



# HIGH-RISE FASHION

Chanel's Barbara Cirkva finds a calming oasis in a breezy Miami pied-à-terre, made to measure by longtime collaborator Stephen Sills.

**T**HE FIRST TIME BARBARA CIRKVA STEPPED INTO a Paris apartment that had once belonged to Coco Chanel, she was captivated by the amalgam of furnishings and objets that revealed glimpses into the legendary couturier's take on design. "It was such an emotional experience," remembers Cirkva, who as president of the U.S. fashion division of the house of Chanel, has deftly shepherded the iconic label into a new era. Surveying the rooms of the two-story apartment, which have been left intact since Chanel's death, in 1971, Cirkva says she was struck by the designer's appreciation of the "scale, adornment, and proportion of rooms." Since that seminal moment—and after almost three decades at the company—Cirkva has

found that Chanel's point of view has subtly permeated her personal outlook on design. "It's like a drip system," she says, "which little by little influences my choices at home."

Time at home for Cirkva and her husband, John Schumacher, is divided between three places: a penthouse in an early-postwar Upper East Side co-op in Manhattan; a 1920s stone country house in Mount Kisco, New York; and their new two-bedroom apartment in a contemporary high-rise in Miami. Intimations of Chanel can be found in all their residences: A square table like the one the icon favored in her Parisian flat anchors the dining room of their New York penthouse, for example, while a Roman marble statue like one atop the late designer's

By Jean Nayar • Photographs by William Waldron • Styled by Kevin Fox

For the master bedroom, right, designer Stephen Sills chose gilded-cork wallcoverings from Innovations; a custom sofa with Brussels linen fabric from Studio Four NYC; and a Himalayan carpet from Beauvais.

fireplace mantel resides in the living room of their Miami condo. Yet each home clearly reflects the diverse and worldly tastes of the two owners, who regularly travel to Europe—especially Rome and Capri—and other parts of the globe. Thanks to the influence of longtime friend and interior designer Stephen Sills, who is known for his restrained, sophisticated interiors and who collaborated with the couple on all three places, the residences also astutely attune to their distinct contexts as well as the ways Cirkva and Schumacher live in each setting.

Much like their New York homes, where the couple often entertain friends, the newest one in Florida is all about rest and relaxation. Situated on a high floor in the only condominium building on Miami's Biscayne Island and surrounded by floor-to-ceiling glass walls on three sides, the contemporary abode features wraparound terraces that open onto expansive views across Miami Beach to the Atlantic Ocean on the east, over Biscayne Bay and downtown Miami to the south, and along Miami Beach and the bay toward Bal Harbour to the north. "The water, the foliage, the palms, the tropical flowers, the boats are staggeringly beautiful," Sills says. Appropriately, the interiors he crafted with his clients make the most of these spectacular vistas.

AT THE SAME TIME, SILLS DEvised a rapprochement between the distant views and interior comforts with a couple of contrarian gestures that make the home more inviting than the typical modern all-white, ultraminimalist Miami dwelling. "There's a lot of glass, so we didn't want a big white box," says Schumacher, who like his wife prefers more tactile decor. To warm the rooms, Sills started by replacing the original terracotta tile floors throughout with creamy honed travertine and covered many walls with metallic-tinged cork, enriching the home's shell with subtle texture and a soothing palette of grays, taupes, alabaster whites, and beiges. Since Schumacher loves to cook (he owned a restaurant in Miami before the couple purchased their Biscayne Island apartment), Sills also bucked the open-kitchen trend. He instead closed off the kitchen, separating it completely from the dining and living areas to keep the focus on function. "You don't see it or hear your dishwasher running while you're having dinner," Schumacher says.

Unencumbered by views of appliances, the living and dining spaces reflect a bit of Miami's signature sexy glamour, yet their muted palette lends a note of gravitas, which is pepped up with an occasional twist. Instead of an abundance of antiques like those that bring character and comfort to their New York homes, French and Italian midcentury pieces (many from Fleur, the couple's shop in Westchester County) artfully blend with rustic-feeling furniture, sidestepping any sense of sterility. In the foyer, a pair of gilded palm-tree lamps by Maison Jansen atop a 1940s French iron console set a glamorous tone with an opening wink and salute. In the living room, a collection of lily-pod cocktail and pull-



up tables by contemporary French artists François Daneck and Olivier Coisne contrasts with a curvaceous '70s Italian sofa covered in its original two-toned velvet. Custom-made and refined pieces by Sills, such as bleached Bugattiesque end tables, Swedish-style chairs, and a chrome-and-glass side table, add freshness and sparkle.

"We have a kind of shorthand, if you will," says Cirkva of the collaborative approach she and her husband have developed with Sills on their interiors projects, which invariably include furnishings they've discovered on scouting trips to Europe for Fleur, their antiques and garden shop. "We have things that we show to Stephen and he knows exactly what to do with them, and then he embellishes them with his ideas; it's that easy," Schumacher says. Among the trio's inventive strokes were transforming a pair of doors from a 19th-century French greenhouse into mirrors for the master bedroom and converting Cirkva's Paris flea market find, a 1950s French bronze table base, into a bouquet-like sculpture they mounted on the wall above the master bath's tub. "Allowing your artist-designer to create unique pieces gives personality to rooms that's very special," Cirkva says.

Since their Miami home was completed in December, it has become a welcome winter retreat for the couple and their standard poodle, Mink. Whenever Cirkva and Schumacher meet after long-distance business trips, "it's like always being on a date," she says. The Miami space also serves as a kind of decompression zone for Cirkva as she prepares to step away from her executive role at Chanel next year and adopt a less-demanding pace, handling only occasional special projects. And if Madame Chanel were alive to see its keenly crafted interiors, the fashionable getaway would likely bring a gleam to her eye. ♦



Coco Chanel, right, stands in her Paris apartment at 31 Rue Cambon, ca. 1965. In the dining room, below, a French 19th-century steel obelisk and vintage Emilio Terry stools.



The study's mirrors and tables, above, came from the couple's garden-and-antiques shop, Fleur; and a Rochelle Apartment sofa from Crate & Barrel. In the entry foyer, a pair of gilded table lamps by Maison Jansen; an antique suede-and-steel stool from Jean-Pierre Secula, in France; and wallcoverings from Innovations.

➔ For where to shop in Miami, see [departures.com/miamishopping](http://departures.com/miamishopping)



Barbara Cirkva wears a jacket from Chanel's Paris-Salzburg Métiers collection in her living room, next to a first-century Roman bust acquired through Sotheby's. Opposite: In the dining room, refinished Hastoe Windsor chairs from Hive Modern. For more information, see *Where to Buy*, page 118.

