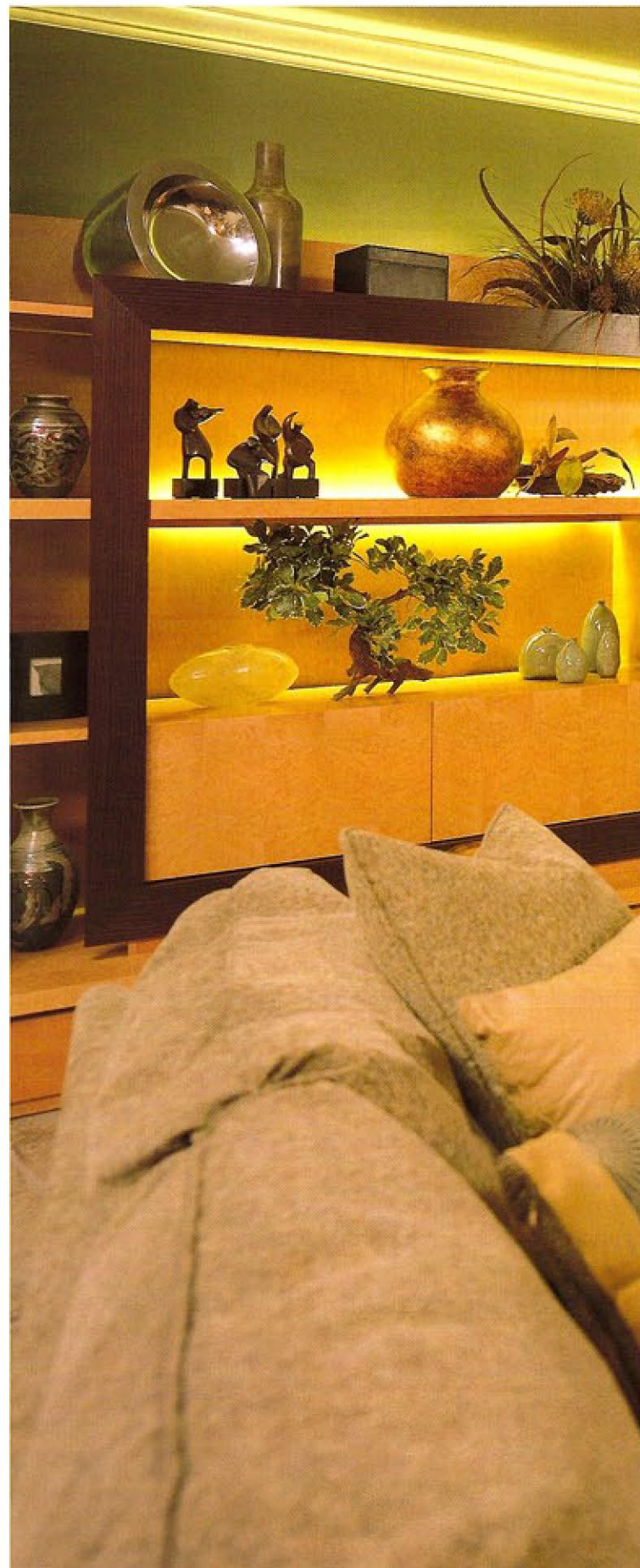


THE VIEW'S THE THING

A Naples couple moves up to a high-rise home with gorgeous Gulf vistas.

BY Nanci Theoret
Photography by Jim Freeman

The Pedigos' home in Pelican Bay's Montenero earned the Grand Award in Collier County's 2002 Sand Dollar Awards.



Quiet, please: Calm, uncluttered contemporary interiors, including this dining room, keep the focus on the views.



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FTER FOUR YEARS IN A SECOND-FLOOR CONDO without a water view, the last thing Gary and Julianne Pedigo wanted in their new, higher home was an interior that would upstage their long-awaited views of the Gulf of Mexico. Leslie Christian, the couple's designer, understood. "The views are what capture you in Florida," she says. "Inside, you want it to be calmer so you don't overpower those views."

