



Villa Moderna is nestled into its sultry South Beach surroundings. Just as Vaso intended, everything revolves around the pool.



The cowhide rug that brings warmth to the master bedroom is from West Elm, and the Bald & Bang light fixture is a playful element in the space. Michael's collection of sport watches inhabits the shelf below the ocular window.

MODERN LOVE

A South Beach Couple Falls Head-Over-Heels For Villa Moderna

by Saxon Henry

When a power couple creates a nest in sizzling South Beach, the outcome will surely be sexy. Given its location and its owners, it's no surprise Villa Moderna, the contemporary home of Michael Kahl and Vaso Spirou-Kahl, has a serenely seductive quality about it. Michael, a successful entrepreneur, has modernism stamped in his German genes, and though she will shyly deny it, Vaso—who owns Salon Vaso, one of the Beach's top salons—is a Greek goddess personified.

When the couple bought the gated compound, which is a stone's throw from the ocean, there was no doubt they would fill the interiors with iconic pieces from some of the modern movement's greatest names—Le Corbusier, Verner Panton and Eileen

Gray among them. "I have always loved modernism," Michael explains. "The entire movement began in Berlin when Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe worked for the same architectural firm, and there's something about the aesthetic that I relate to on a psychic level."

In the master bedroom with its warm taupe walls and white Italian marble floors, Le Corbusier's L2 Chaise stretches out in the corner beneath an ocular window that looks onto the lush courtyard. Because Vaso's business is as hectic as they come, she kept the finishes and the linens in this room—her haven from the chaos of her workaday world—pale and peaceful. The only



Skimmer candlesticks march across the Esvedra dining room table—its glossy sheen achieved with the sealant manufacturers use on Ferraris. The curviness of the Verner Panton chairs and the texture of the camouflage fabric on the pert perches in the foreground add a sense of movement. The carpet anchoring the elevated space is Linea by Carpet Creations.

patterns in the space are found in a cowhide rug and the spirited contemporary art from the couple's collection, each of which adds a bit of punch to the overall tranquility.

The main living spaces are similarly easy on attitude, though they are awash in texture from the tone-on-tone wallpaper and a lighting system that sprinkles the fireplace wall with dots of light to the camouflage upholstery fabric that brings a hint of Michael's masculinity into the space. "I tend to be drawn to feminine lines and soft, sculptural pieces," says Vaso, whose favorite piece of furniture in the home is the explosive pink lacquered dining table by Esvedra Design. "Pairing it with Verner Panton's S chairs satisfied my desire for curves and femininity!"

When push comes to shove, Michael favors leather over fabric, so comfortable sofas upholstered in supple black leather flank the area of the living room devoted to afternoon reading and watching movies. A hand-knotted wool rug creates softness underfoot and serves to define the elevated space. Michael's office above it was originally walled off but he wanted to feel connected to the rest of the house when he is working, so he removed the upper part of the walls and inserted a long swath of glass. To tie the spaces together, glass was inset into the stair railing, which is both modern and industrial in its shape and tone.

One of the things the couple loves about the home is that it is as perfect for entertaining as it is for intimate dinners on their rare nights in. When they do entertain, snagging an invitation is a coup. Vaso's Greek delicacies—*avgolemono*, or egg and lemon soup; Greek salad; *pastitsio*, a traditional Greek pasta dish; *gemista*, stuffed peppers and tomatoes; and spinach pie—combined with Michael's talent for creating sultry playlists of lounge music means they often have to kick people out the door when the clock edges toward one or two in the morning. All too often, Vaso's *galaktompouriko* dessert, a custard cream in flaky dough covered in honey syrup, is left untouched!

The outdoor spaces were designed with these rambunctious soirees in mind as well, and the moment they took their design acumen outdoors Vaso's interest was really piqued. An avid gardener and self-proclaimed water baby who spent summers in the Greek Isles when she was a child, she knew the pool had to provide both the enjoyment of swimming and a view of water through most of the home's windows. "Water to me is life itself," she says. "Nothing soothes me more and I knew that no matter how much patio surface we sacrificed to have a longer pool, it would be worth it."

Floor-to-ceiling windows in the interior spaces that overlook the pool bring watery waves of light inside. Existing mature



A focal point in the master bathroom is the artful glass door, which is molded and sandblasted for a semi-transparent glow that filters light into the space without interfering with privacy. The woven stool that adds textural flair is Flo by Driade.



To contrast the stainless steel appliances and clean-lined cabinetry, which were musts for Vaso, the black granite countertop adds warmth and depth to the kitchen. To assure that it was at home in the contemporary setting, the stone was polished to a high-gloss sheen.

hedgerows, which envelop the pool, provide the exquisite privacy the couple craves when the gate is closed at the end of the day. "One of the things I like about the house is that it is right in the heart of all the action but it is also very intimate when we want to keep things quiet," says Michael.

The intimacy of the rooms in the 3,620-square-foot house with four bedrooms and four baths is surprising given the generous ceiling heights and open floor plan. The sleek, efficient kitchen is fitted with a clever clean-lined bar of stainless steel and granite. Kicky bar stools that flank the long, lean surface seem to draw people like magnets when a party is underway. As an everyday element in the house, it's the spot where the couple enjoys coffee and the newspaper before the demands of life whisk them away.

The Kahls converted one of the bedrooms in Villa Moderna into an art studio so Vaso could create large-scale mixed media works, one of which takes command of the fireplace wall in the living room. It's the perfect complement to the mix of bold furnishings that dot the light-toned surroundings.

Though their opinions as to their favorite aspects of the home differ—Michael enjoys the fact that the grounds have plenty of space for his automobile collection and Vaso loves light meals by the pool while enjoying the aroma of the climbing jasmine that entwines the fence—there is one thing about which the couple agreed wholeheartedly. "Initially we both responded to the fact that the house is not imposing," Michael explains. "It's gated and commanding but the scale of the architecture from the street makes it read as the perfect size for the property."

Though it would be easy to assume the tranquil interior spaces with their expanses of glass inhabit a home born of air and light, there was plenty of fire involved in the creative process that brought them into being. "We're like Frick and Frack," says Vaso. "We complement each other but it doesn't mean we see eye-to-eye on everything!" Luckily for them, their aesthetic longings are similar enough that the house didn't test them too mightily. If only the rest of their endeavors went as smoothly! "Michael said the other day, 'Flexible is my middle name,' and I nearly choked on my drink!" Vaso quipped. "I actually thought designing the home with him was going to be a test of my will and patience, but we had so much fun, and we love how it turned out!" ■

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