

This entrance to the dining room of Ilonka Harezi and her husband, Courtland Reeves', Sunny Isles Beach condo is one of many framed with architectural elements.



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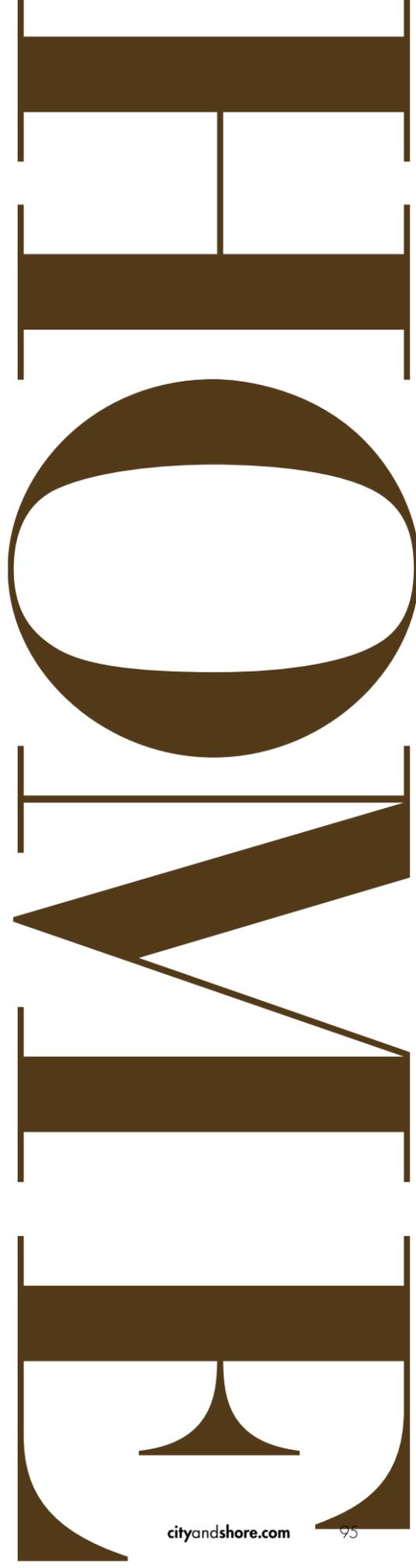
Zen. serenity on the beach

By Charlyne Varkonyi Schaub

Step off the elevator onto the 27th floor of the Sunny Isles Beach condo, and into a soothing sensation.

When the custom-made metal door opens, a smiling life-sized golden Buddha greets you. A fountain gurgles in the background. Fabric drapes the ceiling. It's like walking into a cocoon that symbolically embraces you. The vibe is less materialistic South Florida and more the mysterious East, where karma rules and traditions go back thousands of years.

This oceanfront retreat is the dream home of Ilonka Harezi and her husband, Courtland Reeves. Throughout the 2,090-square-foot condo are artifacts the couple found in faraway lands - India, China, Bali, Egypt and Tibet. Large bone vases from China. Bedouin bowls from Egypt. A life-sized statue of the goddess of science, music and technology from India. A chest from Tibet.





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Left, The sofas in the living room are arranged at an angle to make guests feel comfortable. Above, Courtland Reeves, Ilonka Harezi and JYBA.

It's all of these things that create the serenity the couple desires in their lives.

"As soon as you walk into the condo, it's peaceful," Harezi says, "and that's the most important thing in a stressful world. It's a refuge. I think it's the dream of everyone to have peace. What we all want for the world is peace, and it has to start in our own world."

From a Cornfield of Dreams

You may not recognize Harezi's name, but you may know the Philip Stein Teslar watch she helped create. Madonna and Jack Nicholson are fans and Oprah Winfrey put it on the list of her most favorite things in 2006. The watch, available at Saks Fifth Avenue, Bloomingdale's and Neiman Marcus, ranges from \$595 for the simplest version to \$23,000 for one in gold with diamonds.

Harezi was an interior designer in the 1970s and 1980s, including working for the largest construction company in Egypt. But the world of fabrics and furnishings began to lose its luster. An expert in quantum mechanics, she switched off her right creative brain and turned on her left scientific side.

She sold all her belongings and moved into a Quonset hut with 10 scientists in what she calls "the middle of nowhere" – St. Francisville, Ill. It was there



Left, the entrance to the all white master bedroom. Above, the media room, which has three televisions, which they watch from Indian daybeds.

she collaborated with Dr. Andrija Puharich, an expert in ELF (extremely low frequency) technology. Their goal was to create an instrument that could shield or reduce the effects of exposure to ELF frequencies, which some scientists believe can cause cancer. The result was the Teslar watch, which claims to help the body fight the negative effects of low-energy electromagnetic fields given off by cell phones, computers and other magnetic devices. The original "no frills" version sold for \$79-\$149 and was aimed at those who were environmentally sensitive.

