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from *the* TOP

A contemporary penthouse offers technological creature comforts—with a bird's-eye view of Miami's skyline.

BY LOUISE FARR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILYANA DIMITROVA



New Yorkers Howard and Lilly Steinberg love the vibrancy of South Beach, so in 2000, they purchased a 40th-floor penthouse in Continuum, an ultra-luxurious waterfront condominium project. The undertaking for their vacation penthouse required foresight and patience, as the trilevel 7,400-square-foot space—which boasts an additional 6,400 square feet of terrace and thrilling 360-degree views of beach, cruise ships and city—wouldn't be completed until 2003. In the meantime, the Steinbergs continued their Manhattan lives in an apartment



Lilly and Howard Steinberg were drawn to Miami because its melting-pot atmosphere reminded them of New York. Their five-bedroom, seven-and-a-half-bath penthouse sits atop Tower One at Continuum, a two-tower luxury condominium that boasts wraparound views of Fisher Island, the Atlantic, and Miami's skyline. The couple couldn't be happier. But putting it all together, Howard says, was a love-hate experience. "Florida construction has its own time table—not anything like New York. Things take longer." Lunch or dinner guests can enjoy views of lively South Beach.

located just two blocks from the World Trade Center.

When the Twin Towers fell on September 11, 2001, the couple, who had three young children, was traumatized. They wondered if they should proceed with building a second home. Lilly remembers saying, "I don't want it. There's no way that I'm going to move and live up high after what happened." Eventually, she changed her mind after visiting the space before the windows were installed. She gasped with pleasure at the sight of the night skyline. "I was punching myself: 'Why didn't I do this sooner?'" she says.

It was a turning point: The couple decided to continue building their waterfront condominium. "We put a lot of work into it once we committed," Howard says. "We used it as an escapist vision. We got stronger." But in late spring of 2003, when they finally closed on the property, they were confronted with a vast, empty space that required careful planning.

"It was barren, but it was still gorgeous—[a] breathtaking and very urban concrete jungle," Howard says. "We had the

basic idea of what we wanted to do, which was accent the views, but make an apartment that was contemporary—that harnessed the technological advances you could have in a smart home, but also had the raw beauty of nature as you looked out."

Lilly envisioned the home as minimalist, unpretentious, and inviting. She didn't want the interiors to compete with the views, but she didn't want them to blend into the landscape either. Contractors Cedrik Denain and Joseph Dieppa, of ASR Interiors on Fisher Island, agreed. "The apartment looks like it's totally opening to the sky. Traditional would have been a clash," Denain says.

So the couple made bold color choices, including dark wood doors and 7-inch-tall mahogany baseboards in an espresso color achieved with a mix of stain and paint. Wanting to get a "wow" reaction from guests as they enter the apartment, the Steinbergs dispensed with a foyer and gained a view that stretches the length of the living room. Already, Hollywood has taken notice: Wes Craven's thriller, *Red Eye*, shot there in



"My husband and I had a shared vision in designing our home: to emphasize comfort, simplicity and technology while showcasing our spectacular views."

—Lilly Steinberg, homeowner

January, and the movie version of *Miami Vice*, starring Jamie Foxx, was scheduled to shoot in May at press time. An internal elevator travels up one floor from the five-bedroom condominium to a terrace swimming pool and even higher to a rooftop terrace. Denain created Deco-style, wenge-look mahogany doors for the elevator, inspired by those he and the Steinbergs saw in France. "They are just very rich and inviting," Howard says. "Everything was from scratch," Denain adds. "[Howard's] wife was the biggest help for us. She knew exactly what she wanted."

Comfort was as important as a design scheme that lived up to the quality of the property. The couple splurged on some pieces: A cream-colored Artefacto leather sofa sits in front of the 63-inch Fujitsu plasma screen in the great room, accessorized with Natuzzi pillows in the rich red of the distant low-slung leather Natuzzi sofa, which is placed to take full advantage of the views. The Steinbergs found the graceful espresso walnut dining room furniture at Desiron in SoHo.



"I want nature and technology fused so we can enjoy both and have an unbeatable combination," Howard told the custom installers. The idea worked. Now the owners can sit in their Jacuzzi bathtub and glance from their 42-inch Fujitsu plasma screen to the ocean.

Lilly also had the confidence to add a pair of Pier One vases, whose rich ruby color perfectly complements the Natuzzi pillows, and to place a West Elm low wood table in chocolate beneath the great room plasma television. She loved the table and was equally enthusiastic about West Elm's five-day delivery.

As self-professed tech freaks, the Steinbergs craved the maximum amount of technology but didn't want to draw attention to it. To tackle the audiovisual and lighting elements of the apartment, which has 24-foot living room ceilings and little wall space because of the floor-to-ceiling windows, they called on Mark Ramdeen and Victor Rivera of New York's Custom Integrated Systems. "It was important to keep the look of the apartment without disturbing it," says Ramdeen, whose company integrated Lutron Sivoia QED motorized shades and components between the window mullions (the installation garnered a Lutron 2004 Excellence Award). "There's a lot going on behind the scenes, but all you get to see is the beautiful and seamless stuff in front," Rivera says.




