

THE ART OF TRANSFORMING A CONDO INTO A STUNNING HOME

INTERIOR DESIGN: Stuart Geller of Geller Design Group, Inc.,
Hallandale Beach, 305.937.0111 or 954.457.3692
Florida License #0001705
PHOTOGRAPHY: Robin Hill
TEXT: Marilyn Bowden

When Stuart Geller was ready for a new home, he knew exactly what he wanted – a well-positioned apartment with to-die-for views in a 22-year-old property where he'd already completed six renovation projects. Yes, there were challenges – but Geller, a licensed designer with decades of experience, saw them as golden opportunities. "The apartment was ugly and intimidated other buyers," he says, "but it boasts beautiful north-east views on one side and a magnificent cityscape to the west. I could visualize all the possibilities."

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In the dining room, Geller removed the existing drop ceilings, replacing them with new ceilings six inches higher and creating an opportunity to use linear AC vents with a complete new lighting system and updated fire sprinklers. The original floors were refinished in coffee-bean brown. On the right, he added accoutrements to uninspired space and created a bar area for entertaining. Here, he was able to introduce his partner Mark's antique glass panels and a sculpture niche. On the left, soft lighting illuminates panels of antique parchment Mark rescued from an estate that was being demolished on Long Island's north shore.-

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Geller transformed what was once an unimaginative space into an inviting formal entry/dressing area.

"The space is now clearly defined," he notes, "and gave me an opportunity to incorporate the striking French horn lighting fixture from London as well as to create an architectural node." The raised octagonal ceiling is echoed in the octagonal marble inset in the floor. An English fusee clock adds interest to a small wall space. The antique oval frame on the left holds a picture of Geller's grandfather taken during World War II.

"It's all about energy and alignment," says Geller, who is well-known for his ability to transform raw or unappealing spaces into gracious homes that reflect his clients' wishes and accommodate their lifestyles. "I have been very fortunate that for quite a few years now I have been able to pick the projects that appeal to me. I like projects that are interesting, and working for clients who are very positive individuals. When someone is committed to making something beautiful, that positive energy fills their home with joy. "Let's put it this way: I am doing what I love, and I love what I do."

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When it came to remodeling the master bedroom, the first challenge was spatial: its angled walls would not accommodate a king-size bed and two generous nightstands facing a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows that look straight out to spectacular water view. Geller moved the walls two feet and redefined the space with custom moldings and perimeter lighting that banishes dark corners and accentuates the many mementoes from his world travels gracing the walls.

The two chairs facing the bed add another personal touch. "Mark grew up with those chairs," Geller explains. Completely refinished and reupholstered, they complement their new surroundings. Geller now has a completely redesigned home of more than 2,600 square feet with three terraces, three bedrooms and three and a half baths, on an upper floor of one of Williams Island's most desirable buildings. Does he ever wish he'd opted for new construction instead? "Absolutely not!" he says. "There are so many advantages to a well-constructed older building. They have great value, and at the same time, the taxes are much lower than in new construction.

"This is a Pre-Hurricane Andrew building that suffered minimal damage from the storm, so I know it was built very well. Having worked in this building for the past seven years, I knew the details of how it was constructed. I'm also very familiar with the temperament of the people who live here, and that is an intangible advantage very few people have when they move to a new area."

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