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*Chuck and
Deborah Royce
outside their restored
Palm Beach home.
See page 32.*

RENEWAL on the Lakefront

A remarkable restoration by experienced preservationists Deborah and Chuck Royce breathed new life into Lido, their landmarked Palm Beach home built around 1919.

BY DARRELL HOFHEINZ

ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN LEEK,
COURTESY OF THE PRESERVATION FOUNDATION OF PALM BEACH

It was a classic case of the right buyers meeting the right house.

And as a result, the home is all the better for it.

For that, thank preservationists Deborah and Charles “Chuck” M. Royce, who carried out a top-to-bottom, three-year renovation-and-restoration project at Lido, their circa-1919 landmarked home on the lakefront in Midtown Palm Beach.

Designed by noted Miami architect August Geiger, who also had an office in Palm Beach, Lido is among the earliest examples of Spanish Mediterranean-influenced residential architecture on the island. But after nearly a century, the property at 10 S. Lake Trail needed a caring hand when the Royces bought it in early 2014.

Over many decades, the house and the grounds had been altered, including a renovation that had, at some point, moved the original entrance from the lake facade to the

opposite side of the house. The grounds, too, had been changed significantly over time and included an ill-placed, modern-style swimming pool and fountain facing the lakefront.

As landscape designer Jorge Sanchez of SMI Landscape Architecture in Palm Beach puts it: “The gardens no longer spoke to the architecture.”

The Royces commissioned Sanchez and Palm Beach architect Jacqueline Albarran to once again get the house and grounds on speaking terms. In addition to overseeing the restoration of the exterior, Albarran repurposed rooms, reworked the upstairs bedrooms and fixed anomalies in the 9,550-square-foot floor plan. She focused especially on the kitchen area and the second-floor master suite, where “everything was so convoluted,” recalls Albarran, principal of Palm Beach’s SKA Architect + Planner.

Meanwhile, Sanchez and colleague Brian Vertesch were busy outside. They had the



The open-air dining pavilion at the left was added during an extensive landscaping project that raised the lawn to be flush with the house. A patio, fountain and two lap pools flank the new allée of royal palms. The renovation also replaced the roof with green-glazed barrel tiles to replicate the look of the original when the house was built to a design by architect August Geiger. The new tiles came from Ludowici, an Ohio-based company run by a family who has manufactured tile for more than 130 years.



Lido was originally part of a larger estate that extended from the lake east to Cocoanut Row and once included substantial land to the south. Because the original front entrance faced the lake, the west facade is Lido’s most prominent elevation. It features a predominantly symmetrical design and Mediterranean-style architecture with classical details, including pilasters, entablatures, Palladian-style windows and Corinthian capitals whimsically decorated with squirrels. The Royces’ renovation nearly doubled the size of the loggia, which originally served as an entrance porch. A pergola-topped sundeck was added on top of the loggia. The loggia’s unusual twisted columns feature vines, leaves and fruit. Stonework throughout the property was restored or replaced by Herpel Inc.



The Royces repurposed the original music room to serve as a library, installing bookshelves to blend with the original paneling. The living room is viewed through the doorway, which is fitted with its original folding pocket doors.



Film buffs, the Royces turned an unneeded bedroom into a home theater, which they have named, appropriately, Lido.



On the south side of the library, a doorway leads into the conservatory. The original hardwood floors were stripped and refinished.

sunken lakeside lawn filled in to level it with the loggia, which was nearly doubled in size. Both projects corrected “a litigious drop-off,” as Deborah Royce wryly describes it, “that actually made you not want to go out there.”

Sanchez and Albarran agree the Royces were dream clients who brought to the project an abiding respect for architectural history, a deep love of preservation and an exacting eye for period detail they have honed over many years. And their efforts have not gone unrecognized.

In December 2017, Lido earned the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach’s Robert I. Ballinger Award, which honors historically sensitive renovations at major estates. The house shared the award with another waterfront house on the island, a 1923 Mediterranean-style residence at 280 N. Ocean Blvd. designed by noted society architect Addison Mizner, with 1928 additions by architect Maurice Fatio. Albarran and Sanchez also were involved in that renovation and restoration project for homeowners Yoram and Pnina Weisfisch.

Lido’s renovation returned to the house its original green barrel-tiled roof along with its distinctive front-porch roof — a broad marquee supported by chains, drawbridge style. Albarran had the marquee copied from old photographs of the house.

Inside, crews stripped layer after layer of paint and stain from the extensive original woodwork and refinished the hardwood floors. Other floors — and backsplashes — were given a new look with antique encaustic tiles reclaimed from French and Belgian churches and other buildings, imported by L’Antiquario Antique Encaustic Tile in Miami. West Palm Beach contractor Tim Givens of Tim Givens Building and Remodeling oversaw the construction, which included adding several new fireplaces, including one on the loggia.

The extent of the renovation didn’t faze the Royces. “Chuck and I,” notes Deborah, “have done a lot of projects.”

Those have ranged from restoring The Avon, a 1937 movie house in Stamford, Conn., to a complete reconstruction of Ocean House, a seaside hotel that dated to 1869 in Watch Hill, R.I., where the Royces are restoring a Colonial-era farmhouse. In addition to the farmhouse and Lido, the Royces have a home near Greenwich, Conn., and spend time in New York’s Catskill Mountains at a historic house they restored.

