

A FAMILY'S COURTYARD HOME FITS THEM "LIKE A GLOVE"

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THE COURTYARD HOME OF DON AND ROSE
CIAMPA FITS THEM "LIKE A GLOVE."

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If it hadn't been for a close and very persistent friend, Don and Rose Ciampa might never have been introduced to John's Island. After she called several times, urging them to come for a visit, they reluctantly said yes. The couple agrees it was one of the best decisions they ever made.

"We had vacationed in other places throughout Florida and nothing excited us, but our friend kept saying, 'You really need to see this place. It's special,'" says Don. "To be honest, I really didn't want to like it here, but after the first day I was getting very good vibes."

Rose was getting the same vibes. "Our friend took us everywhere and we liked everything we saw. We knew that if we ever bought a place in Florida, it needed to be near the ocean since we've been on the ocean in the Hamptons for 30 years. This is where we were meant to be. We owe our friend a big thank you!"

The Ciampas' heartfelt thank you also extends to architect Harry Howle, Spectrum Interior Design, and Reilly Construction, the team that transformed the 4,800-square-foot John's Island courtyard home the couple purchased in 2011. Built in the late 1980s from one of three prototypes popular at the time, the form, function and flow of the floor plan were outdated. As Howle points out, "The plan was basically obsolete. Consequently the scope of work became very large."

Eager to spend their first winter in Vero Beach, Don and Rose moved into the original house. During that time, Howle was presenting them plans for its renovations. Knowing it would be unwise to purchase furnishings for spaces yet to be defined, Don and Rose conferred with Spectrum owner Susan Smith and her colleague Natalie Holtom.

"We suggested that they rent furniture, and we arranged things the way we thought they would use the rooms. That gave them an opportunity to become accustomed to their surroundings and identify what worked and what didn't work," Smith explains. "It also helped reinforce the plans Harry was presenting to them and gave us time to do things right."

It didn't take the Ciampas long to identify specific areas that needed to be changed and, in one case, to be left as is. Rose was charmed with the entrance courtyard and wanted it to remain untouched. She was less than charmed with the location





*The lattice floor pattern is a combination of black walnut and travertine.
Classic white columns and custom moldings define the dining room.*





GREG HILLS

The two-bedroom guesthouse features a kitchenette and sitting room with a built-in banquette, table and chairs.

of the guest rooms; and Don, who remains involved with the family real estate development firm, needed a combination library and office where he could deal with business matters. They both disliked the angle and central location of the dining room as well as the step-down living room, an architectural feature popular many years ago.

Howle took all of their comments and concerns into consideration as he continued to present them with several layout concepts. “An owner typically likes part of one concept and parts of another, so with their feedback, it becomes a method of refining the layout. It’s a detailed process that eventually gets you to the final plan,” says Howle, referring to over three-dozen architectural renderings.

“What we ended up doing were not minor renovations,” Howle notes. “In fact, the house itself was demolished. The only things left standing were three exterior walls and the garage. The project was going to take more time than any of us originally thought.” Rose and Don were involved throughout the entire design process.

One idea Rose did want to pursue centered on the large,

wrap-around, sectional sofa Smith and Holtom placed in the living room during the rental period. “I spent a lot of time sitting there, looking out to the lanai and pool area, and really liked it. So when it was time for Susan to have furniture made, I told her I wanted the same couch,” says Rose, whose fondness for blue is reflected in the sea-inspired shades that appear throughout the house.

During the getting-to-know-their-house period, the couple’s four children and nine grandchildren visited at various times. That convinced Rose and Don that a separate guest suite with two bedrooms, two baths, and a small sitting room with kitchenette was the way to go. “We love having our family here, and the self-contained guesthouse is perfect. It gives them their own space, they can come and go as they please, and Don and I have our privacy,” says Rose.

Howle designed a number of guesthouse options before arriving at what is fondly referred to as the “lock-out” version. “I start by designing on a small scale. I call them my scribbles,” says Howle, referring to blue ink sketches that illustrate possibilities

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The expanded kitchen includes a breakfast table and chairs upholstered in a blue and white patterned fabric. French doors open to a side garden; the window above the sink looks out over the entrance courtyard and fountain.



the Ciampas considered. “Being in the development business, Don understood plans and Rose had specific suggestions. They both had ideas about what they wanted.”

