

# BEAUTY AND BRAINS

Remodeled Cheval home's artistic design disguises an intelligent mind

BY HILARY DANINHIRSCH

Rodolfo and Mila Ballesteros' 1990s home in Cheval is a fusion of art and smart...technology, that is. Rodolfo, a long-time art collector, installed a smart home system that helps make the home energy efficient while allowing him to control the lighting to accentuate his art pieces. ♦ But before they moved in and installed the most up-to-date smart technology, the couple made significant changes and upgrades to the interior of the home. ➡





Photo by Grey Street Studios/Courtesy of Greaves Construction

### A modern design aesthetic

The original house was outdated and featured a more traditional aesthetic, with smaller rooms, a lot of brown columns and wall niches, a marble bathroom, and an older style kitchen. Most of the home was carpeted or featured old, square tiles, and the windows were small.

“Our style was more contemporary, with simple, straight lines, so we wanted to make everything square with angles and a lot of plain walls,” Rodolfo says. They also wanted each bedroom to have its own bathroom, and they increased the size of the master bedroom, as well as the closets.

The couple had an experienced team of professionals to help them bring their vision to life. They didn’t have to look too far to find a trusted contractor. “We lived in the same neighborhood and our kids grew up together,” says Jon Greaves, owner of Greaves Construction. “I remodeled their first house years ago and welcomed the challenge when they approached me about this renovation.”

Greaves enlisted the interior design expertise of Johanna G. Seldes, ASID of IDC Interior Design Consulting, while Spencer Heckman with Integral Systems, LLC in Clearwater was brought in to install the smart home system.

The extensive 14-month long renovation involved gutting the interior spaces, moving load-bearing walls and adding windows in order to establish the open concept floor plan. “Our goal was to create a streamlined, modern design with clean surfaces to complement the homeowners’ extensive art and sculpture collection,” says Seldes.

Large format Spanish porcelain tile and wood-look tile was installed on the various floors, while suspended drywall clouds with LED lighting add visual interest overhead. “There was a lot of structural engineering involved when we installed the large square and rectangular structures you see hanging from the ceiling throughout the home,” says Greaves. “The modern design and architectural elements you see make this house truly unique.” ➡

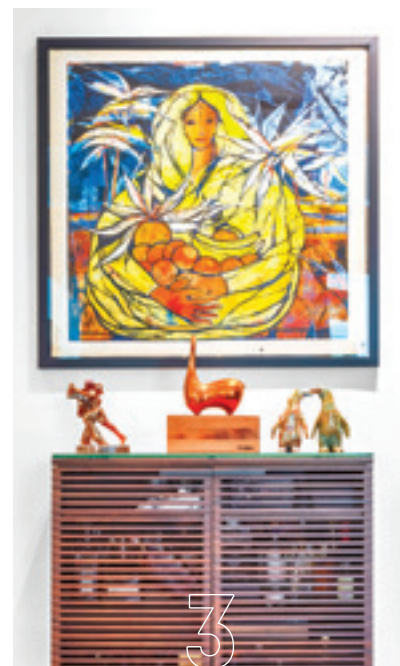


Photo by Jon Cancelino

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1 The formal living room features artwork from several Costa Rican artists including Fernando Carvalho, Francisco Zuniga, Francisco Amighetti, Sophia Tristan, Manuel Zumbado, Roberto Wesson and Alvaro Gomez. 2 The renovation included removing walls to create an open floor plan so the homeowners could entertain guests in their kitchen and adjoining family room. 3 A painting by Cesar Valverde of Costa Rica hangs above a cabinet in the family room. 4 The foyer features paintings by Vernon Gallardo, Manuel Zumbado and Alonzo Rubi. The sculptures are created by Eduardo Guevara, Aquiles Jimenez, Joshua Tobey, Alvin Marshall and Tony Jimenez.

Photo by Jon Cancelino



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**5** Large format porcelain tile was installed on the floors in the main living spaces.

**6** The eye-catching backsplash resembles a piece of art thanks to a mosaic strip featuring a subtle splash of color.

Because lighting is important to the Ballesteros family, they chose to put glass doors on the back of the house by the dining room and go with a glass dining room table, as well as chairs that have hollow backs. “We didn’t want to take away from the view that overlooks the pool,” Rodolfo says. The round chandeliers over the dining room table are really bundles of fiber optic lighting, though they are designed to look like solid crystal.

The kitchen features two islands with quartz waterfall countertops. While one island is used for general cooking activities, the other was designed as a surface to temporarily display pieces of art, such as sculptures. “Sometimes we put it on the center of that island, so we can all walk around and talk about a piece in detail,” he says.



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In addition to the art serving as the focal point, Seldes says function was also an important factor. “I consider everything—how much a client entertains or cooks. It is even important to know where their keys go and where they plug in their devices,” she says. “Rodolfo and Mila wanted materials that are classic and beautiful, and this house has such an extravagant feel to it.”