Originally from Washington, D.C., Chuck



Chuck and Deborah Royce stand in their lakeview conservatory. On the south side of the house, the room doubles as a writing spot for Deborah, who is working on a mystery novel. PHOTO BY RICHARD GRAULICH

Deborah Royce’s hair and makeup by Deborah Koepper, using Deborah Koepper Cosmetics for Deborah Koepper Beauty, Palm Beach



Left: In the loggia off the living room, a fireplace was added during the renovation with details that complement the design of the twisted columns. The mantelpiece’s center cartouche includes a capital letter L, for Lido, designed by architect Jacqueline Albarran and repeated in the metal grille of the front door. Many of the outdoor furnishings came from Antique American Wicker in Nashua, N.H.

Royce is chairman of The Royce Funds and a pioneer in the so-called “small cap” mutual-fund industry. His wife is a Michigan native and former actress who in the 1990s was an executive with Miramax Films. Among her charitable work, she is a board member of the National Garden Conservatory and serves on the board of trustees’ executive committee for the New York Botanical Garden.

The couple enjoyed a vacation retreat in Delray Beach before buying their first Palm Beach home in 2005 — a 1940s-era house with Palm Beach Regency-style architecture on South County Road.

“Our other house was perfectly wonderful,” says Chuck, relaxing in Lido’s loggia on a warm afternoon as the Lake Worth Lagoon sparkles in the distance, separated from the property by the Lake Trail.

“But I did want to be on the trail. I like

walking, and I wanted a very walkable neighborhood,” he says. “That was a primary motivation.”

Lido’s lakefront orientation was no accident. When it was built, the Lake Worth Lagoon was more than lovely scenery — it was the lifeblood of the town and a major transportation artery for Palm Beach, which had been incorporated less than a decade earlier.

That house was designed for Boston entrepreneur Harry Kelsey, once the largest landowner in Palm Beach County and the founder, in 1923, of Kelsey City, which is today Lake Park near North Palm Beach. The house’s construction coincided with a wave of interest in Mediterranean Revival architecture that was sweeping the country in the early 20th century.

Lido — “shore” in Italian — predates the much more elaborate and fanciful



The renovation retained the original shape of the breakfast room, where woodwork and plaster walls were restored. Interior designer Iliana Moore chose fabrics with vintage-appropriate designs for the simple drapery panels used throughout the house. “I didn’t want things to be fussy. It’s a luxurious house, but it’s not frou-frou,” says Moore, who reused much of the Royces’ existing furniture.



Architect Jacqueline Albarran extensively reworked the kitchen and a nearby sitting area. Antique encaustic tiles salvaged from Belgian and French churches and buildings were used on the backsplash. The rear staircase — originally a steep single flight — was redesigned with a landing and drawers for linen storage.



Above: The Royces added a fireplace to the dining room, replacing a built-in china cabinet added within the last few decades. “We made sure that whenever we put in a fireplace, we matched the woodwork in the room,” Deborah Royce says. The photograph above the fireplace is by Hans Withoos and recalls 17th-century Dutch still life paintings, although its flying birds have toppled some of the Delftware china. Deborah Royce’s daughter, Alexandra Porter, a New York City-based art consultant, helped select the art throughout the house, which references historical periods but with a modern twist. “Each one speaks to another moment in time,” Porter says. “They add a lot of life to the home.” The bamboo cabinet was purchased at auction from the estate of the late Lilly Pulitzer.

Mediterranean-style homes that Mizner popularized in Palm Beach after completing the Mediterranean-style Everglades Club, which opened in early 1919. But the house’s architecture isn’t strictly Mediterranean. It’s a curious blend of classical elements along with a traditionally styled interior that likely never would have emerged from Mizner’s

drawing board. “The house is what we call ‘Mediterranean light,’” says Deborah. Her longtime New York-based interior designer, Iliana Moore of Iliana Moore Interiors, agrees that Lido is a bit of a hybrid: “It’s Edwardian English on the inside and Mediterranean on the outside.” The floor plan of the six-bedroom house

is basically U-shaped, although its eastern wings diverge on an angle, a floor plan similar, Sanchez says, to houses he has seen in Cuba. “As Jorge explained it, it’s kind of a ‘U’ that is crossed by a ‘V,’” Deborah says. At the front of the house, Sanchez had an existing tree moved to serve as a focal point for the new driveway. From the front porch, one



Viewed from the living room and tucked beneath the stairway gallery, above and below, the glass front door opens into the foyer. Antique black and white encaustic tiles were installed on the foyer floor during the renovation. The Royces also added an elevator.



can look straight through the foyer to the living room's French doors, which access the triple-arched loggia.

The living room, like other rooms in the house, isn't grandly scaled, and that appealed to the Royces. Chuck, in fact, was especially taken with the size of living room. "It's very narrow but it felt intimate. So many of these Mediterraneans can feel so large," he says.

To enhance the lakeside view, Sanchez centered a patio and fountain within an allée of newly planted royal palms, refining the previous arrangement. He also added two lap pools on either side of the allée and designed an open-air dining pavilion on the north side near a towering old-growth kapok tree. On the south side, a walkway leads through a collection

of tropical plants.

As the restoration and renovation unfolded, the Royces took seriously their roles as stewards who would ensure the house could endure for new generations. "Stewardship is a series of decisions that you make one at a time," Deborah says. "You ask: What are you going to fix and what are you going to leave as is?"

For Albarran, the project was a pleasure, thanks largely to the homeowners. "The Royces were lovely to work with," she says. "They made decisions really quickly, they knew what they wanted and they trusted us. We were a good team."

The Royces, Sanchez adds, had an immediate grasp of Lido's historical importance and legacy: "In a very gracious way, they were looking for perfection — nothing more, nothing less." ■



At dusk, windows glow on the east side of the house. The front door is beneath a chain-supported marquee added during the renovation to replicate the one removed by a previous owner. Two wings branch off at an angle from the central section of the house. The motor court is new. Botanica Landscaping of Loxahatchee handled the landscape installation.