Today those ideas have become a reality. The foyer’s striking lattice floor pattern, a combination of black walnut and travertine, leads to an open dining room, clearly defined by dual sets of stately white columns. Howle can’t help but grin when he notes, “The Ciampas wanted the house to be primarily casual, but I had to add some elements of classical architecture.”

A week after Rose and Don settled into their new surroundings, they hosted a dinner party with all of their guests giving high marks to Howle’s classic statements and Spectrum’s custom designs. “Susan and Natalie provided the furnishings and accessories, and we love the look,” says Rose.

To that Don adds, “They got to know us. We’re not formal people, but we love to entertain and we love having our family here. We’ve never met with an architect and designers who were so enjoyable to work with. Rose knows what she wants and they got it right.”



The kitchen is a perfect example. Relocating the laundry facilities to a room in the garage enlarged the space to allow for additional windows offering views of the courtyard and surrounding gardens, as well as a breakfast room with French side doors. Not only can Rose and Don take their coffee and stroll outside, their canine companions Buddy and Chloe can come and go through their own doggie door.

The Ciampas wanted to level the living-family room floor and visually expand the space by opening it to the lanai where furnishings arranged around the fireplace and an informal dining area make it inviting. An often-used barbecue unit tucked in a corner and a flat-screen television above the fireplace sweeten the invitation. As Howle says, “It’s a big lifestyle addition. The rewarding part of a project is having a client who is willing to totally change the original concept, and Don and Rose were. I think it’s exciting to see how you can transform spaces. It’s not like a job, it’s just fun.”

Another item on the Ciampas’ wish list came from Rose, who asked Howle if he would include muntin panes when designing the windows and doors throughout the house. He did and the effect is eye-catching, especially in the living-family room where the panes surround the large picture window.

When Don is asked to identify his favorite room, he can’t



The library is one of Don's favorite rooms. Richly finished maple paneling, cabinetry and an executive-style desk make it conducive to keeping up with business matters. Windows featuring muntin panes along the top look out over tropical foliage and the pool area.

help but grin when he says, "The library." It's no wonder. With richly finished maple paneling, cabinetry, and a handsome executive desk, the library, which serves as his home office, is perfectly appointed and private, thanks to double doors that close off the main living areas.

The master suite is equally private and reflects Rose's enviable sense of style. Pale blue walls, a blue-and-white striped rug and custom-designed bed and bedding set the desired tranquil tone appreciated by the busy couple.

During the getting-to-know-their-house period, the Ciampas also got to know and enjoy their newly discovered community. "The cultural institutions

here in Vero Beach are phenomenal. I just naturally migrated to the art museum," says Rose, who served on and chaired the board of the Queens Museum, an art museum in New York. "And Don and I became involved with Riverside Theatre right away. It's amazing that a town this size has such an award-winning professional theatre," she adds.

"In the beginning we didn't have any idea how much time we were going to be spending here," Rose notes. "We were here for the month of October, went back up north for the holidays, and flew back here the day before New Year's. Every year we find ourselves staying longer and longer."

If they had known in advance all that would be involved in redesigning and rebuilding their courtyard home, would



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A smiling Don and Rose (4th and 5th from left) link arms with their four children and growing number of grandchildren. The beach has always been a significant part of the family's life and one of the reasons the Ciampas chose their home in John's Island.

they have gone ahead with the purchase? The answer is a resounding “Yes.”

“When everything was finished, and we first walked in and saw the house, I was so excited. It was more than I expected,” Rose says. “Susan and Natalie set the scene. They had music playing, flowers on the table, and food set out. We couldn’t be happier.”

This year the Ciampas are enjoying the second winter season in their redesigned, rebuilt three-bedroom, four-bath courtyard home.

Don is fond of saying, “We’ve built other homes and they were always family destinations, but this one is for Rose and me. It fits us like a glove.” ❁

ARCHITECTURE

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James Stein, Project Manager

INTERIOR DESIGN

Spectrum Interior Design
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