



PHOTOS BY WALTER MICHOT / MIAMI HERALD STAFF

**SALON A LA FLORIDE:** Jorge Rosso of Studio Rossi Ubarri describes this room as: 'Not as studied, but still classically laid out, with highly glamorous touches that are luxurious but understated.' Much of the art was provided by classical painter to the Spanish court, Carlos Perez-Herce.

**IF YOU GO**

Casa Decor Miami '06 will run daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday through Dec. 7 at the Miami Woman's Club, 1737 N. Bayshore Dr. Admission: \$22.50; no kids under 7 allowed; no pets. A multi-admission package is \$45. More at casa-decor-usa.com.

# Woman's Club goes from dowdy to dramatic

\*CASA DECOR, FROM 1H

The bayside club building — which was completed in 1926 and obtained landmark designation in 1983 — was chosen as Casa Decor's first show house in the United States. The company is known for using venues that have fallen on hard times.

"Schools, hospitals, churches, you name it, even garages," says Sanjuanbenito. The Miami Woman's Club fits the mold. August Geiger's urban treasure has been in sorry shape since the International Fine Arts College moved out in 2002.

"This has been a great challenge — and the more that has to be done to a place, the more fun it is," Sanjuanbenito says.

Fun — and probably more than a tad stressful. As of press time, 31 so-called design visionaries (decorators, architects and artists) were scrambling to complete their installations throughout the five-floor Mediterranean Revival building.

A recent, dusty hard-hat visit to the North Bayshore Drive landmark showed a massive makeover underway. Anyone who has ever visited the site is in for a surprise.

Those sad, overgrown weeds out front? A memory. Kentucky native-turned-South Beacher Jeffrey Thrasher has built a rectangular lily pond; dramatic metallic pillars adorned with flowers stand guard at the doorway. Out back by the bay, the Ritz-Carlton has planned a "beach" scene — trucking in sand, lounging beds and palm trees.

**COURTYARD CAFE**

The open center courtyard is being turned into a Balinese-themed cafe by Belle Meade landscaper Stanley Matz (Majestic Gardens). Ambience boosters include waterfalls, an eight-foot-tall Buddha head, frosted-glass tables and snowball-like chandeliers "to give it a little more third dimension."

Inside, gone are the broken, yellowing windows; the stained, smudged wallpaper, and the sticky, stale air — for the first time, air conditioning has been installed.

Most of the outdoor installations will pack up when Casa Decor does, but some interior features will remain — tile, marble and granite flooring; revamped electrical wiring; and a third elevator.

The lobby will be home — at least temporarily — to Philosophy, a full-service, 48-seat restaurant. It's the baby of Pepe Calderin, whose com-



**FENDI CASA:** This room is a label watcher's paradise by Osirys Mendez of Mendez International and Associates. Eye dessert includes a staggeringly beautiful silver metallic floor inlaid with glass and wood, an iguana skin dining room table and a rectangular crystal chandelier with the Fendi "FF" logo.



**COURTYARD CAFE:** Stanley Matz of Majestic Gardens created a lush, Balinese-themed cafe at the club. Drinks and light fare will be served there during the event.



**VEUVE CLICQUOT CHAMPAGNE LOUNGE:** This yellow-tinged room by Sam Robin Interior Design resembles the shade of the Veuve Clicquot label.



**DREAM LOFT:** Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz of BNO Design, the only nonlocal of the group, created this pinker than pink space. Leave your shoes outside before entering — the AstroTurf rug is blindingly white.

and spirit," Rosso says. "It's a good mix of new and vintage pieces that reflects the way chic, young people live today." Local artist Pablo Cano did the drawings; France's Brunschwig et Fils provided the textured, exuberantly patterned fabrics. A heavy frosting of glass and white porcelain adds a cooling touch.

**LOFT LIVING**

Floor No. 3 resembles a series of lofts straight out of New York's SoHo. Just off the elevator is a graffiti-splashed home theater, with giant television and speaker system by Bang & Olufsen.

"The loft concept in Miami is relatively new and a little scary for some people not to have walls," says Camilo Alvarado, who is working on the modern Upper East Side condo Kubik Towers. "We wanted to make an adequate space that adapts to everyone's needs so they get used to the idea."

Among the room's nouveau amenities are an infinity Jacuzzi, lava stone walls and, for privacy, sliding aluminum panels similar to those in Japanese and Indian apartments. Two of the clubhouse's relics remain: Dade County pine floors and a manual pencil sharpener from the old days.

Next door is a *Barbarella*-meets-Barbie hideaway by Casa Decor's only New Yorker, Benjamin Noriega Ortiz, whose BNO Design has done all of Lenny Kravitz's homes. Think 1960s fur-lined lamps, white AstroTurf "carpet" and plastic flamingoes potted in sand.

A hotel theme took over the white-on-white fourth floor. An actual reception desk was built in the obviously Delano-inspired area that used to house the club's ballroom. There's a swimming pool, catwalk, communal table and faux bar overlooking the bay (the only actual drinking and eating is on the lobby level). The hotel action continues on the fifth and final floor. One highlight is the *Rock and Roll* suite, its funky furniture decorated with animal horns.

**FUNHOUSE FEEL**

If you get the feeling you're in a funhouse, that's the point, says Casa Decor's Sanjuanbenito. Stairways lead to nowhere, then suddenly somewhere. Stately fireplaces lend a creepy yet cozy air. The panoramic views of Biscayne Bay are inescapable and distractingly beautiful. Then there's the child-like excitement of stumbling onto a stylish, futuristic habitat.

"You really get the feeling you're in a maze," Sanjuanbenito says. "We want you to spend a few hours here — make this an experience, get lost even."