The homeowners wanted their home to be stylish and minimalist, but comfortable as well. They handpicked the furnishings from furniture stores and showrooms in New York and Miami.

The astronomical clock in Lutron's HomeServe system keeps track of time and season changes. Shades rise and fall automatically. A Crestron control system ties the audiovisual system, heating and air conditioning, televisions, and security cameras into an all-in-one automation command center. The Steinbergs can even control various elements of the South Beach apartment from their New York home, and Ramdeen and Rivera can access the audiovisual rack—strategically placed between the dining room and the great room foyer—to make changes through a computer hidden deep inside.

Howard is proud of the dining room's invisible Sound Advance speakers. "We've got speakers in the walls so they're hidden and throbbing," he says. With four plasma televisions and one LCD screen indoors, the couple plans to add an outdoor theater on the pool terrace, complete with a 100-inch screen. "We're prewired for the equivalent of an outdoor drive-in movie [theater], without the car," says Howard, noting that the pool is about 420 feet above ground. "I'm told that we're free from what is called the 'mosquito zone.'"

Recently, the couple added baby Charlie to their brood of Kimberly, Samantha, and Joshua, who enjoys playing baseball in the condo's wide-open spaces. Lilly likes watching the shifting sunlight from a comfortable perch. "I'm so glad I changed my mind," she says. "In Miami, we feel as if we're floating. Who needs meditation when you can sit down and watch the water, the people, and the city? It's like a private gallery. Every time it's a different view, a different painting."

Says her husband with satisfaction: "Miami is a masterpiece. My wife and I joke, 'What are we going to do after this one?'" For a list of interiors resources and a preferred list of architects and interior designers, visit hemagazine.com. 

TECH TALK: THE STEINBERG HOME

For this installation, the owners did not want the interior design and the use of space dictated by their technologically based entertainment needs. They envisioned a high-performance system that integrated seamlessly into their minimalist environment. Mark Ramdeen and Victor Rivera of Custom Integrated Solutions in New York gave them just that.

Creating a media room system that performs well within this setting requires the right mix of equipment selection and setup. For the front soundstage, Rivera selected floor-standing **Jamo D 870 speakers** and a **D 8CEN center speaker** for their lifelike treble. These selections allowed for more control steering the sound. "We also originally had Jamo rears mounted on the wall, but that would have dispersed the sound into the great room area," Rivera says. Instead he placed **Sonance Virtuoso in-walls** in the ceiling, and performed additional room correction to create a "wall of sound."

Control of ambient lighting is handled by an automated shade system, which is operated by the same Crestron control system that runs the audiovisual gear. In addition to a preset program scene, which raises and lowers different shades throughout the day, the blinds to the right of the media room descend with the touch of a button when the television is turned on.

It all comes together seamlessly, Ramdeen says. "We are a hybrid integration company. If this client didn't use us, he would have dealt with an audiovisual company, a shade company, and an electrical company. We're everything in one." For a full equipment list, please visit hemagazine.com. —Dennis Burger

RESOURCES

Contractors: ASR Interiors of Fisher Island, Fla. (305.534.1989)
Custom Installer: Custom Integrated Systems of New York (877.730.4247, c-i-s-tech.com)
Interior Design: the homeowners

AM/FM tuner, control system, touchscreen remotes: Crestron (crestron.com, 800.237.2041)

CD changer, DVD players, surround-sound receivers: Harman/Kardon (516.255.HKHK, harmankardon.com)
Digital phone system: Panasonic (panasonic.com, 800.211.PANA)

High-definition satellite receivers: Sony (800.222.7669, sony.com)

LCD TV, video projector: Sharp (sharpusa.com, 800.BE.SHARP)

Media room floor speakers:

Jamo (jamospeakers.com, 847.465.0005)

Multiroom amplifiers: Sonance (800.582.7777, sonance.com)

Multiroom in-ceiling, in-wall, and outdoor speakers: Sonance (sonance.com, 800.582.7777), Sound Advance Systems (800.592.4644, soundadvance.com)

Multiroom music server: Request Multimedia (518.899.1254, request.com)

Plasma TVs: Fujitsu (973.575.0380, plasmavision.com)

Racks: Middle Atlantic (973.839.1011, middleatlantic.com)

Satellite receiver: DirecTV (800.347.3288, directv.com)

Screen: Draper (800.238.7999, draperinc.com)

Shade system: Lutron (888.588.7661, lutron.com)

Subwoofers: Sunfire (425.335.4748, sunfire.com)

Surge suppressor: Furman Sound (furmansound.com, 707.763.1010)