During this research period she met Reeves, who has a master's degree in science technology and worked setting up computer systems for towns and municipalities.

"I said, 'Why don't you leave your polo friends and sell your Mercedes and come live in a cornfield with 10 scientists and one crazy lady?'" He was intrigued and took her challenge.

'Every Day with Kindness and Compassion'

Reeves did far more than join her research project. They were married in the Koptic church 22 years ago, have studied Kabbalah together and know the Dalai Lama. Another one of their companies, Teslar Entertainment, is working on *Walking the Waking Journey*, a documentary about a 34-year-old monk who walked 30 days in the rugged Himalayas to save 11 children from Nepal's Dolpa district.

Harezi and Reeves aren't Buddhists, but believe in the religion's principles and display Buddhas throughout their home, even behind the whirlpool tub in the master bathroom.

"Buddhism is about living life every day with kindness and compassion," she said. "We have worked closely with monks and activities that embrace social responsibility."



Above, niches were created in the living room wall to highlight old statues from India, which contrast against contemporary cabinetry. Left, existing kitchen cabinets were refinished and painted with henna hands.



Perhaps the feeling of peace also has something to do with the fact that the Venerable Thupten Ngodup, a healer and medium known as the Oracle of Tibet and the *Kutenla*, was the first to stay in the condo with four other monks. Ngodup was on a tour of the United States to raise money for a monastery in India.

Harezi and Reeves moved into the condo after a seven-month renovation project that transformed a sterile condo into a work of art.

All of the walls have been customized. Some are faux finished to look like stones. A mural in soft brown tones on the living room wall depicts a scene with a man riding an elephant in India and architecture plucked out of the Far East. Pieces of bamboo, painted red, are attached to the walls at an angle in one of the guest bedrooms.

Ordinary doorways have been transformed into temple entrances with architectural elements Harezi found on the floor of a warehouse in Fort Myers. All the doors are antiques or faux painted.

"Everything is picked because of the energy," she says. "Something that makes you feel good and wholesome is used."

As we sat in the living room, the couple's Chihuahua, JYBA, played at our feet and jumped on the sofas, which are arranged at an angle. A large, rectangular, carved coffee table sits between them on a Persian rug.



Above, a Tibetan swing decorates one of three balconies. Right, the bedroom sitting area, which features carved panels that have been covered with plaster and chipped away to look as if they were just discovered. Below, right, Buddha with waterfall over a whirlpool in master bathroom.



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Elements of a Zen Dream Home

1. Authentic Buddhas.
2. Calming water view.
3. Outdoor spaces – three balconies – for breathing room.
4. Trickling sound of fountains inside.
5. Doorways and doors that come from exotic locales.
6. Ceilings draped with fabric.

"The sofas are angled according to the Golden Mean," she says, referring to the desirable middle between two extremes that Greek philosopher Aristotle defined. "The sofas are arranged to create a circular vortex that pulls energy in. Whatever you are working on that is on the table is energized. It's a relaxed circle of energy and makes everyone comfortable and at ease."

'Our Kind of Peace'

Her scientific background comes into play in the dining room table, which was made from Maharaja's doors covered with glass. What makes it even more unusual is the pattern etched on the glass, which appears to be magically illuminated by a light source inside the table.

In a home that is far from ordinary, the kitchen is the most creative. Harezi kept the original cabinets and tile but gave them her special touch. The backsplash tile was painted and gold and silver leafed. The wooden cabinets are adorned with exotic henna decorated hands.

"The idea is as a cook you use your hands and put love into the food," she says. "That's why grandma's cookies taste better. One of her ingredients is love."

But the idea that was the hardest sell for the craftsmen was her order to chip the granite and attach it to the wall in front of the tiles. "Are you sure you want us to do this?" they asked.

Most of the colors she used are earthy - brown,

gold, red and tan. But the mood changes once you go through the double Maharaja's doors and enter the master bedroom.

"This is nirvana," she says. "The bedroom is light and heavenly. Carved doors are set into the drywall. Plaster is put over them and chipped away. Everything is painted white. The idea is you have broken into a wall and discovered all of this beneath."

Harezi, who is once again designing, asks clients to take a quiz so she can create a home that reflects who they are. Likewise, their home reflects who they are.

"This home is very peaceful," Harezi says. "But it's our kind of peace. Some people won't be comfortable here. When people come here, they don't know what to expect. A lot of them say they feel extreme peace. I do hope our home reflects the inner peace we strive for." ■

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