



MIAMI RHAPSODY

ARCHITECT JOE SERRINS DIDN'T HAVE TO LOOK FAR FOR INSPIRATION WHEN DESIGNING A GRAND DUPLEX HIGH ABOVE FLORIDA'S MOST GLITTERING CITY: HE FOUND IT IN THE SAND AND SURF JUST OUTSIDE THE FRONT DOOR

TEXT BY DAVID COLMAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM WALDRON
PRODUCED BY DARÁ CAPONIGRO





ONE OF THE STRANGEST—and, regrettably, most common—paradoxes of design is the muddled thinking that follows: You want a fabulous home. You do your research, you ask around, and, finally, you find exactly the right architect. Then, as soon as he or she signs on, you second-guess every decision, drawing out the process and enveloping the project in an atmosphere of distrust and fear.

But every now and then that rare enlightened client comes along who thinks, What do I know about architecture? Why not hire someone whose vision I love, and just let go? It was Joe Serrins's good fortune to discover two such clients. Hani El-Naffy, an executive with Del Monte, and his wife, Danielle, had recently bought a grand duplex in a Miami high-rise. The couple had already moved several times around the globe, from their native Lebanon to France to Chile, with Danielle undertaking the soup-to-nuts decoration of their homes (they still have a house in Beirut and a pied-à-terre in Paris). This time, however, with their three daughters away at school, they wanted something different—a glamorous, sophisticated pleasure dome where they could live and entertain—and Serrins was given carte blanche.

"I had total free rein," says Serrins. "I bought the plates, the silverware—I even picked out their bathrobes. It was a big responsibility. And Hani refused to come to the site, which made me very nervous at times."

Part two of the carte blanche directive: Except for discussing details about her bedroom closet, Serrins could not consult Danielle about the project. "I didn't meet her until about two months before the place was done," he recalls. Suffice to say, the architect was more than a bit apprehensive when the time came for her walk-through. "I thought, It's going to be a bummer if she doesn't like it, because at this point there's basically nothing that can be done."

Luckily, his worries were quickly put to rest. "I love it," says Danielle, who tends to be more disposed toward traditional, antiques-filled

