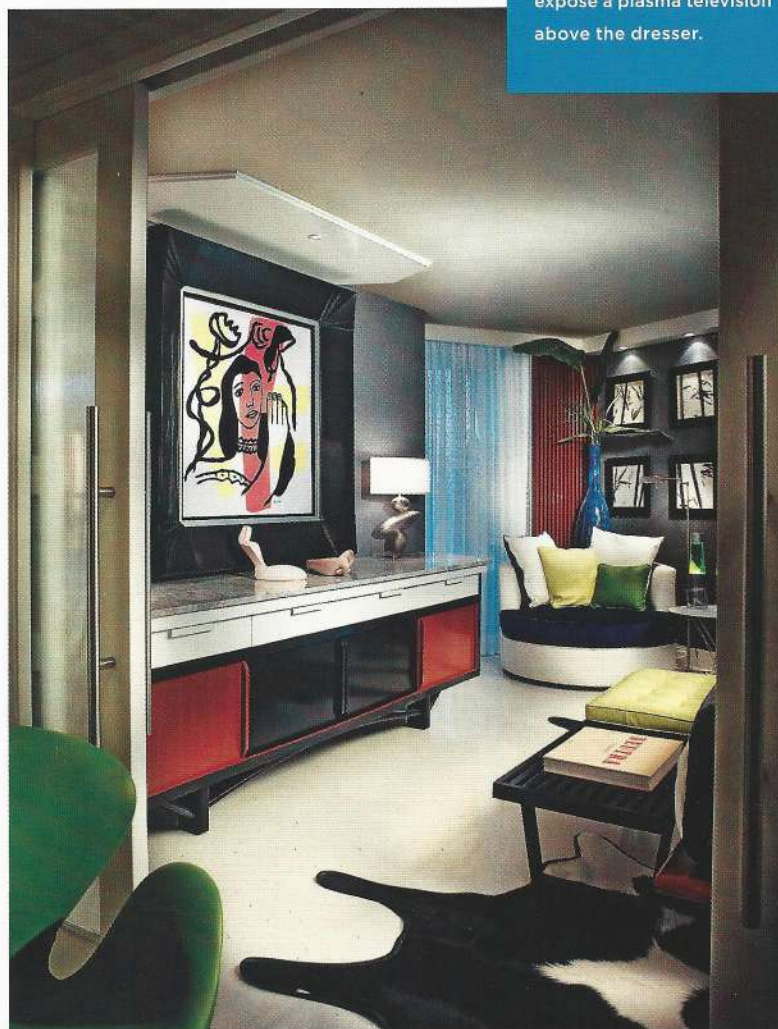
Sound quality from the digital cinema rivals that of a full-size theater, and Smith rattles off words like Tectum, Sheet-Bloc and AcouSculpt as he describes the measures taken to ensure its volume would not startle his neighbors. "What looks like a simple plaster wall with striations is actually a material that provides intense acoustical privacy," he says. "Though most of



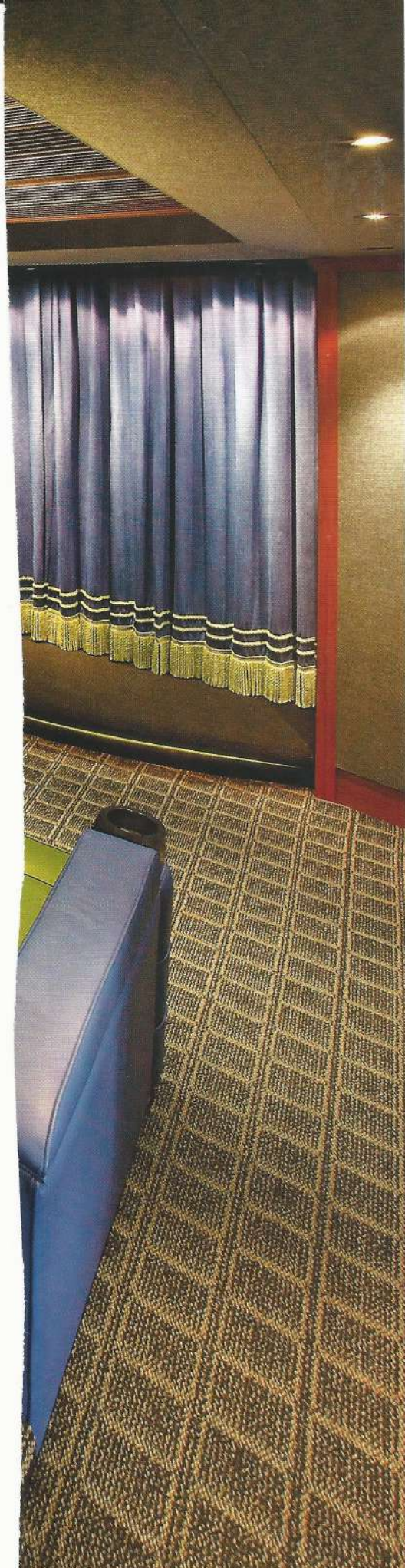
Opposite page:  
George Nelson bubble  
lamps flank an Italian  
glass block panel above  
the bed in the master  
bedroom. Arne Jacobsen's  
Swan chair is tucked  
into a corner in the  
library alcove.

Left: Blue Venetian  
plaster sets the walls  
aglow in the master  
bathroom, which is  
equipped with a  
Swedish steam shower  
and whirlpool bathtub.

Below: A framed  
Fernand Léger print  
slides up and away to  
expose a plasma television  
above the dresser.







the materials in the condo may seem arbitrary, nothing could be further from the truth. The panels in the ceiling may look decorative, but the core of each one is sound-abatement material made of fiberglass."

The theater is not the only place to watch a movie. A piece of art above a dresser in the master bedroom conceals a 40-inch plasma television that also features home theater sound. "I also put a plasma above the mirror in the master bathroom," says Smith, who explains that he studied precise angles so he would have a perfect view during his morning shave. "It's great to be able to watch the news while I'm getting ready for work." And there is yet another in the sleek kitchen. "It pulls out of the cabinetry because I wanted the room to be as seamless as possible."

As might be expected, technology is just as skillfully integrated, and the single touch of a button animates each of the condominium's systems. "When I walk in and push 'Home,' the temperature, music and light levels return to a memorized setting," says Smith. "Conversely, when I leave, everything—including closing the drapes—is accomplished with one touch. I can also operate the system from my cell phone."

But despite the ample diversion Smith's indoor technology provides, it has a rival: expansive views of Biscayne Bay and Miami. "I sometimes have to wrestle between watching a movie and having a cocktail on the terrace, especially in the evenings," he says. "It's so beautiful that it's nearly impossible to resist, even when there is a new movie that I'm itching to watch." 🏠

First Impressions Theme Theatres, 800.305.7545, [www.cineloungers.com](http://www.cineloungers.com)



Opposite: Seats in the cinema are equipped with heat and massage. The drink holders are hewn from granite.

Above: Smith poses next to one of his favorite B-movie posters.

Below: The SkyLoft Cinema is what Smith calls a "floating room" because the floor is elevated and the ceiling is lowered in order to provide sound control above and below.