For the Pedigos' sixth-floor condo in the new Montenero luxury high-rise in Naples' Pelican Bay, Christian created a clutter-free contemporary look with an urban edge that morphs natural materials and organic shapes with manmade effects. It's a far cry from the couple's more country-traditional homes in Indiana and the West Indies—although somewhat in the contemporary design of their former Naples home, also designed by Christian. "They have a place in New York and wanted something more urban," says the designer. "She likes drama, and he was really comfortable with the colors and the palette of metals, cherry, stainless steel and dark granite. This is much more contemporary without the extremes of total minimalism and modernism."

The couple loved it. So did the judges for the Collier County Building Industry Association's Sand Dollar Awards, giving the home the top award in its merchandising category and the Grand Award for the only perfect score in the 2002 competition.

Christian, with Holland Salley Interior Design, has carved out a niche locally for her contemporary flair—an interesting juxtaposition to the Naples design firm's more traditional Old World look. Her full appointment book attests to the growing appeal of the design genre. "People come down to Florida and want something different," she says. "They want life a little less cluttered."

In the Pedigos' home, stone, granite and wood commingle with shimmering stainless steel and shiny lacquer finishes. Christian based much of the palette—"colors of nature," as she calls it—on the wood and stone inside, adding texture in linens and wall coverings and creating deep shadows with custom built-ins like the cantilevered shelves set into the dining room wall and deep, geometrical niches in the foyer that sparkle with glass bottles. "I don't like flat walls. I like to add dimension, to play with the architecture,"



Winning team: Designer Leslie Christian and homeowner Julianne Pedigo, above. At top: Natural materials and colors are accented with metallic finishes in the sitting room.

Christian says. "I'm a closet architect."

A Roche Bobois piece in the living room was the inspiration for much of the custom woodwork created by Don Helton, a Pennsylvania/Marco Island cabinet-maker. Helton fashioned the family room's custom built-in from exotic anigre and cherry, picking up elements from the adjoining kitchen cabinetry. He also made pieces in the master bedroom and guest den.

Rock and metal are

the basis for an illuminated rock-and-stainless waterfall wall in the dining room, continuing the melding of organic and manmade and combining fire, water and natural elements. "People are more comfortable with a neutral palette that springs off the wood tones, stones and metals," says Christian. "I like to use copper and stainless."

Social areas have lots of seating and "places to kick up your feet," she says, including an abundance of ottomans. Blinds, made of a sheer fiber weave, ensure the views are always on display. "Julianne told me she was always trying to see the water when they lived on the second floor in their other building," says Christian. "They sold that

condo so they could move higher."

Only the guest room reveals a hint of the previous home's personality, an Asian theme accented with grids. The guest den got lime-green accents, which Christian carried out to the adjoining lanai.

An artist, Christian tends to leave a personal statement in each of her projects. In the Pedigos' home, the kitchen backsplash became a canvas for a custom glass tile mosaic, an impromptu design she assembled right on the counter. A trio of paintings, which Christian affectionately refers to as her "two-second artwork," was born on the living room floor just prior to the arrival of Sand Dollar judges. So admired by the Pedigos, the three pieces stayed, replacing a collection of vintage racecar photos that had been planned for the spot. (Gary Pedigo owns an Indianapolis auto dealership and is co-owner of Pennzoil Panther Racing.)

The walls and floors provided additional canvases. Commercial rubberized and sandpaper-like wall coverings add texture and fun, and their 54-inch width means minimal seams. The floor in the master bathroom became an oversized checkerboard of 24-inch red Bisazza crushed-glass tile with copper insets. "I found this three years ago, and just haven't had the opportunity to use it," Christian says of the Italian tile. A small crystal and gold chandelier—a fixture you'd expect to see in a more traditional home—illuminates the bathroom. Christian explains, "I always like to throw something in that's tongue-in-cheek."