

PROFILE IN DESIGN



ART, EVERYWHERE: Sam Robin and Diva the dog lounge on a comfortable piece from her Margutta Collection.

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BY SAXON HENRY
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Those who are familiar with Sam Robin's design prowess understand that she comes by it naturally, but the extent to which it is alive in her may surprise even those who are close to her.

"If I was your baby-sitter when I was young, you'd come home and the entire house would be redecorated!" she recalls. "I was the only babysitter in Chicago who would have the kids saying, 'Can we go to bed now?' in order to avoid moving furniture!"

Those guerrilla tactics have gone by the wayside, but Robin's current clients enjoy the same rapt attention she gave those early impulses, and the designer credits her father for at least some of her exuberance. "My dad was actually a frustrated designer," she explains. "He was a glazer, and he owned a company that outfitted homes with shower and tub enclosures, and patio doors, which he brought in from Los Angeles."

As a girl, Robin accompanied her father when he visited clients on the weekends, soaking in the luxury of the homes they entered. "One lady, who had a four-story penthouse on Lakeshore Drive, had the entire staircase glassed in so she could have an aviary for her birds," she recalls. "I had access to some outrageously fabulous homes back then, and Chicago was such an inspiring city architecturally."

In fact, architecture, design and art saturated her life. She attended the Art Institute of Chicago where she studied painting. "When I was attending the art institute, I was hired to catalog Buddy [Robert B.] Mayer's art collection," she recalls. "He had an entire wing for Ming Dynasty artifacts, and there were Picassos hang-

ing in his bathroom and Lichtensteins everywhere!"

All of this stimuli led in 1972 to Sam Robin Interior Design. In 1979 Robin came to Miami to design the interior of a 707 aircraft. "I came here for a month and a half, and a year and a half later, we were still designing the project," she says. "Since I left Chicago in February during an ice storm, there was something about

Miami that enticed me to stay."

After designing aircraft interiors for a string of well-known clients, including Sheik Mohammed and Harry and Leona Helmsley, she was tapped by actor Don Johnson, who was filming *Miami Vice* at the time, to design his office and residence in Miami, and his Aspen and Beverly Hills homes (with then-wife Melanie Griffith).

"Designing Johnson's homes was a big break for me because I wanted to return to residential design," Robin says. "That said, I still consider designing the aircraft interiors to be my most transformative experience."

Eight years ago, she launched a furniture line, Sirio, which she produces with

Francesco Caracciolo di Marano. They debuted the Margutta Collection in her Champagne Lounge at Casa Decor '06 last year (online at www.sirio.tv). She has also been featured on HGTV and continues to design residential projects and commercial spaces, such as the Astor Hotel in South Beach and 900 Biscayne Bay.

Robin draws her inspiration from her experiences, including an immense catalog of photos she has taken of things that have inspired her. But, she says, "much of my inspiration comes from ancient designs, like the cities in Mesopotamia. I actually find that ancient simplicity is very similar to contemporary design."



Sam Robin designed aircraft interiors, then turned to celebs' homes



HER INSPIRATIONS: Above, a Miami Beach and custom furniture by Sirio. Below, a reproduction of a 17th-century Italian looks a Buddha statue from Bali.



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RONNA GRADUS/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

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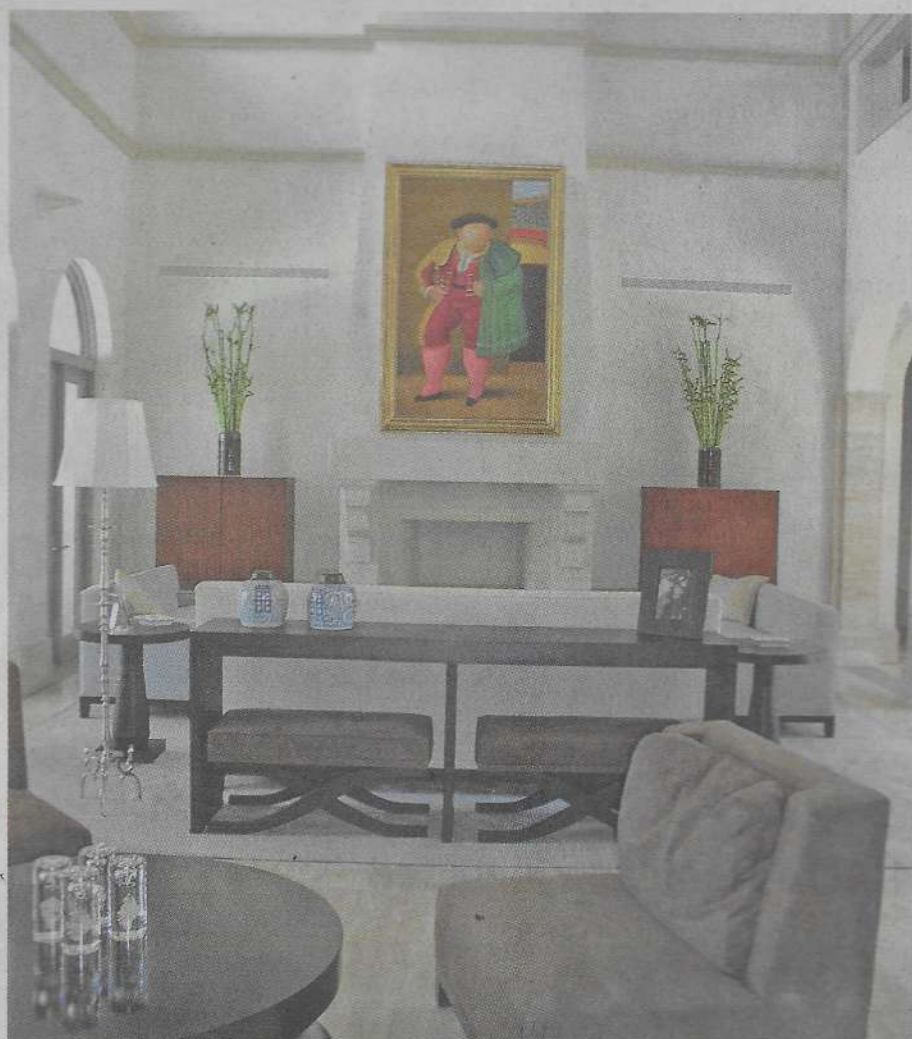
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PHOTOS BY SAM ROBIN INTERIOR DESIGN

HER INSPIRATIONS: Above, a Miami Beach salon features a Botero painting and custom furniture by Sirio. Below, a Moroccan-style bedroom displays a reproduction of a 17th-century Italian bed. Left, a spiral staircase overlooks a Buddha statue from Bali.



MORE

Sam Robin of Sam Robin Interior Design (1000 Venetian Way, Suite 112, Miami; 305-375-0727) offers these design tips:

- Dark floors with light walls make ceilings appear higher.
- Use solid neutrals for significant upholstery pieces and use color in your accessories; that way it's easy and not so expensive to change the entire energy of a room.
- Using the same flooring throughout gives the illusion of more space. When in doubt, keep it simple and odds are you won't get tired of it.
- A pale blue ceiling creates energy.