Because they enjoy outdoor living in Florida’s balmy climate, they wanted to maximize that area. In addition to an outdoor kitchen, they also modified the design of the formerly oval pool, transforming it into one that is rectangular. “That saved space and we were able to increase the living area around the pool without taking away the space of the pool,” says Rodolfo.

### A high-tech home with smarts

Rodolfo has been collecting art since 1983, starting with Costa Rican art, and he regularly adds to his collection. Pieces are thoughtfully placed on most walls throughout the home; even the foyer features a small gallery of paintings and sculptures. “My wife and I have been big supporters of the arts; we have dozens and dozens of art pieces, so the house was built to showcase those pieces, and the lighting was designed for the art. Every single piece of art has its own way of being lit up and appreciated throughout the day,” he says.

Heckman and his team installed a professional level Control4 smart home system. “For the size and quality of home, there are only three or four different systems that would be suitable to control that, and Control4 is one of those. It’s a great system that provides both reliable and convenient solutions for their lifestyle,” he says.

Heckman explains that the lights turn on only to the brightness needed, cutting back on unnecessary energy usage. With whole home lighting the homeowners have the ability to control all the lights in the house with the press of a single button, eliminating the possibility of leaving any lights on by mistake. ➡



Photo by Jon Cancelino

All the components of the smart home system, including the cable boxes, receivers and camera system, are tucked away in an equipment rack in the office so that it does not distract from the décor of the home. And unlike some other smart home automation systems that might necessitate multiple apps or remotes, the system the Ballesteros family has in their home is integrated and works seamlessly and intelligently together with one app.

Heckman says that he is seeing a greater demand for smart home systems like this. “It makes life easier and simpler—you don’t know what you’re living without until you experience it. For our customers, it’s a very growing market, especially with Alexa integration,” he adds.

Everything from the air conditioning, to the WiFi, computers and televisions is controlled remotely; even the outdoor features, such as the pool and fans by the grill area, are integrated with the system. “With the press of a single button the homeowners are able to dim the lights, turn on the television to watch a movie, change the thermostat or shut the garage doors,” Heckman says.

**7** Paintings by Costa Rican artists Roberto Wesson and Alonso Rubi add bold splashes of color to the master bedroom.

**8** A mixture of gray tile, including stones, and LED lighting add visual interest to the oversized master bathroom shower.

**9** The outdoor living space includes a new full kitchen, while the original oval pool was reconfigured to a rectangular shape to complement the clean lines of the interior design.

Photo by Grey Street Studios/Courtesy of Greaves Construction



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Similarly, the master bedroom has many options for controlling lights and television, as does the bathroom shower.

When people come to the house to see the art, Rodolfo can engage the ‘art display’ set, which sets the mood of the house just to show the light with the appropriate music. “I can turn off all the rest of the lights in the house, so that the main focal point will be pieces of art,” he says.

In addition to the ability to highlight his art collection in the proper lighting, Rodolfo says that he enjoys the convenience of his smart technology system.

“It is a big convenience that you don’t have to move around the house to control all that. I can do everything by remote. I can access the whole house and use the cameras to control safety and security,” he says, adding that in addition to the convenience, it’s fun to operate, and it helps with energy efficiency. 🍷



Photo by Grey Street Studios/Courtesy of Greaves Construction

**RESOURCES** **Builder** Jon Greaves, Greaves Construction; **Smart home automation** Control4, installed by Integral Systems, LLC; **Interior designer** Johanna G. Seldes, ASID, IDC Interior Design Consulting; **Architects** Donald Sharp, Sharp Design Studio AIA; Javier Elizondo Esquivel; **Cabinetry** Miriam Johnson, C&C Cabinets; **Countertops** Lufriu Marble, Inc.; **Kitchen backsplash** Emser Tile; **Sinks and faucets** Ferguson Bath, Kitchen & Lighting Gallery; **Appliances** Thermador, Famous Tate; **Faux painting** Jeff Monsein, Splat Paint and Design; **Art framing and placement** Four Corners Framing; **Lighting** Lightstyle of Tampa Bay; **Paint** Sherwin-Williams; **Furniture** Scan Design; **Tile** Gulf Tile; ProSource; **Window treatments** Progressive Designs; Hunter Douglas Pirouette, installed by David Boisse, Equinox Interiors, Inc.; **Entry door** TMD; **Electrical** Millican Electric, LLC; **Plumbing** D.R.B. Plumbing, LLC; **Outdoor kitchen** Outdoor Florida Kitchens; **Landscaping** LeBel Landscaping, LLC; **Pool** Larsen’s Pool & Spa; **Hardscapes** Quality Brick Pavers, Inc.